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- Húsavík

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Humpty Dumpty Isn’t The Only One Having A Great Fall

After the final season of ‘Game Of Thrones’ last year, I am going to amend the sentiment that I traditionally start my autumn columns with. Winter is, uh, on the horizon. And while maybe this isn’t the autumn we pictured, it’s the autumn we have, so as the days get shorter and we do our best to soak up the last sunlight, let’s all try to appreciate the numerous wonders this city gives us. We’re lucky to be in Reykjavík. Where else can you eat a hot dog for breakfast without social judgement?

So here we go: your guide to having a spectacular fall in Reykjavík. Along with all the winners, in this issue you’ll find the post-pandemic world, social distancing, or—God-willing—uh, on the horizon. And while maybe my autumn columns with. Winter is, only having a great fall, looking for cheap booze and event listings. And look out for our Best of Iceland magazine and app to learn what’s worth checking out in the Icelandic countryside. More? Don’t miss our YouTube channel at youtube.com/TheReykjavíkGrapevine for travel content, interviews, news and more. We love to hear from you, so hit us up at grapevine@grapevine.is. No conspiracy theories, please (unless they’re about ‘Saved By The Bell’ being a vehicle for the Illuminati, of course).

Finally, if you enjoy this Best Of guide, please consider supporting The Reykjavík Grapevine by joining our High Five Club at grapevine.is/highfive-club, where for just a few euros a month, you can ensure our journalists do cool things like eat, buy shampoo, and give you the best independent journalism around. Make sure to check out our shop at shop.grapevine.is too for everything from Icelandic perfume to local candy to mugs that say “Þetta reddast” on it. You need that. Also, book your tours at gotrail.grapevine.is for Grapevine-approved entertainment.


Hannah Jane Cohen
Editor, Best Of Reykjavík
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THE AWARDS:
How We Picked the Winners

The word “conclusion” is a little strong in this case. We have argued, fought and interviewed panels, tried blind taste-tests, 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.

THE GUIDE-
How To Spot The Winners

Look out for these stickers of recommendation, which we’ve handed out to this year’s winners. They indicate your best option, whether you’re looking for shopping, dining, drinking or fun days out in Reykjavik. We at the Grapevine know what’s best!

Also, these are the stickers from our previous “Best Of” selections, given to winners from prior years. ✨
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Dining

Delicious, even if you can’t pronounce it

The year 2020 wasn’t kind to many restaurateurs. Let’s be honest, it’s a tough business. Nevertheless, Iceland’s culinary scene is seeing the emergence of new players and the old guard stepping up their A-game. Restaurants continue to diversify; we’ve got ourselves an izakaya inspired spot, while tasting menus are being questioned and reinterpreted. The scope of “Icelandic cuisine” is broadening to include not just produce and products but also their sourcing and seasonal integrity on this harsh island by players big and small. Whether it is globally recognised Nordic fine-dining or fragrant Thai curries, traditional Icelandic cuisine or family-friendly sushi, to everything in-between, this guide to the best of everything Reykjavík has to offer has been hand-picked by our exacting panel of passionate gourmands. From budget bites to fanciful fare, we’ve got you covered. Skál!

Best of Reykjavík 2020

Le Kock & Búllan

Joint Winners

Le Kock, Tryggvagata 14

O burgers, glorious burgers! If there were a national dish, burgers would be it for Iceland. And at Le Kock, their irreverence is thankfully a social media strategy only. When it comes to the food, it is still the ‘gourmet tuck shop’ the founders envisioned. The potato roll game is strong and holds up despite their recent defeat at the hands of the sauce puddle muddle (a beast so savage, hardly a burger in town hasn’t succumbed). Grab those extra napkins, you’ll need them. Better yet, ask for just a smidgen of sauce. Singed with smoke and magic, a classic cheeseburger is still the top dog here.

Hamborgarabúllan, multiple locations

An oldie but a goodie, Búllan slings a solid burger that seals Iceland’s reputation as a worthy burger destination. With multiple locations you are always close to one. A lil’ birdie on our panel whispers that, “the Tommi-owned Höfði location is excellent with kids,” and another swore by the Geirsgata location for the ‘Steak Burger’. Also worth trying are the Tuesday 1,190 ISK deals.

Newcomer

Yuzu
Hverfisgata 44

The citrus fruit extract might be a tad too pronounced in their mayo, but the steamed bread burgers at Yuzu have got everyone at the Grapevine offices converted. They arrive in a cane steam bun with a melty vegan cheese. The restaurant serves up sloppy, greasy vegan food that hits the spot whenever you’re in the market for a full burger experience. It’s relatively light on the wallet as well.

Best Vegan Burger

BioBorgari
Vesturgata 12

Veggie burgers can be many things, but too often they’re reduced to a close-to-meat contest. Standing tall amidst a sea of pre-made patties and bean paste offenders are their scrumptious grain-bean-lentil patties, with the earthiness of assorted veggies and buckwheat and flax with the charcoal grill adding a lovely singed note. They’ve really listened to the dry burger complaint cause the ‘Special Vegan’ with its crown of baked apples is quite an unmissable treat, whether you are vegan or not. The tomato sauce & kale pesto are pretty great too. For clean, small-batch, slow living, BioBorgari is worth the love.

Runners-Up

Jömm
Kringlan & Faxafélon 18

With soy-based Oumph products, Jömm have a wide selection of burgers to choose whatever your plant-based junk food craving may be—if the basic burger doesn’t cut it, there are other variants and wraps and pastas as well. Past... our panel says, “their sauces are a game changer.”

Black Box Pizzeria
Borgartún 28 & Háholt 13-15

Black Box combines the Napoli-style sourdough craze with the familiarity of commercial pizzerias. With a large wood fired oven (gas assisted), Flatbakan is an homage to homegrown pizza style. Think a thin crust, generously sauced pie topped with local favourites—regular suspects jostling for attention amidst dates, bananas and of course cream-cheese, and a melty vegan cheese.

Best Pizza

Flatey
Grandagarður 11 & Hlemmur

Newcomers rarely, if ever, win a category in the Best of Dining. But when Flatey blew onto the pizza scene in Reykjavik, they brought with them unknown-in-these parts Napoli pie-game. One bite of that foldover, blistered pie and we were floored. A few years in, and Flatey’s pie-game is still as strong as ever. The menu spans classics—the Margheritas are a panel favourite with their puddle of milky mozzarella—and beloved faves, like the Tartufo, a truffled pizza bianco and the vegan(o) with its rosemary speckled potatoes. Keep an eye out for the offspring of the ‘Battle of the Bakers’.

Runner-Up

Islenkska Flatbakan
Mathóli Höfði & Bæjarlind 2

With a large wood fired oven (gas assisted), Flatbakan is an homage to homegrown pizza style. Think a thin crust, generously sauced pie topped with local favourites—regular suspects jostling for attention amidst dates, bananas and of course cream-cheese, and a melty vegan cheese.
Sandholt
Laugavegur 36

In this hotly-debated category the competition is tough. Nothing gets passions boiling quite like talk of bread and butter. And still showing the young guns how it’s done is the grand dame of all things baked, Sandholt. Their classic sourdough might be the most well known, but spare some love for their bulgur and Egyptian barley as well. Pastries and viennoiserie is something they excel at and the seasonal Danish, in-house chocolate and artisan sodas make for more than just a bakery experience.

Runners-Up
Deig Workshop
Tryggvagata 18
Deig’s strength is its consistency—be it the handmade doughnuts, bagels or airy brioche-like crullers. We are suckers for their potato loaves, which the panel exclaims are “especially good with egg salad.” And for early risers, this is the perfect breakfast spot with their poorman’s offer of a coffee, doughnut and bagel for just 1000 ISK!

Brauð & Co.
Multiple locations
The wicked curse of expansion woes has struck our favourite bakery, but fret not! While the kanill croissant snobur can be a hit or miss, their classic snúður continue to be as stellar as snúður can be a hit or miss, their classic sourdough. Their bulgur and Egyptian barley as well. Pastries and viennoiserie is something they excel at and the seasonal Danish, in-house chocolate and artisan sodas make for more than just a bakery experience.

Previous Winners
2018: Sandholt
2017: Sandholt and Brauð & Co.
2015-7: Sandholt

Austur-Indíafjélagið
Hverfisgastraði 56

Richly decorated with warm teak and antiques, this dinner-only establishment is ideal to perk up those taste buds after days of eating, ahem, milder fare in these parts. While the festive Diwali menu “is such good value for money,” as one panelist quipped, others swore by the smoky Tandoori chicken. Serving some of the best lamb dishes in town, the classic Raan Manjarabad is a whole shank slow cooked to fall-off-the-bone tenderness. Vegans and vegetarians aren’t a mere afterthought and the selection of breads exceeds that of standard naans.

Runners-Up
Himalayan Spice
Laugavegur 60A
Other downtown restaurants might scream tourist trap, but this little slice of Nepal on Laugavegur is anything but. The thakali thali is “the only way to do justice” to the light, hearty fare of Himalayan cuisine—subtle, fresh and wholesome. The momos are worth trying too, a perfect foil for nippy days.

Previous Winners
2018-9: Ban Thai
2016-8: Austur-Indíafjélagið
2015: Gandhi

Ban Thai
Laugavegur 130

Thai club rules say no chopsticks and no “adjustment of spice levels” and Ban Thai isn’t afraid to curtly remind you so. Pad Thai is passé, so you are better off doing as our panel suggests, and order the #107, the deep fried chilli shrimp. The juicy crustaceans are rendered sweeter and juicier cooked within their shells. “You eat the crisp shells and gnaw off the little legs, you get more of that chilli crust that way,” shares a die-hard loyalist on our panel. When a restaurant’s been around for three decades like Ban Thai, it is indeed an accomplishment.

Runners-Up
Mai Thai
Laugavegur 118
Dining here can be a reminder of Queen’s style joints, part store-part restaurant. The band of ladies churn out quick Thai classics spanning spicy larbs dusted with toasted rice powder to easy going Thai curries, be it with tofu or plump shrimp. One panelist pressed her love for them by admitting she “eats there more than she should.”

Previous Winners
2015-8: Ban Thai
2015-8: Fönix

Fine
Rauðarárstígur 33

Did you know that the Chinese kanji for fine recalls that of rice/meal? This proper Sichuanese restaurant packs a wallop of flavour, heat and textural delight in each of their selections. The simply stir-fried hot and sour potato matchsticks and vegetables are exactly the kind of subtlety that has been absent from Chinese cuisines in these parts and puts to rest doubts that this is only a fiery spicy cuisine. Other must-ties are the beef in hot oil, yu-shiang chicken. The panel loves “the chewy wood ear mushrooms” and the hand pulled noodles. Most dishes are vegan and lactose free, making this little gem accessible to everyone.

Runners-Up
Fönix
Bíldshöfði 12
Family-run Fönix has something for everyone. The dedicated vegan menu is a joy-ride of tastes and textures—the mapo-tofu has pleasingly jiggly cubes of tofu and the fish fragrant eggplants are silky. The lunch buffet is also a notch above similar fare.

Previous Winners
2018-9: Fönix
2018-9: Ban Thai
Dining
Iceland’s not cheap so it better be good

Best Coffeehouse

Reykjavík Roasters
Ásmundarsalur, Freyjugata 41

While Reykjavík Roasters’ mothership is undeniably at Brautarholt 2, it’s hard to beat the serene elegance of their Ásmundarsalur setting. Built in 1933 by one of Iceland’s most beloved sculptors, predictably, the building is a sculptor’s dream and filled with natural light. According to our panel: “It’s that proper third wave coffee millennial cup plus a privately-owned art space.”

Runner-Up

Emilie’s Reykjavik
Hverfisgata 88

A cafe and lunch spot, this cute little French import is endearing. More substantial than being just a caffeine fix, the freshly baked scones are what you should be after here. We are particularly partial to the goat cheese with spinach. Washed down with some excellent brews and a neat little selection of coffee, it makes for pleasant people-watching and tummy pleasing.

Newcomer

Kaktus Espresso Bar
Vítastígur 12

One of those “blink and you miss it” neighbourhood cafés that make the humans huddled in Reykjavík’s snowy embrace feel they’re living in a vibrant metropolis. “It’s cute, and with a nice lunch deal. I especially love the soup,” one of our panellists offered. Part café, part cactus sanctuary, this is one for all you wallflowers out there.

Previous Winners

2018: Bismút
2018: Kaffihús Vesturbærjar
2017: Reykjavík Roasters

Best Sushi

Sushi Social / Osushi
Joint Winners

Sushi Social
Pingholtsstræti 5

By regularly showcasing Wagyu beef and tuna at one of their many festive specials, Sushi Social keeps things interesting throughout the year. An homage to Icelandic sushi, this is where classic sushi meets our love for sauces. And it is still a happy union. The rainbow hued tropical drinks and the peppy music only add to that happy island vibe.

Osushi
Tryggvagata 13

Before you turn your nose up at conveyor belt sushi, hear us out. This is a fantastic way to try several different plates, stumble upon a new love—in their crispy AF Japanese wings—or determine your least favourites. The quick turnover means the sushi was made minutes ago, a win-win in a land of cold rolls. Past... this is bound to be a hit with kids and we spotted several happy young diners practicing their chopstick skills.

Runner-Up

Fish Company
Vesturgata 2a

Fish Company has recently expanded their sushi selection, particularly during lunch service as a small and a large portion. The usual suspects of classic salmon nigiri, maki rolls and sashimi are so beautifully presented, it surely counts as a cure for workday blues.

Newcomer

Jömm
Kringlan 4-12

Jömm plays with the entire range of Dumph! variants, making soy sexy. What elevates a store shelf buy, though, are the clever iterations of Dumph! burgers, bowls and wraps satisfying every kind of craving. The icing on that (vegan) cake however are the accoutrements and vegan versions of a whole host of sauces, with the aioli deserving special mention.

Previous Winners

2016-7: Fish Market
2015: SuZushii
2014: Sushisamba

Best Vegan Meal

Mat Bar
Hverfisgata 26

The vegan tasting menu has, in the past year, taken hold of Reykjavík, with many restaurants giving their take on the plant-based phenomenon. Mat Bar’s iteration is particularly notable, serving up a variety of both on- and off-menu dishes that have found success with herbivores and omnivores alike. With five dishes made for sharing, the menu is Icelandic-sourced and Nordic inspired, with delectable nods to other cuisines.

Runner-Up

SPES
Grandi Mathöll, Grandagarður 16

For too long now, vegans have had to contend with stereotypes translating to insipid restaurant offerings. Not so at SPES. Chickpeas are pulverised, dressed intensely and served atop crusty bread. Their tacos would fool meat eaters and the scrambled tofu on toast mimics eggs. Plus with most everything priced well under 2000 ISK it makes SPES quite a draw, vegan or not.

Previous Winners

2018: Sumac
2018: Skál & Mat Bar
2016-7: Kaffi Vinyl
2015: Teni
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Sumac Grill + Drinks & Skál

Joint Winners

Sumac Grill + Drinks, Laugavegur 28

Sumac's vibrancy seeps into everything—the food, ambience, service and its mix of diners across age groups. Chef Párainn's love for Lebanese-Levant flavours is reflected in the menu. By focusing on flavour profiles unique to the cuisines, it is a successful transplant from Beirut to Reykjavík. For an indulgent spread, we recommend getting all the dips and a few flatbreads. Mop it up with the excellent grilled lamb chops (commendable for the absence of sous vide) and the now cult whole roasted cauliflower. Our only pet peeve is the kitchen's mysterious affinity for smooth purees. Sumac, we love you but give us a gritty muhammara and the silky strands of eggplants.

Skál, Hlemmur Mathöll, Laugavegur 107

What do we say about this Bib Gourmand awarded restaurant that defies labels? Is it a gastropub or an experimental kitchen? Chef Gísli's passion for cooking from the island permeates both the food and drink. The cod wings will have you weep with joy, the charr is a buttery cocoon of comfort, and the lamb ribs unctuous. Pair with guest brews, or natural wines... or maybe a pineapple weed cocktail—Eiriksson Brasserie mutates the classic brasserie concept with a menu that also reflects this divergent style. On it, crème brûlée sit cheek-to-cheek with tonka bean ganache. You can pick out classics like duck breast orange or wander into the hinterlands of langoustine tempura and enoki over charcoal flatbread. Add to that the 4,000-bottle wine cellar encased in a former bank vault and you got yourself one odd duck.

Runner-Up

Eiriksson Brasserie
Laugavegur 77

Eiriksson Brasserie mutates the classic brasserie concept with a menu that also reflects this divergent style. On it, crème brûlée sit cheek-to-cheek with tonka bean ganache. You can pick out classics like duck breast orange or wander into the hinterlands of langoustine tempura and enoki over charcoal flatbread. Add to that the 4,000-bottle wine cellar encased in a former bank vault and you got yourself one odd duck.

Grillmarket
Lækjargata 2a

Grillmarket is a stalwart in the Reykjavík fine dining scene and for good reason. Their locally-sourced menu continues to surprise and inspire after all these years. We'd recommend going for a set menu—their ‘Trip To The Countryside’ is a particular favourite—and letting the chefs go to town.

Previous Winners
2018: Grillið (RIP)
2015-8: Dill

Best Place For A Fancy Meal

Dill
Laugavegur 58

Dill 3.0, as it’s popularly known, holds Reykjavík’s only Michelin Star. The beloved restaurant cleverly curates an entire experience, be it the absence of branding except for subtle flourishes in the letterpress menu cards, the cutlery jar instead of place settings and the eclectic playlist. The food—a series of signature snacks—evokes a sense of Nordic nostalgia, so expect precise culinary references that’ll have you mulling them over long after digestion. Even as the winning wine and dinner service are bookended by precision food, it is all designed to put you at ease, and really rattle fine dining norms. And that it does, with aplomb.

Runners-Up

Eiriksson Brasserie
Laugavegur 77

Eiriksson Brasserie mutates the classic brasserie concept with a menu that also reflects this divergent style. On it, crème brûlée sit cheek-to-cheek with tonka bean ganache. You can pick out classics like duck breast orange or wander into the hinterlands of langoustine tempura and enoki over charcoal flatbread. Add to that the 4,000-bottle wine cellar encased in a former bank vault and you got yourself one odd duck.

Best Family Restaurant

Hamborgarafabrikkan
Höfðatorg & Kringlan

Kids’ Choice

The Hamborgarafabrikkan burger chain is 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. 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. There’s a wide range of juicy square burgers, veggie options and house sauces to choose from, with comfortable seating and friendly service.

Parents’ Choice

Osushi
Tryggvagata 13

It isn’t always sunshine and rainbows when dining with young wards. At Osushi, the entertainment is taken care of by its engaging conveyor belt format. The selection manages to please safe and adventurous palates alike, so whether its toddler friendly hosomaki or play-with-your-food eda-mame or spicy tuna rolls or more than acceptable sashimi, there’s something for everyone. Chopstick skills are an enviable bonus, what’s not to like?

Newcomer

Laundromat
Austurstræti 9

With the same branding, focus and vibe as its original predecessor, Laundromat is bringing families back out from their hidey holes. The basement play area is brand spanking new, clean and ready to satiate any play time demands of its young customers, while their parents can enjoy some respite. The tasty burgers are just a bonus really.

Previous Winners
2018-9: Hamborgarafabrikkan
2017: Jamie’s Italian
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* You only need to type the URL in once
**Icelandic Street Food**

Laekjargata 8

Plokkfiskur, a fish stew cooked with boiled potatoes and bechamel, is traditionally eaten with heavily buttered rugbræður (dark, dense rye bread) and is on everyone’s must-try list when they visit Iceland. At Icelandic Street Food you can have all this and more—shellfish soup, traditional kjötsúpa (lamb soup), the aforementioned ‘Fisherman’s Special’, hjónabandssæla (rhubarb-oatmeal crumble pie) and pancakes for about 2000 ISK. The clincher, however, is that buying one shellfish soup allows you to have a refill of the lamb soup, and then the fish and then the dessert and it goes on! Simply put, an impossible offer to beat. The barnyard funk is especially ambient as you sit and sip on your lamb soup like a farmer of yore.

**Best Cheap Meal**

**Noodle Station**

Laugavegur 103 b Krínglan

If you, like the martians in Bill and Ted’s Bogus Journey, have only the word “station” in your vocabulary, you are halfway to naming this celebrated cheap meal in Reykjavík: Noodle Station. You can smell the coriander for metres around this no-nonsense space, and whenever the temperature drops you can see the conden-soup-sation on the windows. Their menu is simple—noodle soup with vegetables, noodle soup with chicken, and noodle soup with beef.

**Previous Winners**

- 2018: Lamb Street Food
- 2018: Icelandic Street Food
- 2017: Bike Cave

**Dining**

*If they’re over 7mm wide they’re chips, not fries*

**Best Brunch**

**The Coocoo’s Nest**

Grandagarður 23

It’s with good reason that this family-run restaurant has made such a strong impact on the local brunch scene. Such is the popularity of their sumptuous fare that they now offer brunch starting Fridays. The pancakes are American perfection. That award-winning sourdough is put to good use under poached eggs bathed in a silky hollandaise tickled with blue cheese, the wreck-your-bank-account avocado toast, or just simply grilled and served alongside an omelette that feeds six. We kid, but only partially. Iris, one of the owners, insists people leave well fed and stuffed. And even though Luna Flores extends the seating availability, it’s best to make a reservation.

**Runners-Up**

**Fish Company**

Vesturgata 2a

Fish Company is the definitive seafood restaurant in Iceland. Around the world inspired tasting menus are a great way to try the best the waters around Iceland have to offer, from Atlantic cod served Japanese style to harissa stocked wolf-fish. Many chefs have cut their teeth in this very kitchen. The restaurant also has fantastic lunch deals. With an eye on sustainability, they are also limiting their serving of the now overfished Icelandic langoustine, a laudable effort.

**Previous Winners**

- 2018: Fish Company
- 2018: Fish Company & Fish Market
- 2015-7: Fish Company
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Best Lunch Place

Mímír
Hótel Saga

Following a sprightly makeover, Mímír is garnering accolades for its extremely affordable lunch offers. Where else would you dine on a two-course meal; from lamb saddle to roast cauliflower to the best roasted potatoes, cooked by some of the most promising chefs, for just 2500 ISK? Sure the prices have risen slightly since they opened, but the fast paced, suitable for lunch service, and all the flourish of fine-dining makes you forget impending deadlines. That alone makes them a clear winner.

Runners-Up

Jómfrúin
Laugavegur 4

This outpost of Denmark in Iceland upholds its Danish tradition of smørrebrød uncompromisingly. You might want to skip the akvavit for lunch, but it pairs so well with Jacob’s Plaice (who’re we kidding, you deserve the schnaps!). Perhaps the shrimp pyramid is more to your liking. Or the velvety Danish paté. Once you’ve been seated and treated like the royalty that you are, you’ll see why this was a panel favourite.

Best Late-Night Bite

Mandi
Veltusund 3b

We might as well just call this “The Mandi category.” Whether it’s their full-flavoured meats, their extensive vegan options or their idiosyncratic social media messages, this Syrian kebab place stole Reykjavík’s heart. Crispy falafels, lamb shawarmas, teeny desserts, or a pack of ciggies; Mandi’s got you. If there’s any doubt that these gentlemen were destined for true kebab greatness, consider that one of them is called Hál!

Runners-Up

Devitos
Laugavegur 126

Even bad pizza is good pizza and Devitos is better than bad, it’s good. Another staple of the Icelandic late night bites for over 25 years, this place is sure to sort you out at the end of a long shift at the hotel or a long line at the bar bathroom. Now stop your yapping and grab a slice with pepperoni, pineapple, and cream cheese like a real native.

Newcomer

Fjallkonan
Hafnarstraeti 1-3

What is it about playful drinks housed in popcorn bags, fluffy sugar clouds of cotton candy, ferris wheels of doll-house desserts and tiers of colourful hummus that makes hanging out at places that much more fun? Fjallkonan is the hottest new spot for large groups or anyone hankering for a hands-on engaging experience. That the food tastes delicious, the cocktails inspired, cozy seating and the service knows how to keep the good times rollin’ makes this our favourite place to head out with your besties and frenemies alike.

Best Place To Go With A Group Of Friends

Tapas Barinn
Vesturgata 3b

Peppy music, check. Tropical drinks, check. Platters upon extensive platters of copious amounts of Spanish-inspired tapas, check. Service that never falters. The Gin selection is expansive enough to warrant revisits and the brews on tap are perfect foils to the there’s-something-for-everyone selection of foods.

Best Newcomer

Vínstókin Tíu Sopar
Laugavegur 22

When a chef and restaurateur’s mutual passion for natural wines and quality bar snacks collide, a little gem like Tíu Sopar is born. The wineria (like vermuteria, get it?) is perfect for chat-up-the-barman banter and noisy weeknight street parties, all while noshing aged Tindur with beurre noisette, crackling Padron peppers, charcuterie and the occasional “Fried Chicken” pop-up which should just be a staple dammit!

Previous Winners

2017-8: Mandi
2016: Ali Baba (RIP)
2015: Fish and Chips
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Dining
Greasy burger, or glazed, torched cod head?

Best Ice Cream

Skúbb
Laugarásvegur 1

Nothing quite says ‘live in the moment’ like a melty cone of luscious ice-cream. Did you know that Skúbb only uses milk from Bíobú, a local organic farm? Did you know they are the most non-distinguishable between vegan and dairy ice-cream scoops? That is how vibrant and intense each scoop is at Skúbb. Lately, the panel’s been gushing about the passion fruit with coconut milk, although the dark chocolate and berry sorbets are also not to be missed. The waffle cone itself has improved dramatically, with a shattering crispness. With a small curated selection that reflects the seasons, this imaginarium of joy churns its head, with a slight chill to the air between vegan and dairy ice-cream. Did you know that Skúbb only uses milk from Bíobú, a local organic farm? Did you know they are the most non-distinguishable between vegan and dairy ice-cream scoops? That is how vibrant and intense each scoop is at Skúbb. Lately, the panel’s been gushing about the passion fruit with coconut milk, although the dark chocolate and berry sorbets are also not to be missed. The waffle cone itself has improved dramatically, with a shattering crispness. With a small curated selection that reflects the seasons, this imaginarium of joy churns its head, with a slight chill to the air between vegan and dairy ice-cream.

Runners-Up

Isbúð Vesturbæjar
Hagamel 67
A cultural centre, blitzer of ice-cream shakes, dipper of chocolate dips in assorted toppings and maker of the best gamli-ís (old school water-based ice cream) beloved Isbúð Vesturbæjar is basically an institution. Nothing quite says you are a local like going here during a mild storm, getting your dairy fix for the slow biltur ahead.

Previous Winners
2018-8: Skúbb
2017: Valdis

Best Tasting Menu

Óx Reykjavík
Inside Sumac, Laugavegur 28

An intimate dining experience unlike any other, Óx seats only 12 diners each night in an intimate chef’s table setting. There is little room for error in this gastronomic drama where everything unfolds in full view. Whole roasted duck carved exquisitely, whole grilled monkfish passed family style, delicate morsels of langoustine paired with beers and wines, all while you chat away with the chefs and fellow diners. The intimacy enhances the experience, and as the wine pours it starts to feel like you know each other well. Once the dust settles, it’s time to leave and you do so a tad bit shaken as you walk out from the tiny timber cabin into the bustling Sumac.

Runners-Up

Dill
Laugavegur 59

Turning the tasting menu concept on its head, Dill features a singular seafood and/or meat across multiple courses in order to really honour the produce in its entirety. Expect to be dazzled by the foreplay—the onion cake is gaining rightful notoriety as is the wine pairing, in that there is no pairing at all, but ‘a’ wine to accompany a selection of dishes, allowing you to disown for yourself what pairing you enjoy best.

Previous Winners
2018: Marshall House
2019: La Primavera

Best Italian

La Primavera
Marshall House, Grandagarður 20

With the re-opening of La Primavera, the restaurant has earned loyalists both old and new. Sitting pretty by the Grandi harbour in Marshall House, it is particularly popular with the lunch crowd. Fair warning however, this is lunch at an Italian Nonna’s house, meaning you’ll be dawdling out of there stuffed to the gills. Dinner however is an elegant affair. The focus is on coaxing maximum flavour from seasonal ingredients at their prime by doing as little as possible. You might start the year with pan-fried fresh cod, and then move onto light summer salads, perhaps grilled broccoli, and in the fall, pasta woven with wild mushrooms. A right royal treat however is the truffle (from San Miniato) festival the restaurant intends to continue hosting.

Runners-Up

The Coccoo’s Nest
Grandagarður 23

Between their brunches and breads, it’s easy to forget that Coccoo’s is really a Cali-Italian place at heart. The sourdough pizzas deserve particular mention, as do the appetisers that intend to continue hosting.

Previous Winners
2018: Gríllil aug (RIP)
2017-8: Dill

Eiriksson Brasserie
Laugavegur 77

It’s hard to categorise Eiriksson with its Italian-French leaning menu. The interiors and menu whisper nouveau riche indulgence, the ‘fancy’ ingredients are a giveaway. But all these reservations aside, they dish out a mean veal, good steaks and a smattering of pasta and pizzas.

Previous Winners
2018: La Primavera
2018: Marshall House
2019: Matarkjallarinn

Previous Winners

By foregoing frivolous add-ons, Matarkjallarinn lets the lamb speak for itself. Aðalstræti 2

Aðalstræti 2

Matarkjallarinn lets the lamb speak for itself. Whether you order the grilled lamb chops or the popular shoulder it will be cooked to tender succulence. Icelandic lamb is prized for its clean, grassy flavour and here it is showcased in a lamb is prized for its clean, grassy cooked to tender succulence. Icelandic

chops or the popular shoulder it will be jallarinn lets the lamb speak for itself. By foregoing frivolous add-ons, Matarkjallarinn

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Joy And Jollof Rice
Introducing Ogolúgo, 101's only African restaurant

Words: Poppy Askham  Photo: Art Bicnick

Ogolúgo means “welcome” in Hausa and the name couldn’t be more fitting for Laugavegur’s latest culinary arrival. Since its early July opening, the team behind the restaurant have been determined to deliver a taste of Africa to 101 by offering a host of authentic dishes from attieke to domuda, all served with a generous helping of laughter and hospitality.

Filling a gap in the market
“I want it to feel like home, that was the main idea,” explains Alex Jallow, Ogolúgo’s owner, waiter, and resident TikTok superstar. “The taste of the food, the smell of the spices, the crowds of people—when you walk in you feel like you’re home, like you’re in Africa.”

Alex hails from the Gambia and Senegal region of West Africa, but grew up in the U.K. and has been living in Iceland for over ten years. “I love Iceland, but I just felt that that African touch was missing in this country, so when I was able to make it happen, it was a dream come true.”

Before taking up the role of restaurant frontman, Alex worked as a chef. “I got my love for food from my mum. I was always in the kitchen, running in and stealing food from her whilst she was cooking,” he explains. “When I was 11, I would always ask to go to the market. My mum would ask me what I wanted to buy, but I just wanted to go to the market so I could get close to all the different ingredients. That’s the kind of person I’ve been ever since I was little. I’ve always loved food.”

He suddenly jumps up from the table and disappears into the kitchen, emerging with a plate of jollof rice served with crispy plantain and grilled tilapia. He also brings the rather reluctant head chef Dawda in tow. “This is West Africa’s favourite dish, but it can be found all across the continent” Dawda explains. “I have lots of favorite recipes to make and I’m always experimenting, but at the end of the day I’ll always love jollof rice.”

Service with a smile
Although the food is superb, what really stands out from a dining experience at Ogolúgo is the atmosphere, largely thanks to the overbrimming enthusiasm of the restaurant’s owner. Alex practically leaps from table to table, frequently breaking out into dance as he delivers steaming meat pies and huge bowls of okro soup. It’s this exuberance that has earned him hundreds of thousands of views on the restaurant’s hit TikTok account—username ogolugo101—where he puts his own vivacious spin on the trends of the day, attracting a younger crowd of dedicated diners in the process.

His cheerfulness is infectious; within moments of entering the restaurant, you’re grinning along with him and even agreeing to make a TikTok cameo.

“Trust me, I don’t even know where I get my energy from myself and I’m in here every single day,” he laughs. “It’s all about happiness. There’s so much positive spin on the trends of the day, attracting a younger crowd of dedicated diners in the process. His cheerfulness is infectious; within moments of entering the restaurant, you’re grinning along with him and even agreeing to make a TikTok cameo.

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Book your seat at FlyOverIceland.com
Flæði
Vesturgata 17
Flæði is back! The art venue—whose name translates to ‘Flow’—has finally re-opened in a new central Vesturgata spot and we could not be more jazzed. Since their humble beginnings last year on Gréttisgata, the team behind the space has sought to showcase marginalised artists and counter the bourgeois elite gallery culture found in other spaces here and abroad. Alongside exhibitions, they host concerts, events, and basically anything else under the sun. Here’s to flowing and growing, friends. Long live!

HJC

Mama
Laugavegur 2
Nothing tastes better than ethics, which is why we can’t wait to try the rainbow salad and “nicecream” bowls at Mama, a plant-based restaurant with big dreams. The company is proudly environmentalist—they hope to use their profits to invest into land so that the kitchen can become self-sufficient. The restaurant also doubles as a wellness space offering a whole host of yoga sessions and breathing workshops. Have your plant-based prayers been answered?

PA

Gaeta Gelato
Aðalstræti 6
Ice cream is a longstanding culinary staple for Icelanders. But for a long time, Reykjavik has lacked one of the dessert’s most well-known, and perhaps most delicious, varieties: gelato. Enter Gaeta Gelato. Newly opened on Ingólfstorg, it is owned by newly-arrived Italian transplants with nearly 25 years of experience as gelatai. Their artisanal and authentic flavours, from blueberry to Piedmontese hazelnut, are made with fresh and well-sourced Icelandic ingredients. Though only recently opened, Gaeta has already won over a crowd of committed regulars.

NB

Taj Mahal
Tryggvagata 26
A nice compliment to fancier establishments like Shalimar or Austur-Índíaefjelagíð, Taj Mahal fills a previously unoccupied niche in Reykjavik’s South Asian culinary scene: a simple, classic, relatively affordable Indian restaurant with staple curry, tikka masala, and tandoori dishes served alongside portions of fresh rice or naan, to be washed down with a Kingfisher beer, one of India’s best-known brews. Eat in or take advantage of Taj Mahal’s quick and affordable delivery in the capital area if you’re feeling lazy.

NB

Freddi
Bankastræti 12
It’s the Return Of The Freddi: 2 Freddi 2 Furious. The Freddi Strikes Back. Yes, rejoice thirsty gamer boys, the iconic Freddi arcade has returned—after a jump around various downtown locales—taking up residence in the newly renovated upstairs patio/shed of Prikið. Decked out with Pacman, pinball, old school gaming signs and a new brightly coloured mural, it’s a revelation for those who are tired of this newfangled PUBG nonsense. We bow down, Freddi. Please don’t leave us again.

HJC

Duck & Rose
Austurstræti 14
Duck & Rose is the hip and happening place that opened across the street from Apótek in May. The new cafe serves light fare influenced by French and Italian cuisine. With neon signs and roses on the walls, the chic cafe is certainly inspired by romance. Try the duck pizza.

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SKÓLAVÖRROUSTÍGUR 23 • 101 REYKJAVÍK

"Your first and last stop"

BRAUD & CO
Drinking
Tippsy or wasted, the choice is yours

Let’s not beat around the bush: Icelanders love to drink. In fact, there is probably nothing Icelanders like to do more than drink, which could very well be why this country doesn’t have a space program. 2019 was a big year in the downtown drinking scene, with some old favourites closing and some strong newcomers opening. Some facts of life, however, remained the same: alcohol is still expensive, but that doesn’t stop us from partying. How else would we have sex?

Best Goddamn Bar

Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

Three times the charm! Yes, for the third year, the Reykjavík institution of Kaffibarinn is Grapevine’s Best Goddamn Bar. Are you surprised? How could you be? While many Reykjavík bars come and go and redecorate and rename and put on bells and whistles, Kaffibarinn has stayed the course for almost three decades—because it’s just a really good, reliable place. It plays host to Reykjavík’s artistic intellectuals, creative talents, and, well, downtown characters and consistently puts on a show. Basically, you’ll never have a boring night at KB. It’s no ordinary watering hole.

Newcomer

Röntgen
Hverfisgata 12
A bar that’s open but a few months winning the runner-up spot in the Best Goddamn Bar category? Quelle surprise! Well, go to Röntgen on a weekend night and you’ll understand why. It’s a party bar in the purest sense, with a rowdy dance floor, delicious cocktails and a fanbase that’s just growing and growing. We stan.

Runner-Up

Gaukurinn
Tryggvagata 22
With dim lights, leather sofas, and gender-neutral bathrooms, Gaukurinn is the preferred hangout for the unorthodox Reykjavík bars, so if you’re looking for like-minded peeps, here you go. The venue hosts everything from metal to underground rap to drag extravaganzas to stand-up comedy, so you never really know what you’re gonna get on any given night.

Previous Winners
2018: Veður
2018: Prikið
2017: KEX Hostel
2016: Loft Hostel

Best Place To Start The Night

Veður
Klapparstígur 33
For the second time in a row, Veður has snatched up the Best Place To Start The Night gold medal. And for good reason. This charming, low-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that grabbed each member of the panel’s heart. “There’s something casual about Veður in that you feel fine relaxing and chatting but it’s still a nice and sophisticated bar,” one panelist explained. “But that said, the first time I went they were playing a new wave punk playlist, so it’s not your average quiet cocktail bar.”

Runners-Up

Loft
Bankastræti 7
“Loft is perfectly situated between the two areas of downtown and their Happy Hour lasts until 21:00,” one panel member raved. “Their service is also great, and their balcony is fantastic in the summer.” It’s no wonder the hostel’s members love to chill out on the Prikið floor, “one panel member said. Their outdoor smoking area should be applauded too. If you want a more intimate venue than the Prikið floor, you’ll always return home to Kaffibarinn, one panel member explained. “You’ll eventually find me crying on the steps of the Prikið floor.”

Miai
Hverfisgata 33
Miai has a lot going for it—an amazing interior, delicious cocktails, and a relaxed atmosphere. It’s a party bar in the purest sense, with a rowdy dance floor, delicious cocktails and a fanbase that’s just growing and growing. "We stan."

Previous Winners
2018: Veður
2018: Prikið
2017: KEX Hostel
2016: Loft Hostel

Best Place To End The Night

Prikið
Bankastræti 12

Prikið is the bar version of the “I’m going to bed early tonight vs. me at 3 a.m.” meme. At 22:00 you’ll have a bunch of regulars relaxing at the bar sipping brews, but arrive at 3:00 and it’s Project X. “It’s a younger crowd, but there’s always a party on weekends and if there’s a concert going on, well, you won’t find a more intimate venue than the Prikið floor,” one panel member said. Their outdoor smoking area should be applauded too. If you want a more intimate venue than the Prikið floor, you’ll always return home to Kaffibarinn, one panel member explained. “You’ll eventually find me crying on the steps of the Prikið floor.”

Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

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Previous Winners
2018: Kaffibarinn
2018: Prikið
2017: Kaffibarinn
2016: Núrø (RIP)
2015: Paloma Basement (RIP)
American Bar
Austurstraeti 8

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

BrewDog
Frakkastigur 8

To call the panel passionate about BrewDog would be an understatement. “To be honest, I was prepared to hate BrewDog because it’s a chain,” one panellist admits, smiling. “But I was wrong. I absolutely, absolutely love it.” The Scottish outpost offers low-lit booths, sofa seating and a thriving list of beers. At any given time, there’s a choice of ten or more of the BrewDog brand and a rotating selection of Icelandic craft brews. Note: They’ve also got fantastic wings and cauliflower wings too!

Runners-Up

BrewDog
Austurstraeti 9

Skúli Craft Bar
Abakjóstr 9

For a quiet drink, the real beer nerds will tuck into—as per an authentic Spanish dwelling that serves up a delightful experience, it’s easy to lose yourself in those places you should expect to set foot in to—as per an authentic Spanish craft beer bar. Their live music and lively atmosphere make this a must-visit for any beer lover.

Runners-Up

Vínstúkan Tíu Sopar
Laugavegur 27

Runners-Up

Spánski Ingólfssstræti 8

Spánski barinn—“Spanish Bar” in English—is a dim-light bodega-style dwelling that serves up a delightful selection of wine and tapas. It’s one of those places you should expect to settle in to—as per an authentic Spanish experience, it’s easy to lose yourself in a long afternoon siesta.

Previous Winners

2018: American Bar / English Pub
2018: American Bar
2017: Lebowsk Bar
2016: American Bar
2014-5: Bjarni Fel

Lebowsk Bar
Laugavegur 20a

Honour “The Dude” at this laid-back and unpretentious locale that is the best of both worlds during sports games. Some people will get rowdy; others will stay chill, so you’re certain to find your crowd as you munch on some of the best burgers in Reykjavík. Ps. If you’re feeling fancy, pick up a White Russian.

Runners-Up

English Pub
Austurstraeti 12

If it’s football you’re hankering for, go to those that know it best: the English. This pub serves up a dark wooden Anglo-kitsch interior, a long bar with plenty of staff, and loads of comfortable seating, and, best of all, a plethora of screens. Make sure to yell loudly and berate Þorlör Sigurðsson when he misses his penalty—you wanted an authentic pub experience, right?

Previous Winners

2018: Slippbarinn
2018: Mikkeller & Friends (RIP)
2017: Microbar
2016: Mikkeller & Friends (RIP)

BrewDog
Austurstraeti 8

To call the panel passionate about BrewDog would be an understatement. “To be honest, I was prepared to hate BrewDog because it’s a chain,” one panellist admits, smiling. “But I was wrong. I absolutely, absolutely love it.” The Scottish outpost offers low-lit booths, sofa seating and a thriving list of beers. At any given time, there’s a choice of ten or more of the BrewDog brand and a rotating selection of Icelandic craft brews. Note: They’ve also got fantastic wings and cauliflower wings too!

Runners-Up

Port 9
Veghúsastigur 9

Cosy and tucked away with a secretive vibe, Port 9 is a true hidden gem, hosting a delicious wine list as well as potentially the most intimate atmosphere in Reykjavík. “It’s a place not a lot of people know about,” one panel member raved. “You feel like you’re going abroad—walking into a bar in San Francisco or Barcelona.” The panel also praised its balcony, calling it the ideal locale for sipping some Pino in the summer sun. “It’s also a great place to bring a Tinder date.”

Runners-Up

Miami
Hverfisgata 33

With a sharp aesthetic that’s miles ahead of any other joint in town, Miami serves up pure vice with a splash of cosmopolitanism and a dedicated basement ping-pong room. Their cocktail menu—designed by master mixologist Martin Gabeleik—takes your favourite classics and mixes them up into complex 21st century drinks. If that’s not enough, they also offer Duba Libre on draft. So sit back, drink, and you’ll feel just like you’re in ‘Scarface’—minus the mountains of cocaine.

Runners-Up

Jungle Cocktail Bar
Austurtraeti 9

They’ve got a cocktail titled, “To Kale A Mockingbird,” one panel member laughs. “It’s a tequila and kale cocktail. How can you beat that?” Jungle, though very new to the scene, has already made a large impact—with more than their punny names. Helmed by vets of the Reykjavík mixology scene, it’s truly one to watch in 2020.

Previous Winners

2019: Slippbarinn
2018: Hverfisgata 12 (RIP)
2015-6: Apetek
2014: Slippbarinn
Drinking
Why have just one happy hour when you can have nine?

Best Place For Live Music

The Reykjavík Grapevine

Misþyrming—played their first shows there.
and many of the biggest and edgiest Icelandic acts—from Hatari to
Gaukurinn has consistently been on the forefront of Icelandic music,
gig goers and features gender neutral bathrooms (and free tampons)!
centricities. It also operates a proactive safe space policy for LGBTQ+
when you can have nine?

2014-5: Café Rosenberg (RIP)

When you can have nine?

Harpa
Austurbakka 2
When it comes to a grand musical experience—cushy seats, bubbly champagne, posh clientele, the works—you just can't compare to Reykjavík's iconic concert hall. Behind the glittering glass facade, Harpa plays host to a diverse roster, from the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra's regular performances to biweekly jazz nights and the occasional famous superstar. Don't it feel nice to be fancy?

Previous Winners

2018: IDNO (RIP)
2017-8: Húrra (RIP)
2015: Café Rosenberg (RIP)

Best Happy Hour

Kaffibrennslan
Laugavegur 21

The former Hemmi og Valdi is still a firm favourite for those who like a bargain beer. At 550 ISK a pop for beers and 750 ISK for wines from 16:00-20:00, in a beautiful, comfortable wooden house, you can't really argue. "It's such a nice house," said one panellist. "I had my first snog there. It's cheap and easy, with a really good vibe." The panel also praised the "location, location, location. It has a perfect outdoor area for summer, and you can sit upstairs in the rafters in winter. Cheap beer and a nice place to sit, what more could you want?"

Runners-Up

Mengi
Öðinsgata 2

You never know what you're going to get at Mengi. The venue is known for their brilliant and eclectic programming. On any given night you might catch an intimate low-fi electronica release or an experimental cowbell symphony. For those looking for the avant-garde in the city, you've found it.

Previous Winners

2019: Pablo Discobar
2018: Veður
2017: Luna Flórens & BrewDog

Best Newcomer Bar

Röntgen
Hverfisgata 12

Here we are—another unanimous winner! Since it opened but months ago, Röntgen has charmed the party-goers of Reykjavík. "They are doing something ambitious and fun. It looks great. It has good energy, good cocktails, and a great dance floor," one panel member announced. This prompted a giggle out of another panelist. "Yes, I have done some stupid dancing there and it was always accepted." It's safe to say that there hasn't been a bar that has so quickly found its audience, and we can't wait to see what Röntgen gets up to.

Runners-Up

Vínstúkan Tíu Sopar
Laugavegur 27

Every oenophile—wine connoisseur, for the uninitiated—knows that to truly appreciate wine, it's imperative to find a quiet and undistracting environment. Vínstúkan Tíu Sopar is a cozy basement bar perfectly made for this. The menu is varied, the bartenders knowledgeable, and the location ideal for starting out a night, which made it an easy pick for runner-up.

Jungle Cocktail Bar
Austurstræti 9

Jungle is a back-to-basics mixology haven. Filled with oosy leather couches, the bar has already—in its short time—elevated the downtown cocktail scene with its unusual, innovative, and frankly delicious drinks. Stop by, take a seat, and prepare for some of the wildest mixes you'll find in Reykjavik.

Previous Winners

2020: Havana Club
2019: Luna Flórens & BrewDog
2018: Veður
2017: Pablo Discobar
The LOBSTERHOUSE

Amtmannsstígur 1, Down town center - www.thelobsterhouse.is - Tel: (+34) 561-3303

Stay like a local

[ HOTELS, RESTAURANTS & SPA IN THE HEART OF REYKJAVÍK ]
Yes, there is a bar on Skipholt, and yes, it is one that you need to check out. The RVK Brewing Company has slid under the radar since it opened, but now, we’re here to bring it out of the shadows. The brewery and beer hall offers a varied list of brews, most of which they make themselves locally. “It’s one of those places that you have to know that it’s there because it’s so out of the way,” one panelist explains. “But it’s excellent.”

**Best Kept Secret**

**RVK Brewing Company**

**Skipholt 31**

Iceland’s first food hall is great for a casual night out with your significant other. There are plenty of people buzzing around, giving it a relaxed, social feeling, and there are plenty of options—grab some wine at Kröst, pizza at Flatey, or a cocktail at SKÁL. Yes you’re in public, but the buzz of the hall gives you a certain privacy. Plus, if things get steamy, you’re right next to the bus for an easy ride home. Halló.

**Runners-Up**

**Spánski Bar**

Ingólfsstræti 8

So you’ve got a Tinder date and you’re looking for a quiet locale where you won’t run into your ex, best friend, or baby daddy. Check out basement wine bar Spánski—it’s dark, cozy and full of delicious Spanish vino and tapas. Just remember: No politics. No religion. No weird childhood trauma stories.

**Luna Flórens**

Grandagarður 25

Part flower-child, part spiritual and with a whole lot of whimsy thrown into the mix, this cozy and hand-crafted bar is so intimate it makes you wanna spend the day musing about geodes and tarot card readings. If you’re looking to properly get to know a flame—one you’re astrologically compatible with, of course—grab a house cocktail, a slice of vegan cake, and explore your lunar cycle.

**Previous Winners**

New Category!
The Reykjavík Grapevine
Best of Reykjavík 2020

LoveStar
Andri Snær Magnason, 2013
If you are an Icelander and have already read ‘LoveStar’ by Andri Snær Magnason, read it again. The book not only predicted social media, but also how it would be utilised for marketing on a global level, and how it would eventually disconnect us from reality. When it was published in 2004, ‘LoveStar’ was supposed to be science fiction, but nowadays it’s more science than fiction. Set largely in the North of Iceland, Andri’s masterpiece critiques an Orwellian megacorporation—which is eerily similar to Facebook, to be honest. Now is the perfect time to read it, we believe, because with the way 2020 is going, space burials are probably not too far off. VG

Moonstone: The Boy Who Never Was
Sjón, 2013
Sjón’s book ‘Moonstone: The Boy Who Never Was’ is set in 1918 and explores the dramatic moment when Iceland declared independence from Denmark, which corresponded with the introduction of cinema to Reykjavik, the eruption of Katla and the deadly Spanish flu epidemic. What a time! The plot revolves around a young gay man who is obsessed with cinema during these catastrophic years. There’s forbidden love, imaginative escapism and the horrific reality of a viral pandemic taking over. Sjón possesses a magical realism that dabbles in steampunk, and the book is a short read so expect to throw the novel out the window of your car in anger after the last page before calling Sjón and demanding more information. But don’t despair—you can just pick up Sjón’s ‘Codex 1962’ next. VG

The Blue Blood
Oddný Eir Ævarsdóttir, 2015
An autobiographical novella available on Kindle, ‘The Blue Blood’ charts the author’s journey as she attempts to become pregnant, via various means. Oddný’s search takes her from the corridors of a sperm bank, to a market in South America, to a cave under Eyjafjallajökull; along the way she muses on subjects like masculinity, Nazism, bohemianism, mythology and history. ‘The Blue Blood’ is full of vivid moments, and captures the turbulent joy, seriousness, sadness and absurdity of personhood. JR

Reply to a Letter From Helga
Bergsveinn Birgisson, 2010
Bergsveinn Birgisson’s novel is one of those rare ones that’ll make you love your partner a little bit more. It’s a well-written saga about an old sheep farmer’s regrets when it comes to love. The story is incredibly modern and honest when it comes to the human experience and the terrible regret about love lost. Plus, it also contains some of the best sex scenes ever written in Icelandic. It’s almost mandatory to read this book in the countryside, under the cacophony of a running stream, a golden plover, and a distant, perhaps after reading, weirdly erotic, bleat. VG

BOOK GUIDE
Who Doesn’t Want To Read About Sperm Banks And Erotic Sheep?
Welcome to the Grapevine book club, it’s free
Words: Valur Grettisson & John Rogers Photos: Art Bicnick
Got some downtime? We relate. Pick up one of these Icelandic books to enrich your mind while you wait for this chaos to end.

Got some downtime? We relate. Pick up one of these Icelandic books to enrich your mind while you wait for this chaos to end.
Shopping

Consumerism might be destroying the planet, but hey, you can't walk around naked. While Iceland may not be a worldwide shopping destination due to high prices and its relative isolation, there's still a plethora of unique products that are worth spending your hard-earned dough on. From handmade lopapeysur created by dotings Grandmas to obscure Björk b-b-b-sides, here’s your essential guide to shopping in Reykjavik.

Best Goddamn Store

Fischer
Fischersund 3

Last year, Fischer wowed the 2019 Shopping panel, with the then-newcomer unanimously winning the Best Goddamn Store for its out-of-the-box take on the shopping experience. This year was no different. From packaging-free shampoo to a special perfume section, the store treads the line between a shop and a design space, serving up a sensorily, highly aesthetic environment that makes every purchase feel special. “Fischer changed just what a store could be in Reykjavík,” praised one panellist. “They showed that you could push the limits and do something personalised and different. It’s inspirational.”

Runners-Up

Farmers Market
Laugavegur 37 & Hólmaslóð 2

Many brands have claimed the throne of traditional Icelandic style, but perhaps no brand has done it so luxurious-ly as Farmers Market. With references to the past wrapped up in modern silhouettes and opulent fabrics, Farmers Market serves up traditional Scandinavian fashion for the modern age. For this, they deserve applause.

Stefánssúti/p3
Laugavegur 7

It’s no understatement to say that Stefánssúti/p3 showcases local designers and second-hand high-fashion finds (hello 1980’s Úsúi!) as well as accessories from quirky international brands. “It’s truly a boutique,” one panellist exclaimed. “It’s quirky and zany. You don’t know what you’re going to find but you know it’ll be exciting.”

Previous Winners
2019: Fischer
2018: Harra Reykjavik

Best Design Store

Akkúrat
Laugavegur 80

This local design Mecca has been a stalwart of the Icelandic scene from day one, endeavouring to offer a careful collection of highly curated products showcasing the best of local and Nordic design. Their ever-evolving shelves are filled with fascinating materials, and as soon as the shop’s name was mentioned, panellists instantly and eagerly began sharing some of their favourite finds. “You’ll always find something unique at Akkúrat,” one panellist cheered. “They also present new and off-the-beaten-path designers, so things feel one-of-a-kind.” In December, the shop opened a second location up on Laugavegur. We can, therefore, only imagine how they will thrive in 2020.

Runners-Up

Hönnunarsafnið
Garðatorg 1, Garðabær

The Museum Of Design And Applied Art offers a quirky array of design objects and books, some related to the exhibits within, some completely random. For extra oomph, they also have a workshop inside where you can watch designers create right in front of your eyes.

GK Reykjavík
Tryggvagata 21

GK Reykjavík has long been a favourite of the trendy Reykjavík fashionista sect for special occasions, though it’s never won a Grapevine award until today. “It’s truly a boutique,” a panel member declared. The panel also praised the shops’ new location in Hafnartorg.

Previous Winners
2017-2018: Akkúrat
2016: Kraum (RIP)

Best Fashion Boutique

Kvartýra №49
Laugavegur 49

It’s no understatement to say that Kvartýra №49 changed the face of Reykjavík fashion when the minimalist, Bauhaus-esque spot opened in 2018. Before then, yes, athleisure was popular, but nowadays, you can’t throw a stone in Reykjavík without hitting some cool tracksuit-clad kid covered in Cyrillic typography. Specialising in Russian streetwear, the store brought post-Soviet street style to the city with an eclectic selection of brands like Sputnik 1985, Volchok, and Fusion. The store also showcases innovative Icelandic brands like Ýgglo and Sushchenko, as well as high-end American designs from Opening Ceremony.

Runners-Up

nomad.
Frakastígur 8f

A relative newbie to the Laugavegur scene, nomad. was a surprise favourite of the panel. “I love nomad. They have amazing books, lamps, candles and more,” one panellist raved. “And it’s so important that Laugavegur has these shops’ new location in Hafnartorg.”

Stefánsbúð
Laugavegur 7

Stefánsbúð showcases local designers and second-hand high-fashion finds (hello 1980’s Úsúi!) as well as accessories from quirky international brands. “It’s truly a boutique,” one panellist exclaimed. “It’s quirky and zany. You don’t know what you’re going to find but you know it’ll be exciting.”
Best Clothing Store

Hildur Yeoman
Skólavörðustígur 22

Hildur Yeoman has dressed everyone from R'n'B goddesses GDRN to the swan lady herself Björk to recent Grammy/Bafta/Oscars award winner Hildur Guðnadóttir. She’s a patron saint of Icelandic fashion, known for her dreamy patterns, lush textures, spacey body-cons, and beautiful tailoring. Her hole-in-the-wall Skólavörðustígur store is no exception, hosting not only her eponymous brand but Vanessa Mooney jewellery, bright candles, and more. ‘Her stuff is expensive but it’s timeless. Moreover, Hildur is often in the store, so you can chat with her about the items and she will help you style it,’ one panel member said. ‘Where else can you find that?’

Runners-Up

Geysir
Skólavörðustígur 7 & 18

You can’t talk about shopping in Reykjavík without mentioning Geysir. The store defines elegance with their beautiful staple pieces, which manage to both harken back to the old-world, Arcadian vision of Iceland while also being distinctly contemporary and innovative.

Extraloppan
Smáralind

“Extraloppan revolutionised the second-hand market in Iceland,” declared one panelist. “Everyone has too many clothes and this is the best way to get rid of them.” The Smáralind favourite works like a big flea market. Each booth has a different vendor, so you’ll never know exactly what you’ll find at this cornucopia of used clothing. “It’s an eco-friendly way to keep your closet fresh,” another panelist praised. “You’re not importing clothes. You’re not buying new. You’re taking what someone else didn’t want directly from them.” The selection is notoriously varied, so expect to find everything from Geysir sweaters to Adidas tracksuits.

Runners-Up

Wasteland Reykjavik
Laugavegi 37 & Hólmaslóð 2

The Reykjavík take on the Danish franchise, Wasteland came onto the secondhand market and quickly dominated. For super à la mode downtown looks—i.e. cheerleader uniforms, Guy Fieri t-shirts, and astronaut-esque jumpsuits—this is the go-to. Though it’s only been in the city for a year, Wasteland has already proved it doesn’t just sell trends, it makes them.

Handprjónasamband Islands
Skólavörðustígur 19

“This is a no-brainer,” one panelist said, the moment this category came up. “Handprjónasamband Islands is the real-deal. It’s real Iceland. Many places mass-produce and import their lopapeysa [traditional Icelandic wool sweaters] nowadays, but [at Handprjónasamband], you’re buying a freshly-knitted sweater directly from the maker, who is probably a grandma that poured a lot of love into it.” Stacked from floor to ceiling with cosy woolly goodness, the store offers sweaters, gloves and more, in every colour of the rainbow. This, dear reader, is ultimate Iceland.

Best Place To Buy A Wool Sweater

Red Cross
Laugavegur 12 & 116 & Skólavörðustígur 12

The Red Cross is not only the cheapest place mass-produce and import their lopapeysa [traditional Icelandic wool sweaters] nowadays, but [at Handprjónasamband], you’re buying a freshly-knitted sweater directly from the maker, who is probably a grandma that poured a lot of love into it.” Stacked from floor to ceiling with cosy woolly goodness, the store offers sweaters, gloves and more, in every colour of the rainbow. This, dear reader, is ultimate Iceland.

Best Jewellery Shop

Orrifinn
Skólavörðustígur 17b

Orrifinn is known for their sensual, raw, detailed and carefully crafted pieces that manage to be at once timeless and distinctly modern. Often inspired by mythology, the beloved store was an unanimous and instantaneous pick for this award. “To be frank, it’s difficult to beat them. Orrifinn has an aesthetic, a style. The interior and the jewellery work together. Not to mention, you can watch them working in front of you,” one panelist raved. “They truly honour the craft of jewelry-making.”

Runners-Up

Hildur Hafstein
Klapparstígur 40

Hildur Hafstein is known for her slightly hippy, slightly witchy vibe—a lone jewellery shaman within the Icelandic scene. “She’s doing her own thing. She doesn’t follow trends. She’s got a niche all her own,” the panel proclaimed, praising her mix of delicate jewellery with unusual shapes. Stop by her tucked away Klapparstígur studio to experience the magic in person.

Aurum
Bankastræti 4

“Aurum, the store, which occupies one of the best spots on Laugavegur, serves up finely-crafted pieces firmly based in Icelandic nature. ‘It’s a wild and woody brand that still seems chic and modern. Again, I’m obsessed.’”

Previous Winners

2018: Hildur Reykjavík
2018: Buenafataverðlan Kormáks & Skjalárdar
**Best Homeware Shop**

**Kokka**
Laugavegur 47

Kokka is a fancy fantasy-land for food and homeware lovers, filled with all sorts of utensils you didn’t even know you needed (but, obviously, you do). For those looking for new toys to furnish a modern and really, really stylish kitchen, Kokka should be your first stop. “They recently expanded and it’s really nice,” one panel member raved. “It’s proper quality, humble, and cool. It’s also very accessible and easy to navigate, which I appreciate. The owners are also very pro-Laugavegur, which is also important for me.”

**Runners-Up**

- **Geysir Heima**
  Skólavörðustígur 16
  “What else can you say about Geysir Heima?” one panelist asks. “It’s well-curated. The interior is beautiful. Geysir has cultivated an empire and it’s for good reason.” The upscale home shop, which offers everything from their iconic wool blankets to minimalist glassware to a fantastic selection of art books, will make you fall in love with Scandinavian style. Pro-tip: Check out their basement. There’s often exhibitions down there.

- **Epal**
  Skeifan 6
  “Epal has been a mainstay of the Reykjavík design scene for more than 30 years, supporting it and constantly pushing it forward. “You can’t talk about Icelandic design without mentioning Epal,” one panel member explains. “They are devoted to Scandinavian style.”

**Previous Winners**

- 2018-9: Geysir Heima
- 2017: Mál og Menning
- 2016: Mál og Menning

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**Best Bookstore**

**Eymundsson**
Austurstræti 18 8
Skólavörðustígur 11

Eymundsson is a classic bookstore, offering up the newest in Icelandic writing and international titles. It has the rare characteristic of being perfectly curated for both locals and tourists, so if you’re a traveller looking to get an illustrated edition of the sagas, or a Reykjavik kid hoping to pick up the definitely-going-to-be-released upcoming Game Of Thrones book, this would be the place to find it. Bonus: The cafes also make for great people-watching spots.

**Runners-Up**

- **Bókin**
  Klapparstígur 25-27
  “If anyone in the city has released anything, no matter how small, it’s Bókin. “ It has charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent, it’s Bókin.”

- **Bóksala Stúdenta**
  Sæmundargata 4
  Located within the main building of Háskóli Íslands, the university bookstore runs the gamut from speciality academic texts to classics, new fiction, notebooks and much more. 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.

**Previous Winners**

- 2018: Bóksala Stúdenta
- 2017: Lucky Records
- 2016: Bókin
- 2015: Eymundsson

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**Best Record Store**

**Lucky Records**
Rauðarárstígur 10

Lucky Records is the punky, underground horse of the Reykjavík scene. It’s one of those shops that are easy to get lost in—expect to easily spend an entire afternoon perusing their selection. “Lucky Records is very in-tune with the local music scene,” one panelist explains. “If anyone in the city has released anything, no matter how small, it’ll be in this store. Moreover, the shopkeepers will have listened to it. They are really knowledgeable and opinionated in that old-school record shop way.” Pro-tip: Make sure you check out the back room.

**Runners-Up**

- **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.

- **Geisladiskabúð Valda**
  Laugavegur 64
  Valda is by far the most obscure shop in the city. “You’ll find things in this store that you won’t find anywhere else in the world. I once found a Japanese bootleg copy of a Finnish band’s first record. How on Earth did they get that?” one panel member reminisced. “It’s a gem.”

**Previous Winners**

- 2018-9: Reykjavík Record Shop
- 2017: Lucky Records
- 2016: Reykjavik Record Shop
- 2015-6: Reykjavik Record Shop

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**Shopping**

Stuff is better than money anyway

**BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2020**

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Best of Reykjavík 2020

Shopping
Stuff is better than money anyway

Best Grocery Store

Perlan – Wonders of Iceland

Perlan – Wonders of Iceland is an enchanting interactive journey through Iceland’s nature, on five floors.

Previous Winners

2017-8: Krónan Grandi
2016: Bónus

Best Grocery Store

Krónan Grandi
Fiskiðó 15-21

For the fourth year in a row, Krónan has proven that it is the best grocery store in town. “Krónan at Grandi is no doubt the freshest market in the city. It’s beautifully organised and has a great selection. You really couldn’t ask for more,” one panel member raved. They also praised its wide selection, which has everything from specialty vegan products to obscure meat cuts. 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 stores, it is absolutely worth it.

Runners-Up

Pastel Flower Studio
Baldursgata 36

Pastel Flower Studio is only open on Fridays from 13:00 to 18:00—so plan accordingly. The studio uses out, dried, and fresh flowers to create unique arrangements that reference classic Icelandic nature in an unexpected and innovative way. Trust us: You won’t find a florist in the city that’s in anyway comparable.

Geysir
Skólavörðustígur 16

Geysir’s signature touch is that of clean designs with quality materials; works that are luxurious but wearable, casual yet conceptual, and modern yet timeless. “Their men’s collection is a standout,” one panelist said. “If I could, I’d get everything from that store.” The dedicated men’s clothing store lies on Skólavörðustígur, just a stone’s throw away from their women’s branch and homeware shop. Inside is a cornucopia of woody tones, cozy materials, and cuts that could go from the international runways to a relaxed night at home. Stop by for pure Scandinavian goodness.

Hidden Gem

Runners-Up

Núllið Gallerý
Bankastraeti 0

“Núllið Gallerý has a purpose and an attitude that is desperately needed in this city,” the panel determined. “It’s fresh, curated, and has its finger on the underground pulse of Reykjavík. To be fair, it literally is underground.” The pop-up gallery project space—located in the old Freddie arcade—hosts exhibitions, events, performances and more, focusing on the newest, brightest, and strangest of Icelandic talent. It’s an edgy, eclectic space that has consistently wowed with everything it’s done. Check online for upcoming events, and no matter what, show up to see them.

Best Men’s Clothing

Núllið Gallerý
Bankastraeti 0

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Farms Market
Laugavegur 37 & Hólmaslóð 2

No one puts classical Icelandic style into the 21st century quite like Farmers Market. Their clothing somehow manages to walk the line between debonair and utilitarian. They are warm enough to get you through the darkest Icelandic winters while still stylish enough to make you look suave while doing it.

Previous Winners

2018: Nexus
2018: Hyáln Reykjavík

New Category!

66° North
Bankastraeti 5 & Laugavegur 17-19

Everyone from countryside farmers to downtown cool-kids don this iconic Icelandic brand. Peruse their wares and it’s obvious why—their quality and aesthetics is impeccable. These are pieces that will last not only your lifetime, but probably your grandchildren’s.

Previous Winners

2018: Nexus
2018: Hyáln Reykjavík
Perlan – Wonders of Iceland is an exploratorium in Reykjavík. Experience a real Ice Cave, Icelandic Glaciers Exhibition, Guaranteed Northern Lights Planetarium Show and more.
**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

Vesturbær is one of Reykjavík’s most bustling areas, and probably the only locale where you could bump into Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir, renowned artist Ragnar Kjartansson, and a member of Sigur rós in the same day. Vesturbæjarlaug is smack in the middle of the hubbub and serves up a wonderful selection of hot tubs chock full of chattering artists, students, and other 107 locals. The pool is unique in the sense that it offers up pretty much anything you’d need—a shiny outdoor pool, big hotpots, a large steam room, and a particularly lovely outdoor changing area, which you should take advantage of in the summer. And remember, don’t hesitate to converse about the state of things in the hot water—Icelanders love to debate politics, philosophy about art, and make fun of, well, everything.

### Vesturbæjarlaug

**Previous winners**

2016: Neslaug
2017: Lágafellslaug

### Best Art Museum

Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata 24

Kjarvalsstaðir was the first art museum in Iceland built specifically as a visual art showroom. The house is an homage to the iconic Icelandic artist, Johannes S. Kjarval—hence the name—and in fact, one can still find his art adorning the walls. This year, the museum showcased itself in standout fashion, with a hot streak of historical explorations of creative stalwarts like Ólafur Elíasson and William Morris. One must also applaud their iconic architecture. On top of that, it’s also home to one of Reykjavík’s finest and most underrated coffeehouses.

### Best Gallery

**i8**

Tryggvagata 16

i8 is once again the best gallery in Iceland. Over the years, it’s given us works from internationally lauded art superstars like Ragnar Kjartansson, Elín Hansdóttir and Ólafur Eliasson, putting Icelandic art on the worldwide map and helping it stay there. Although it’s a commercial gallery, it’s not a hoity-toity stuffy spot—expect to see conceptual cutting-edge museum-sized displays, rather than conservative and conventionally appealing wall-based work. 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

### Berg Contemporary

Klapparstígur 16

For the past few years, Berg Contemporary has concretely established itself as the go-to spot for contemporary art in Reykjavík. Their large, beautifully renovated space is known for blurring the lines between the conceptual, the abstract, the art, and the functional with their installations and exhibitions.

That may sound complicated, but what we’re trying to say is simple: Stop by.

### Nyli / Living Art Museum

Grandagarður 20, 101 Reykjavík

Since 1978, over 2,000 artists have been connected to Nyli in one way or the other. Founded by the legendary Icelandic 70s art group SÚM, the sole purpose of the museums is to open up discussions on experimental and progressive art. Basically, if you want to experience the radical art scene in Iceland, whet your palette at Nyli.

### Gerðarsafn - Kópavogur Art Museum

Hamraborg 4

Gerðarsafn is one of those hidden gems outside of Reykjavík. Located in Kópavogur, the museum offers a fresh take on Icelandic art, and also gives people an opportunity to meet and listen to their artists in their fantastic artist talks. It also has a coffee shop and a delightful garden.

### Previous winners

2015-18: I8
2014: Kling og Bang
2011-13: National Gallery

### Best of Reykjavík 2019

2019: Reykjavík Art Museum
2018: The Marshall House
2016-7: Hofnarhús í Reykjavík
The Marshall House serves up a number of top galleries, but the artist-run Kling & Bang is a true standout. No matter what they have on the roster, expect something ambitious and unique—from makeshift karaoke rooms to gardens covered in bees. Another amazing thing about Kling & Bang is that they play host to not only well-known internationals, but also to up-and-coming talents. The space never ceases to amaze with its provocative, vibrant style.

**Kling & Bang**  
Grandagarður 20

The Culture House  
Hverfisgata 15

The Settlement Exhibition  
Aðalstræti 16

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Best of Reykjavík 2020

Best Art Space

The National Museum  
Suðurgata 41

The National Museum of Iceland  
Perlan

Whales Of Iceland  
Fiskisloð 23-25

**Smárabíó**  
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Activities

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

Best Day Trip

**Reykjanæs Bound!** ...Reykjanæs

**Brinkettill Lava Rock Pool / Grindavik Local Pool / Reykjanesviti**

Reykjanæs is, unfortunately, often overlooked by tourists. We honestly can't fathom why, as the area is chock full of beautiful lava fields, steamy hot springs, and some great local pools. Not to mention, it's only a short drive from Reykjavík. Our recoo? Stop by the Reykjanes Lighthouse, Brinkettill rock pool, and end the day with a swim at the Grindavik swimming pool and a bowl of lobster soup at Bryggjan. If you have time, take a stop at Kleifarvatn, where you can mosey amidst hot springs and the bright grassy landscape.

**Runners-Up**

**Pingvellir / Geysir / Fríðheimar / Fontana**

South of Iceland

If you’re going to do the Golden Circle, make sure you add this little twist. On the drive to Pingvellir, turn onto the route to Laugarvatn and pull over at the lovely Fontana spa for a soak. Afterwards, head to Geysir and grab some greenhouse-fresh grub at Fríðheimar near Flúðir.

**Krauma / Settlement Center Deildartunguhver, Reykholth**

You can’t miss Krauma—the steam from the bubbling geothermal vent pours skywards into a column that’s visible for kilometres around. The complex contains five outdoor hot pools of various sizes and temperatures, a cold plunge pool, a scented sauna, a steam room, and a lounge area with an open fire. Afterwards stop by Borgarnes’ Settlement Center for some culture.

Previous winners

2018: Snowmobile/ATV Tour

Best Place To See The Aurora

**Grótta**

Seltjarnarnes, 170 Seltjarnarnes

Grótta is something of a hidden gem. At the end of the Seltjarnarnes peninsula, not far from the centre of Reykjavík, there’s a lonely, windblown, red-topped lighthouse, with a walkable causeway that’s only accessible at certain times, depending on the tide. There’s a black beach, a miniature hot pot, and a nature reserve. Now, to find the Northern Lights, it’s rather complicated. Basically, you stand on this picturesque beach, open your eyes, and look up. There you go. Pure happiness. Note: Be aware of the tides if you’re gonna cross over and check out the lighthouse. You could get stuck overnight.

**Runners-Up**

**Landakotstún**

Hávallagata 14-16, 101 Reykjavík

This spot is a sneaky one. It’s smack downtown, but yet there’s magically enough darkness there to spot the aurora if it’s burning up above the city. Where is it, you ask? Find the Catholic Church—there’s one only—and walk to the bench behind it. That’s it. Now, pull your flask and enjoy the green fire in the sky.

Previous winners

2018: Agissiða to Grótta
2017-8: Whales Of Iceland
2014-6: Núsdýragarðurinn

Best Place To Spend Time With The Kids (Winter!)

**Reykjavík City Library**

Tryggvagata 15

For some free and wholesome family time, the parents on our panel enjoy the Reykjavík City Library. There’s an excellent play area for younger children between one and three and—you guessed it—there are books for kids of all ages to look at. On the second floor, take a gander at everything from a small aquarium to a closet of pirate and princess costumes. Afterwards, show your kid your favourite comics or just chill while they run around like crazies. Don’t miss their photography museum on the top floor either.

**Runner-Up**

**Whales of Iceland**

Fiskislóð 23-25

Whales Of Iceland is a cavernous, hangar-sized space populated by life-sized models of whales, with information plaques and flat-screen devices containing information about the different species. It also has a fun indoor climbing structure shaped like (you guessed it) a whale. It’s one of those places your kids will repeatedly demand to return to.

**Newcomer**

**Flyover Iceland**

Tryggvagata 15

Kid playing too many video games? How about just stepping into one? Flyover Iceland is a brilliant amusement park ride for the whole family—a VR flight over the majestic and frightening nature of Iceland. It’ll definitely make your kid forget about Minecraft. We promise.

Previous winners

2018: Loft Hostel
2018: Helmiur Mathöll
2017: Kaffihús Vesturbæjar

For A Fancy Night Out

**Sinfóniuhjómsveit Islands**

Harpa

In recent years, the Icelandic classical music scene has been booming, producing superstars like Vikingur Ólafsson, Anna Porvaldsdóttir, and, yes you guessed it, the Oscar-winning composer, Hildur Guðnadóttir. What do these three all have in common? Well, all three have played or have had their compositions played by the wonderful Iceland Symphony Orchestra. With shows every month at Harpa featuring a mix of old-school favourites and contemporary premieres, they are one of Iceland’s most valuable cultural assets. Pro-tip: Don’t miss their morning open rehearsals on show dates either. For only 2,000 ISK, you might even see their whole programme.

**Runners-Up**

**Islenkski Dansflokkurinn**

id.is

The Icelandic Dance Company has established itself over and over again as a provocative and progressive artistic group that consistently pushes themselves and their medium into new territory. Having collaborated with artists like Súsúns and Matthew Barney, they are guaranteed to put on a unique night that you will never forget. Bring a date to impress them.

**New Category!**

**Tjarnargata 12**

Tjarnargata 12 houses the independent professional theatre scene in Reykjavík. The works shown here are experimental and often in English, which is refreshing, especially as Iceland gets more and more multicultural. This year, they played host to everything from a Saga-inspired Drag Show to techno rave performances to contemporary plays and more. We stan.

Previous winners

2018: Libbey's/Reyki/isländer

New Category!
The Reykjavík Grapevine
Best of Reykjavík 2020

LAUGARÁSVEGI 1

2020
THREE
YEARS

2019
CONSECUTIVE

2018

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