Will We Say Yes?
News: Joining the EU is back on the table

Necksplitter
Music: Making brutal death metal gay again

Burgers Galore
Food: Iceland’s favourite sandwich reviewed

Hit the Slopes!
Travel: Slaloming up in Akureyri

Ukrainians who lost their homes, and an Icelander who found one
The Strong Leader Is Dead

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is not only a shameful and illegal act, but obviously a huge political mistake for Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia. This is clear to anyone that wants to see it. Not only has the dictator shown his true colours as a nostalgic totalitarian ruler — not there was any doubt before — but he has also displayed the weakness of Russia for the world to see.

The Russian army has showcased that Russia is far from being the strong empire they would like the world to believe. Ukrainians have shown once again that defending your home is the strongest drive when in conflict.

Although the Ukrainians are facing dark times, they have inspired the world with their courage. They have sent a clear message that they are no buffer state for the Russians, but an independent nation with a distinct national soul. Their bravery has even strengthened the West against Russia. Just a few years ago, the unity of the West appeared to be on shaky ground, with the discord within the UK and the alarming alt-right leadership of Donald Trump, heavily fueled by disinformation from Russia. Now, we see that the Russian public is the true victim of this new warfare of information, a situation with which Western leaders have far too much experience.

Ukrainians have shown once again that defending your home is a strong empire, which no other country will be able to survive the disintegration of Russia, on the other hand, is facing a bleak time ahead.

Volodymyr Zelensky will go down in history as one of the most inspiring leaders of his generation. As a truly strong leader, the democratic world. They will rebuild, and many refugees this invasion may be, Ukrainians have a bright future within Ukraine.

Ultimately, regardless of whatever the immediate outcome of this invasion may be, Ukrainians have a bright future within the democratic world. They will rebuild, and many refugees will return to help. Their political strength is unique and Volodymyr Zelensky will go down in history as one of the most inspiring leaders of his generation. As a truly strong leader, Russia, on the other hand, is facing a bleak time ahead.

The public will be as isolated as in the early days of the Cold War, stuck in the debris of an economy that is falling to rack and ruin around them. Putin, and his archaic, macho ideals of strength, will not be able to survive the disintegration of his nation that, at this juncture, feels to be inevitable.

The biggest cliché here is that “strong” leaders rule until they are overthrown. It might take a week, it might take a decade. But it will happen. And then, Russia will need to start all over again from the broken wreckage of a dictatorship. Perhaps they will look to their strong neighbour, Ukraine, and realise that the true strength was always democracy.

Valur Grettisson
Editor-in-chief
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What Are Icelanders Talking About?

Besides the Oscars

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine  Photos: Art Bicnick

 Barely five or seven years ago, any talk about overseas reporting of Iceland hunting fin whales was met with mild annoyance, if not fierce resistance. How dare the rest of the world tell us what we can and cannot do in our own waters, we’ve been whaling for decades, no one pushes us around, and so on. Quite a different tune is being sung now as Hvalur hf., Iceland’s last fin whaling company, announced they would resume whaling after a three-year hiatus. Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture Svávardsdóttir has heavily implied that she will likely let Hvalur’s hunting license expire come 2024, saying that it is unclear what benefit whaling gives Iceland. Furthermore, not just whale watching tour guides but the head of the Icelandic Tourist Board himself, Johannes Pór Skúlason, has said that they believe the hunt is bad for tourism and bad for Iceland. What a difference a few years makes.

Iceland’s Minister of Infrastructure, chair of the Progressive Party, and quite likely the least offensive and quite likely the least offensive minister, chair of the Progressive Party, Ingi Jóhannsson has earned the distinction of addressing members of his party at a weekend conference, referring to “the villains in the Kremlin” and saying that he hopes the Russian people will “rid themselves” of them. This did not go unnoticed by the Russian embassy in Iceland, who replied that Russia’s government was democratically elected and that it was highly inappropriate for a foreign government official to publicly call for regime change in another country. In response, Sigurður Ingí quipped “I can apologise if the Russian army leaves Ukraine.” Bear in mind this man has the same vibes as your grandad’s friend who’s really into coin collecting, ugly Christmas sweaters, and watching golf on television. It’s always the last ones you suspect.

Reykjavík will soon receive the mixed blessing of Nordic coming to shoot in Iceland again. No, this isn’t a sequel of Eurovision Song Contest: The Story Of Fire Saga. Rather, the streaming giant will be coming to Iceland in early April to shoot an action thriller called Heart Of Stone. Details are scant, but there are two things we know: first of all, it will include stars such as Gal Gadot, Jamie Dornan and Sophie Okonedo. Second, it will mean that several downtown streets will be closed during filming for hours a day, every day of shooting. And a whole nation braces itself for the inevitable social media posts complaining about being stuck in traffic, and blurry photos of people who look like celebrities supposedly spotted getting a hot dog. 🥭


**NEWS**

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Will We Or Won’t We Join The EU?
Public opinion is shifting. Will policy?

On the heels of a poll conducted in early March that indicated public support for Iceland joining the European Union has grown, with the largest portion of Icelanders now in favour of taking up membership, the matter is receiving somewhat contentious treatment in Parliament.

RÚV reports that leadership for the Social Democrats, the Pirate Party and the Reform Party, are calling for a national referendum on the subject of Iceland joining the EU.

Our special position
Iceland, while not a part of the EU, is part of the EEA and EFTA, but has had a rocky relationship with the block. Iceland first began accession talks in 2011, having applied in 2009, during a time when the country was led by a very pro-EU government.

The beginning of the end was in 2015, when under a new government, then Foreign Minister Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson unilaterally decided to send a letter to EU authorities announcing that Iceland no longer wished to join the EU.

As RÚV points out, however, the application to join the EU was never formally withdrawn, which has made the matter an open question ever since.

For her part, Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir told reporters that she is personally against Iceland joining the EU, saying that there are more advantages to being in the EEA and EFTA than would be afforded by formally joining the European Union. She added that it would be the EU’s turn to “complicate matters.”

Given the Prime Minister’s position, as well as the decidedly anti-EU stance of the other parties in the government—the Independence Party and the Progressive Party—such a majority is highly unlikely, at least during this parliamentary term.

LOST IN GOOGLE TRANSLATION

A short, sad story: Bob, an eager American exchange student, is starting his Icelandic adventure. On his way to school, he scrolls through local news. A headline stands out: “The police are looking for a man with a headache.”

He thinks: “That could easily be me.” Could he be a test subject escaped from a drug study promising headache-free futures. On his way to school, he scrolls through local news. A headline stands out: “The police are looking for a man with a headache.”

He thinks: “That could easily be me.” Could he be a test subject escaped from a drug study promising headache-free futures? At this point Bob isn’t too convinced that this scenario holds true for him.

Bob opens the article. The police are in fact looking for someone, and while the pictures don’t show him notably migrane- less, Bob’s questions remain unanswered. He’s already missed his bus stop, but the obsession grows. He attempts to translate the original headline manually. Lögreglan = police. Good. Lögreglan lýsir eftir manni með kollvik = the police are looking for a man with... Great!


Kollvik =... kollvik? Bob’s eye twitches. Adding insult to injury, google interrupts: Uzbek kollvik? Bob’s eye twitches. Adding insult to injury, google interrupts: Uzbek kollvik?
Take a walk anywhere in Iceland and you are likely to see the word “Viking” slapped in front of everything from jewelry, to souvenir shops and hot dogs. The male-dominated seafaring warrior class has become a supreme icon of all things Iceland, to the point of an ahistorical horned helmet being a stand-in for the country itself.

But none of these great warriors would matter one bit were it not for the Valkyries, whose name literally means “choosers of the slain.” These feminine spirits descend upon battlefields, after the fighting is over, and personally select which afterlife they will go to. Half of the fallen are spirited away to Fólkvangur, a beautiful field under the auspices of the goddess Freyja, while the other half went to Valhalla, which belongs to Óðinn. Valkyries played a super important role beyond the afterlife, too. Throughout the Middle Ages in Germanic Europe, the Valkyries were the subject of poetry, spells, charms, and some of the most beautiful art of the ages. Vikings arguably took a back seat once their age was over, but Valkyries persisted in the imagination for centuries.

Despite this, it’s the Vikings who dominate the popular image of the Norse people today, which is, frankly, pure misogyny. Valkyries are objectively better than Vikings.

**NEW MUSIC PICKS**

**Supersport!** “Íla Samtaka”

Supersport! (the exclamation point is theirs, not mine), are probably already familiar to many musically-inclined Reykjavíkurs, having been around for a while now and releasing an album last year. This is charmingly ramshackle noise that grows on you quickly with a couple of listens, and comes across a bit like Bulls and Sebastian covering a Pavement song in Icelandic.

**Filous & Daði Freyr**

“Sabada”

This relaxed upbeat track—created by Daði with Viennese producer Filous—is a great way for Iceland’s favourite 8-bit avatar to return a couple of years of Eurovision insanity. He’s a little more grounded now, having recently fathered a baby, moved house and built a new studio. It’s great to enjoy Daði again without the high-octane nonsense of Eurovision getting in the way.

**Una Torfa**

“Ekkert Að”

This is the first release by Una Torfadóttir, a 21-year-old singer-songwriter who has created a wonderfully gentle ballad, sparsely arranged around acoustic guitar, piano and some understated drums. This track bodes well for Una’s upcoming EP which has apparently been in the works since 2019. If taking her time created work as good as this, then whenever you’re ready, Una. No rush.

**SHOCK AND RAIN**

Do you remember that scene in, well, every movie, when there is a funeral and it’s pouring rain? Well, Icelanders have a saying for that: Öft kemur regn eftir reisalag “there is often rain after a shock/tragedy.” It seems that Icelanders noticed that the sky got darker and there was rain after a tragedy hit, and instead of being dramatic about it, we honed a saying about it. So, when we look up into the dark sky at the funeral, we can turn to the next person with a slight know-it-all smile on our face, and say: it often rains after when tragedy hits. I mean, if you’re that kind of person. Which you totally aren’t. That’s just how the saying goes!

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Those Who Left And Those Who Stayed

Ukrainians in Iceland, and an Icelander in Ukraine, on the past, present and future of war

On the morning of February 24th, the world woke to the news that after weeks of sabre rattling, Russia had invaded Ukraine. Since then, some four million people have fled the country, while others have opted to stay—to fight, to volunteer assistance, or to document the war. We spoke to three of the Ukrainian women who reluctantly fled their country for safety in Iceland, as well as an Icelandic photographer who chose to stay in Kyiv, about what this war has meant for them, and where it could lead.
We felt a bit calmer with my deciding to stay with her parents in the in a day or two; a week at most. Her misunderstanding that would resolve confident that this was some kind of in Ukraine, Olena’s family was believe it. We couldn’t believe that this up to explosions in Iprin, we couldn’t togethertogether should the situation get worse. medicine, candles, matches, just in arrangements before the war broke medicine, candles, matches, just in arrangements before the war broke

As such, Olena didn’t make any negotiations. “I was in shock,” she says. “They started. her thoughts and wake up her husband it took Nataliia some time to gather they would relocate to another office to keep peace of mind and concentrate what they should do. Then they decided not to relocate, as fast as possible and decided to clear out their basement, and make it a shelter.”

Olga Druyanova, a freelancer from Kharkiv, found herself in the midst of war just three days after she returned home from a trip in Iceland.

“A month before the war, there were lots of rumors already,” she says. “When a aske when asked whether there was a turning point that prompted Olga to decide to leave Kharkiv five days after the war began, she shares a personal story about her family: “I have Jewish relatives on one side of my family,” Olga says. “In 1932, my great-grandma’s family was shot dead by fascists in Kharkiv. She was 90 years old. All of them were shot and buried in Drobitsky Yar. Before the war, their relatives encouraged them to leave and go to the USA or elsewhere, but the family didn’t want to leave. Kharkiv was their home, they spent their lives living in the basement. They tried to stay as silent as possible and pray for their lives. The Kadyrovites discovered that there were four cars in the garage so just for fun they shot the cars too. Of course, they stole some things from the house, things like alcohol, some clothes... and gloves. My mom also told me they took some perfumes probably as trophies for their crimes. When leaving, the group of soldiers saw our neighbour, badly beat him up, and said they will be back in an hour and won’t spare anyone.”

“After passing border control, Olena and her kids received a warm welcome from the Polish volunteers. “They met us, offered us food, gave us a ride to Warsaw, and helped us find accommodation. Olena’s parents who had been evacuated from Bucha ten days later, however, received a different treatment. “A group of Kadyrovites [a Chechen paramilitary group supporting the Russian army], who are known for their cruelty, broke into my parents’ house,” Olena says. “They broke into the house with machine guns and shot absolutely everything, including windows and furniture. Thank God, my parents weren’t home at that time—they were

Olena Jadallah, a former deputy mayor for the city of Irpin and associate professor of Economics, couldn’t have imagined that a full-scale war would be possible. “Everyone in my family believed in the strength of diplomacy, dialogue, and the wisdom of politicians and world leaders. We thought this could be negotiated!”

As such, Olena didn’t make any arrangements before the war broke out, but her parents had.

“My parents bought enough water, medicine, candles, matches, just in case,” she says. “They have a heated basement, so we were planning to stay together should the situation get worse. When at five in the morning, we woke up to explosions in Irpin, we couldn’t believe it. We couldn’t believe that this is happening to us, in the 21st century.”

Like many other families in Ukraine, Olena’s family was confident that this was some kind of misunderstanding that would resolve in a day or two; a week at most. Her family stayed home for two days before deciding to stay with her parents in the town of Bucha.

“We felt a bit calmer with my parents, but on the third day we realized that the whole region—Hostomel, Bucha, Irpin—was becoming more and more occupied by Russian troops,” she says. “There was active fighting all around. We realized that our kids can’t be locked in the basement all the time, especially our 1-year-old. We decided to leave.”

Natalia Baburina, an account manager at a software development company from Kharkiv, left the city one day after the shelling began. Prior to the invasion, her company had prepared a business continuity plan which meant they would relocate to another office of the company, located in Chernivtsi.

On the morning of the invasion, it took Natalia some time to gather her thoughts and wake up her husband and children to tell them that the war had started. “I was in shock,” she says. “They also didn’t realize it right away. I knew that, should things get worse, they would fire artillery at military targets. We live not far from such a target, on the city. But seeing residential infrastructure being bombed was an absolute shock. There are no military targets there.”

Natalia and her family didn’t rush to flee. Instead, they sat and thought about what they should do. Then they talked to their neighbours and decided to clear out their basement, and make it a shelter.

Olga Druyanova, a freelancer from Kharkiv, found herself in the midst of war just three days after she returned home from a trip in Iceland.

“A month before the war, there were lots of rumors already,” she says. “When I arrived in Kharkiv, they started. Having heard that troops were lining up at the border, I didn’t believe the rumours at all. I think a normal person with common sense can’t imagine that in the 21st century a war like that could begin.”

Despite local friends suggesting she wait until the threat of invasion is over, Olga returned to Ukraine. On February 24, her son woke her up telling her that the war had begun. “I didn’t panic,” she says. “I managed to keep peace of mind and concentrate on what I can do and what needs to be done. I didn’t pack an anxiety suitcase. I didn’t even plan. I didn’t rush straight to a bomb shelter. One of the main bomb shelters in Kharkiv is inside the subway, and I lived really far from the subway, my house also didn’t have a basement that would be suitable to use as a bomb shelter.”

Olga would just stay home, using elementary safety rules when she heard air raid sirens, like not staying close to the windows, choosing a room with load-bearing walls.

“TO LEAVE, OR NOT TO LEAVE”* When asked whether there was a turning point that prompted Olga to decide to leave Kharkiv five days after the war began, she shares a personal story about her family: “I have Jewish relatives on one side of my family; Olga says. “In 1932, my great-grandma’s family was shot dead by fascists in Kharkiv. She was 90 years old. All of them were shot and buried in Drobitsky Yar. Before the war, their relatives encouraged them to leave and go to the USA or elsewhere, but the family didn’t want to leave. Kharkiv was their home, they spent their lives

"Ukrainians not only stand for their own country today. They stand for the sake of security everywhere in Europe and probably everywhere in the world."— Natalia Baburina

"We saw a real nuclear threat and understood that Russia has zero rationality at this point. No one could predict what would happen next."— Nataliia Baburina

S ANITY BITES THE DUST The journey to Iceland went smooth for Natalia and Olga, but it wasn’t as carefree for Olena, who was traveling with a sick one-year-old. “I spent around ten hours at the Ukraine-Poland border with my kids,” she says. “It was cold. My kid developed a high fever and I had to call an ambu-
Andie Sophia Fontaine

**Part 2: Choosing The Less Worst Thing**

Oskar Hallgrímsson on life in Kyiv

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine  Photos: Oskar Hallgrímsson

“How can I bring my child to school, when there’s a threat of Russia starting a war?”

As of March 23rd, 377 Ukrainian refugees had arrived in Iceland. According to forecasts of the Ministry of Justice, up to 2,000 refugees could apply for international protection in Iceland, which would allow them to reside, work and access benefits in Iceland for up to one year.

None of the women I spoke with wanted to leave Ukraine. It was a last resort, a desire to take their kids as far from war as possible.

“We are really grateful to the Icelandic government and volunteers,” Olena emphasizes. “The immigration department has provided us with free accommodation at a hotel. We receive three meals a day, volunteers provide us with medicine, and bring toys and clothes for our kids. There are so many volunteer organisations involved, people aren’t indifferent.”

“My kids were absolutely shocked,” Olena continues. “They were not ready for this war. We haven’t discussed such things with them. They weren’t ready either. It’s easier for the younger kid as he doesn’t really understand much. His mom is with him, so that’s the most important thing. But my older one understands a lot, he watches the news and roots for our president and the Ukrainian army. Of course, we want to go home as soon as possible, we miss our city, our house, friends, relatives... but we are happy to be safe and together here.”

After a few really hard weeks, Nataliia jokes that her stay in Iceland feels like a vacation now.

“For the first few days, we stayed with a family of one of my husband’s colleagues,” she says. “They’ve treated us with sympathy and have been very helpful. We receive a lot of attention, people invite us over so that my son could also play with other kids. He has made some Icelandic friends already.”

Unlike others, Olga didn’t have relatives or colleagues in Iceland. She came here as a tourist a few times and felt good from the very beginning.

“Iceland is a place of unconditional happiness,” Olga says. “I like Icelandic culture, Icelandic people, I’ve recently started to learn the language. I knew that if I were to leave Ukraine, that it would be for Iceland.”

When Olga made the decision to flee from Kharkiv, taking an evacuation train to Lviv and then a bus to Warsaw, she was preparing her son for a new, different life.

“I told my son that our lives would change,” she says. “Now we’re refugees. But so far, we have received a heart-warmed welcome and unmatched support anywhere we would go.”

Unable to find housing on the night they arrived, Olga and her son ended up spending the night at the Minister of Justice’s house. “Iceland really does a lot for those arriving here,” assures Olga.

**THINGS NEED TO CHANGE**

The war in Ukraine began in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and invaded the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. During this period of time, Nataliia lived in a city just 100 km from the occupied areas.

“It all started eight years ago,” she shares. “We’ve welcomed so many refugees back then, helping them in every possible way. There had been many young mothers among them and it was especially traumatic for me as I was a new mom too. I felt really sorry for them. And now...everyone heard this news, and the kids, too. I saw my son playing ‘war’ with other kids. Once my son told me ‘I’m scared to go to school, because it’s just 20 km from Russia.’ On days when we were told an attack is possible, I didn’t drive him to school. How can I bring my child to school, when there’s a threat of Russia starting a war?”

Nataliia hopes that the world will realise that the problem is not only with Putin.

“The problem lies deep in Russia and its society,” Nataliia says. “What we see now, is, in fact, the fascism and Nazism that they accuse us of. My family has relatives in Russia and in Crimea, and every time we talk to them, they just repeat the propaganda broadcasted on their television. They tell us that we deserve all of this. They tell us that they couldn’t force us in any other way. They tell us that no one needs us in Europe. They tell us that it is all the USA’s fault. They tell us that the only reason why our children, our women are now being killed is the fact that we resist. If we didn’t resist, and they managed to conquer Kyiv as they planned, everything would be different. It’s victim-blaming coming from an entire country.”

Olga has experienced a similar reaction from her family in Russia.

“I also have absolutely irrational relatives and friends in Russia, who are completely brainwashed by Putin’s propaganda,” Olga agrees. “They’re trying to assure us that it’s the Ukrainian army that bombs civilians, or that it’s the mythical nationalists bomb- ing us. This war is the cruellest lesson possible, but it will make us stronger.”

Olena concludes the interview with a message for other European powers.

“I want to say that every world leader and every citizen of any European country, including Iceland, has to understand that Ukraine and Ukrainians not only stand for their own country today,” she says. “They stand for the sake of security everywhere in Europe and probably everywhere in the world. Our lives will never be the same as they were before February 24th.”
strong the Ukrainian army is versus the incredible shitshow that the Russian invasion is, that convinced me more to stay. And we’re very glad we did.

**PUTIN’S GAMBLE**

The war is naturally having an emotional impact on people, especially as Ukrainians witness what Russia is doing to the cities of Kherson and Mariupol. That said, Skari believes Putin has miscalculated how Ukrainians would react to the invasion.

"Putin is making a bet that this is going to drag Ukrainians down and make them afraid, but I think it’s doing the exact opposite," he says. "It’s only fuelling their resistance. You can see it in the fighting. The death toll on the Russian side is ten times that of the Ukrainian side. Plus the amount of equipment that’s been lost by the Russians is just banana.

**THE LESS FUCKED THING**

Despite speculations of armchair generals across social media, Skari, from his position in the middle of the conflict, does not see any clean and abrupt ending to the conflict.

"When you’re dealing with war, there aren’t any good things," he says. "There are just less bad things. You can have one thing that’s fucked, one thing that’s way more fucked, so you choose the less fucked thing. There’s no magic answer to any of this. It’s always going to be a tragedy. Every decision here is going to cost something."

That said, Skari remains optimistic. His view from the ground, and his closeness to the Ukrainian people, affords him a keen look at the resolve of the Ukrainian people, whose determination to halt the Russian invasion grows with each passing day.

"I’ve seen people stop and clap for Ukrainian soldiers they’ve seen on the street," he says. "They’re heroes to these people. The morale here is amazing. Right now, it seems very likely that Ukraine is going to kick Russia’s ass out."
**Strangers In The North**

*‘Visitations’ Wins The Visual Arts Prize*

Words: Josie Anne Gaitens | Photos: Margrét Seema Takyar & Daniel Starrason

Polar bear encounters in Iceland tend to take a predictable form: a bear, often weak and emaciated, is spotted by a local. Panic ensues; the police are called; the media incites a brief hysteria. The bear is shot.

This chaotic cycle, doomed to repeat itself every few years, is partially the subject of ‘Visitations’, an exhibition by Icelandic/British artistic partnership Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson—a show that earned them the prestigious Icelandic Visual Arts Award.

“I’ve been told by lots of people not to say it was a surprise,” confides Mark Wilson. “I did actually think we might be shortlisted, but Bryndís didn’t at all.”

“I wasn’t even thinking about it,” confirms his partner, Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir. “I don’t make art to get accolades. But at the same time, I don’t deny how wonderful it was to receive it.”

“I didn’t think the art scene in Iceland had quite arrived at this point,” she continues. “I felt so pleased that they could award the Art Prize to something that goes beyond this idea of the Romantic artist.”

**Conflict and paradox**

Mark and Bryndís’s work is about as far removed from traditional notions of visual art as could be imagined. Shown at the Art Museum in Akureyri from 25.09.2021 - 09.01.2022, and titled ‘Visitations: Polar Bears out of Place’, the project exemplifies the artistic practice of Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, which they have been developing over the past 20 years.

“Sometimes people think we make work about animals, but we don’t—we make work about weird human behaviour,” explains Mark. “We use a particular animal and the interface that humans have with that animal to explore different interests, and often to reveal a lack of consensus; conflict and paradox.”

**Making connections**

This first collaborative work confirmed not only the pair’s enduring interest in polar bear experiences, but also their desire to involve partners from outside the artists’ sphere, an element of their practice that has remained a consistent thread throughout their various projects. From historians, folklorists and zoologists, to farmers, pet owners and hunters, Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson see collaboration as an essential part of their work.

“This thing about ‘the artist, the genius’… I always felt like this was total nonsense—and I still do, basically,” Bryndís says, waving her hands dismissively. “Art is about bringing people together.”

“It’s about making unlikely connections on every level,” agrees Mark. “We work a lot with other disciplines, and we talk a lot about the importance of that.”

**Ill-fated visitors**

For Visitations, the artists focused their work around two polar bear arrivals to Iceland in 2008. The two ‘vagrants’—as non-native visitors are known—both came ashore on the North coast of Iceland, within weeks of each other. Both were shot and killed, although there was serious discussion of trying to tranquillise the second one.

In a macabre twist of fate, Bryndís and Mark discovered that many of the skeletons of bears killed in Iceland are kept for scientific purposes.

“The second encounter came when we and Mark were conducting research at The Icelandic Institute of Natural History. It was here that they discovered that many of the skeletons of bears killed in Iceland are kept for scientific purposes.”

**Conflict and paradox**

Bryndís and Mark were conducting research at The Icelandic Institute of Natural History. It was here that they discovered that many of the skeletons of bears killed in Iceland are kept for scientific purposes.

**The idea of the stranger**

This complex idea of a haunting, of a relationship with a species that is mediated by a heady combination of folklore and fear, forms the basis of Visitations. The bones that Bryndís and Mark drove home that day were also an exhibit in the show; not wired together and displayed as in museums, as if they still inhabited the ghostly form of an absent animal, but in a stacked heap in a box. An indisputable container of evidence of what happened when a bear met a man.

“More abstractly, we’re looking at the idea of the stranger, and the idea of hospitality” says Mark. “How do you deal with a stranger, when the stranger constitutes a threat? Because obviously, historically, there’s only been one answer to that question.”

‘Visitations: Polar Bears out of Place’ took place at Akureyri Art Museum from 25.09.2021 - 09.01.2022, and was curated by Ása Sigurgísladóttir. Learn more at visitations.lhi.is

**Learn more at visitations.lhi.is**
Farmers Market
ICELAND

OUR STORES IN REYKJAVÍK: FARMERS & FRIENDS
Laugavegur 37
Hólmavík 2 / Grandi
WWW.FARMERSMARKET.IS
The heart of Reykjavík has a musical beat. In a city teeming with venues and gigs, pretty much anyone you meet who is remotely interesting will be in a band or three. But if you want to be next in the long line of members of GusGus, you're going to need to know where to buy your kazoo. I dropped into four noteworthy music shops to sample their wares, and catch their vibe.

Hljóðfærahúsið
Síðumúli 20, 108 Reykjavík
This spacious showroom is probably the biggest instrument shop in the city, and can trace its roots back over a hundred years. Hljóðfærahúsið, (a terrifying Icelandic word at first sight, but it translates simply as "The Musical Instrument House"), is a consolidation of various historic instrument, sound and stage lighting businesses. Consequently it boasts a huge diversity of equipment—from stage smoke machines to pianos—including audio gear for podcasts, a growth area during the pandemic. Manager Jón Kjartan Ingólfsson and his staff are happy to help you find what you need, or just to chat about music.

I tried out: a MusicMan Stingray—God's own bass guitar, and no debate. It growls like a horny tiger.

HljóðX Rín
Grensásvegur 12, 108 Reykjavík
HljóðX Rín came about in 2011 when PA hire company HljóðX took over instrument shop Rín, and the current shop reflects that heritage by carrying a decent mix of rock ’n roll instruments, amplifiers and general audio gear. Music shops often serve as social hubs for local musicians, a role recently made more important when the pandemic limited opportunities to meet up at gigs. During a chat over coffee at the shop counter with manager Ingvar Valgeirsson, I got a sense of that community as passing musicians dropped into HljóðX Rín to say hi.

I tried out: a beautiful Dimavery MM-50 fretless bass. But where do you put your damn fingers when there are no metal bits to help you cheat?

Tónastöðin
Skipshót 50d, 105 Reykjavík
Tónastöðin is the Reykjavík music shop that knows how to rock, but also knows which end of a cor anglais to blow into. This smart and expansive store houses a huge range of instrument types; several double basses sit on stands just begging to be played, and saxophones on the wall seduce you away from the more standard guitar and piano offerings. Tónastöðin also deals in sheet music and—like Hljóðfærahúsið—has recognised and embraced the burgeoning market in podcast production gear. There is a fantastic percussion room with a huge selection of fun stuff, including a sea drum which hospitable shop owner Andrés Helgason can coax into sounding exactly like the Atlantic surf rolling up an Icelandic pebble beach.

I tried out: one of the double basses. Easy! It’s like a fretless bass guitar, just held the other way up. Ern... right?

Sangitamiya
Grettisgata 7, 101 Reykjavík
This cosy little store, nestling in a corner house downtown, extends a truly global reach to gather its collection of instruments. The result is a multicultural mélange of acoustic musical objects, united by shop owner Eymundur Matthiasson’s belief that music is a powerful way to bring peace and joy into lives. The Sangitamiya stocklist is dizzying; from the simple and familiar, such as castanets, to obscurities such as the Mongolian morin-khuur. But what they don’t stock are the standard electrical instruments prevalent in the other three shops on this list, a policy which Sangitamiya uses to distinguish itself.

I tried out: a kalimba, or thumb piano. You’ve got to be pretty determined to make one of those sound unmusical. But I did try. 😊
Silja Björk Björnsdóttir
Silja Björk Björnsdóttir is a feminist, writer, podcaster, and lecturer. Her first book is an autobiographical story about mental health, depression, and recovery. Silja spends most of her time between Akureyri and Reykjavík, so here’s her guide to the perfect day in the capital!

Weight training and breakfast
I love early mornings in the city. I always wake up around 7:30 am and head to the gym. My preferred location is World Class Laugar because I can hit the gym, lift some weights and then chill in the hot tub to set the tone for the day. I’m a writer and a freelancer, so I love working from cafes and my favorite spot is Reykjavík Roasters in Brautarholt. I typically start my day with a double cappuccino with oat milk, sourdough bread, hummus and dates. I pop open my laptop, surf some social media and then start my workday.

Let’s squeeze in some work?
My favorite lunch spot is Kröst in Hlemmur Mathöll, where I can enjoy people watching and the most delicious fish known to man. I love to enjoy time with friends so the next spot would be a cozy café like the Kattarkaffihús, where we could enjoy a sweet vegan treat and good coffee while petting cats. Maybe we could squeeze in some work too, since most of my friends are also freelancers or aspiring artists.

I always love a good walk through the city, even in rain. If I need some inspiration I’ll walk along Laugavegur, down to Tjörnin and up to Kókadalagur with some nice music or a podcast in my headphones.

Best dinner spots, undisputed
I am a total foodie and Reykjavík does not leave one wanting when it comes to amazing dinner spots! I love a good glass of wine or a cocktail so starting the evening at Tíu sopar or Skál for natural wines would be perfect. From there I’d take a bus further downtown for dinner. My all time favorite restaurants that I visit over and over again would be Fiskfélagið, Matarkjallarinn or Le Kock if I’m feeling extra juicy. I would love having all my friends and my partner with me, enjoying a nice night out with plenty of good wine, food and laughing!

Wrapping up the day
Winding down for the night means walking home if the weather is nice enough or taking an e-scooter. I have to stop at Mandí before heading home though to grab a falafel wrap. Looking at the night sky, enjoying the sights and sounds of the city quieting down, I come home, wash my face and take a long hot shower before turning on some ASMR on my sleepphones and falling asleep, a little tipsy and very much happy after the perfect day in one of my favorite cities.
Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavík Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or the newspaper stand. For more updates and reviews, subscribe to our Best-Of awards, vital info, downtown bus stops and a wider view of the city.

Dining

1. Blackbox Pizza
Borgarður 26
Blackbox is a solid competitor for best pizza pie in the city. Thin crust, inventive toppings—delivery—what else could you ask for? We'd particularly recommend the Parma Rucola, which serves up at the parma ham goodness you could wish for. For those journeying outside the city, they’ve also got a location in Akureyri.

2. Chikin
Ingólfsstraeti 2
This ain’t your mama’s KFC. No. Chikin—Reykjavík’s first dedicated hot chicken and bao joint—manages to be at once both totally sophisticated food cuisine and also food that’ll definitely fill the hole in your soul you usually quench with a sandwich. So grab some chicken with pickled daikon, shiitake mushrooms, miso mayo and lots of other delicacies.

3. Hosiló
Hverfisgata 12
A newcomer on the block who has certainly made a big stir! Hosiló is a small spot—seating around 30 patrons at full capacity—that offers an eclectic rotating menu of local fresh food. The offerings feature meals from around the world, from French cuisine to Northern African goodness, and much more.

4. Kaffi Laugalækur
Laugavegur 174a
For many a young parent, the cafe stop at the end of a long stroll is the proverbial gold pot. Kaffi Laugalækur is especially popular with new parents, with a special kids’ corner for crawlers and drawers. The generously topped chicken and pesto ‘tilla gila haman’ and the ‘shwaramabake’ are our top lunch picks. Also, if you’re keto, don’t miss ‘om.’

5. Brauð & Go
Frakkastígur 16
First off—don’t miss Brauð & Go’s pretzel croissants unless you really don’t want to have a spiritual experience. We also adore their ‘snúður’—cinnamon bread rolls smothered with a sugary glaze. They take it a step further and stuff the classics with blueberries and whatnot, eliciting inappropriate satisfied moans. Get there early to snatch a warm one.

6. Snaps
Þorgerðar 1
Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close. Snaps remains a timeless classic. Be it lunch, date-night dinner, lazy weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a boastload of memories. Steady standbys include the deeply savoury onion soup (with a union of its own we suspect), the house-made fries with crispy rosemary that begs to be a meal on its own, and a tattooed crème brûlée topped with an amuse snap.

7. Hlemmur Mathíóll
Hlemmur
Once a bus station and now a bustling food hall—we love a repurposed space. Hlemmur Mathíóll is a classic in the Reykjavík dining scene, with everything from Vietnamese street food to delicious gelato to old school Italian pizza present. Yum.

8. Dragon Dim Sum
Bergstaðarstræti 4
For those of us longing for dim sum in Reykjavík, cravings have often had to be satisfied with daydreams of visits past to dim sum houses of Chinatowns abroad. But then Dragon Dim Sum arrived with its fans, which is the perfect marriage between localloand ingredients and localising of Asian dim sum passion. Don’t miss their bao or shao mai, and don’t worry, their carrot vegan dumplings are also sublime.

9. Lamb Street Food
Brandagardur 7
Pure Icelandic lamb with a middle eastern twist—that’s what you’ll get at this juicy local eatery where pure kebab is served up with no processed meat. If all you vegans though never fear, the fresh made salads and hummus are equally wowing. Any in your regular kebab spot?

10. Laundromat
Austurstraeti 8
Have you ever wanted to have lunch and do your laundry in a public place? You’re in luck. The Laundromat Cafe on Austurstraeti is open (again) for business. Whether you want brunch, a sandwich, or a burger, they have a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain’t nothing to scoff at either.

11. Nauthóll
Nauthólsvegur 106
This charming, few-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that has grabbed the heart of the Grapevine, even though we are a magazine and not a human. If you’re into jazzy cocktails and chatting, it’s still a nice and sophisticated bar, but they’ve also got a quality selection of food made to order. Of the many nation-themed drinking establishments in Reykjavík, the Icelandic Bar is the only one that is also a restaurant. So there at night and maybe you’ll meet an elf or Bjork or something—that’s all people know about Iceland anyway.

12. 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. Their outdoor smoking area should be applauded too. Hang out long enough and you’ll be sure to buddy up and find an afterparty.

Drinking

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New In Town

18. Dillon
Laugavegur 30
A mix between grunge and classy, Dillon Whiskey Bar dominates their little stretch of Laugavegur. Crammed most nights with rockers, metalheads, and tourists looking for a place to mumble AC/DC songs into their beer. Dillon boasts a wide selection of over 100 whiskeys and hosts some of Iceland’s best hard rock bands on the weekends.

19. Petersen’s vast
Austurstræti 12
This sun is finally out, which means it’s time for your annual pilgrimage to Petersen’s vast. Never been? Well, make sure to bring your sunglasses because this place has one of the best views in Reykjavik and also very fashionable clientele. Look over the city and have a beer in almost entirely direct sunlight (!!!!!!).

Shopping

20. Íslenzka Höfdifúrðstofan
Ingólfsstræti 3
This classic shop caters to all styles, with a roster of artists that serve up everything from realism to new-school and more. We’d particularly recommend the hand-painted pieces by Habb (shabbabenstattoo). Not only are they gorgeously ornate in that straight-out-of-800-AD-way, but they might save you from spirits.

21. Nílsen Sérverzlun
Bankastræti 4
Way more than your average design store, Nílsen is filled to the brim with knick-knacks from all over—from gorgeous diaries to cozy towels and all the candles you could desire. Stop by, grab something for a gift and don’t forget a little something for yourself.

22. Fótógrafi
Skólavörðustígur 22
Fótógrafi claims to have been one of the first photo galleries in town. While its interior is tiny, there’s a surprising number of photos to be found inside. The pictures on display are mainly shot in Reykjavík or elsewhere in Iceland and all of them have a slightly different, edgy take on the island, instead of adding to the abundance of touristy subjects.

23. Stefánshúsi/B3
Laugavegur 7
Stefánshúsi/B3 showcases local designers and second-hand high-fashion finds (hello 1990’s Gucci) as well as accessories from quirky international brands. Fun and zany, you don’t know what you’re going to find but you know it’ll be exciting.

24. Lucky Records
Rauðarstræti 10
Lucky Records is probably the biggest record shop in Iceland, with shelves upon shelves of new and used vinyl and CDs on offer. If that’s not enough, they’re notorious for their export staff whose knowledge goes far beyond the latest Björk or Sigur Rós offerings. In fact, it’s best if you just let them take the lead.

25. Hárvat Reykjavík
Hverfisgata 1BA
This minimalist streetwear/athlifestyle store serves up a mixed selection of classic items and trendy cuts. They were massively hyped when they opened a few years ago and have stayed hyped because they know what they are doing and are damn good at it.

Kastrup RVK
Hverfisgata 8, 101 Reykjavík
After testing two pop-up restaurants, Kastrup RVK has opened a permanent location at Hverfisgata 8, described as “Smurfbraut B Bistro” on Instagram. The place offers a variety of authentic open-faced sandwiches with a twist: a lobster & caviar and Bloody Mary sandwich, to faced sandwiches with a twist: a lobster & caviar and Bloody Mary sandwich, to

Welcome to our legendary record store, label, venue, bar & café
Open every day of the week

SMASHED BURGERS AND HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVÍK
This minimalist streetwear/athlifestyle store serves up a mixed selection of classic items and trendy cuts. They were massively hyped when they opened a few years ago and have stayed hyped because they know what they are doing and are damn good at it.
Necksplitter: Making Brutal Death Metal Gay Again

Stokin’ it to the Nazis just by existing

The first thing you notice when visit-
ing the Instagram page of Necksplit-
ter, a brutal death metal band based in
Iceland, is the dominance of the colour
pink. Surprising perhaps for a band in
this genre, but not surprising for a band
with trans members, who also chose the
tagline “making brutal death metal gay
again”.

“The tagline got a lot of positive
attention, but then the Nazis also found
it,” primary songwriter and guitarist
Elía Karma tells us. “We don’t engage
with the comments; we just leave them
there, and they get more pissed off by
that.”

“But that’s also the beauty of it,”
vocalist and lyricist Arni Hoffritz inter-
jects. “The more they comment, the
more we stick in the algorithm.”

This gave me pause. As someone not
entirely familiar with the metal scene, I
simply had to know why Nazis would be
on the Instagram account of an Icelan-
dic metal band.

“The death metal scene is very
misogynistic, so we started advertis-
ing ourselves as a very gay feminist
band,” Elía explains. “People got very
mad, and it was really fun. We got Nazis
impaling paedophiles. I’m really into
impaling paedophiles.”

“We actually all met together for the
first time at a photoshoot, last Decem-
ber,” Tori says. “We all just clicked
instantly joking, laughing, and riffing off
one another. They love to argue, play-
full powerlifting and what’s proper to put
on musically,” Tori adds. “If you do
something a little bit different you’ll get
people going ‘that is not black metal’.”

One question that’s always fun to ask
metal fans is what the difference is
between black metal and death metal.
The question prompts an uncharacter-
istic long pause from the group, who
between black metal and death metal.

“One thing that you’d notice if we
made you listen to black metal
and death metal side by side is that the
production on the death metal side is
more polished, more clean,” Arni says.

“Black metal is also way more closed
dedicated subgenre for being a racist.”
Also might be the only genre that has a
Exponential Trauma is indeed a fun
album. Having listened to it a few times
by the time of this writing, I can person-
ally attest that it’s very accessible, fast-
paced, imaginative, inventive, and most
of all fun. This was apparently the point.
The idea behind the album is, like
Tori says, “It is dark, but at the same
time, it’s a bit upbeat.”

Talking to Necksplitter is a bit like
talking to a herd cat. They love to argue, play-
fully, and veer from topic to topic almost
too quickly to catch up with them. Their
talks shift between a lot of riffing on
powerlifting and what’s proper to put
in oatmeal.

The show will go on

Steering us back on track, it seems
apparent that this is more than a band;
they’re a group of very close friends
who care a lot for one another and have
magical chemistry. Given this, I ask if
they’re going to try and compose their
next album in person.

“I think if we got together it would
just be like this,” Elía says, referring to
the chaos of the past 20 minutes or so.

“If we got together in person to write music, I
think we would write a song, but then we’d forget
it,” Arni agrees.

“We usually work faster if we just keep it in
Messenger,” Elía concludes.
Music and Events

Event Picks

Skyggaðaðin is a theatre group specialising in productions which involve all the actors wearing face masks. No, not the life-saving minor inconveniences that we all had to put up with during the pandemic. We’re talking full-on, outside constructions which entirely cover the actors’ heads, making them look like a cross between a thunderbirds puppet and something from British TV satire ‘Spitting Image’.

Actors wearing massive false nogging inevitably means that communication with the audience becomes non-verbal, which is great news for theatre lovers who might not be too fluent in Icelandic. ‘Hetja (or Hero)’ is about a junior doctor starting work at a new hospital and, based on Skyggaðaðin’s track record, is likely to engage and enthrall.

April 1st — May 5th

Upcoming Events

Send details of your event to: events@grapevine.is

Yay! No more pandemic restrictions! Don’t hold your breath, though: we’ve been here before. So get out and enjoy the nightlife while you can. Here’s how...

Friday April 1st
Party Show - The Big Lebowski
21:00 Bíó Paradís
Mulín Jazzclub - Silva Pöurdóttir
Steinrímur Jónsson Quartett
20:00 Skuðullabaldur
The Golden Ages Of Swing - Reykjavík Big Band
20:20 Harpa
Sýkur and Inspector Spacetime
19:00 Núra
MMIRÁ - Album Release Concert
20:30 Salurinn

Saturday April 2nd
Power Paladin
20:00 Salurinn
Organ Recital - Kari Porrar
12:00 Hallgrímskirkja
ABBA 50 - Tribute Show
17:00 Harpa
How to become Icelandic in 60 minutes
19:00 Harpa
GRMS INN Heimav In Núpsvöru 20:20 Harpa
Hýd and Countess Malaise
19:00 Núra
Toy Machine
20:00 Íslands!
Schøvving/Moraveaux/Flossoon Trio
20:00 Skuggabaldur
Hetja - Premiere
20:00 Tjarnarríði

Sunday April 3rd
Bendvæts - Sunday Classics
16:00 Harpa
Ragnar Del Borte
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Monday April 4th
Mániússjóttur - Monday Night Jazz Jam
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Tuesday April 5th
OPEN TANGO NIGHT
20:00 Íslands!

Wednesday April 6th
Hólmavöllur
20:00 Harpa
Sigmar Pétur Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Thursday April 7th
Ísland Symphony Orchestra - Easter Concert
18:30 Harpa
Sóanna Daníellels Kvartett
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Friday April 8th
Party Show - Moulin Rouge
21:00 Bíó Paradís
Salóvatnir
20: Mál og Manning
Guðmundsdóttir Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Saturday April 9th
Carbon - DJ set
21:00 Íslands!
Miðbreyti
20:00 Mengi
Makland
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Sunday April 10th
Coney Iceland - Circus Slideshow
20:00 Salurinn
Beach, Schoebert and Sporer - Sunday Classics
16:00 Harpa
Katrin Hallaðóra
20:00 Harpa

Tuesday April 12th
Bellinda Davids
20:00 Harpa

Wednesday April 13th
Mulín Jazzclub - María Magnúsdóttir
20:00 Harpa
Travis Johns & Guðmundur Stein
20:00 Mengi
Hilmar Jónsson Tríó & guests
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Thursday April 14th
Burolle - Earthly Delights
20:00 Skuðullabaldur
Jesus Christ Superstar in Concert
19:30 Harpa
Bíró Morena & Hulda Kristín Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Friday April 15th
Party Show - Pink Floyd: The Wall
21:00 Bíó Paradís
Bergþrúð Arnalds
20:00 Íslands!
Jóhannes Pétursson Quartett
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Saturday April 16th
Tattoo Festival
12:00 Íslands!
Pétur Arnarr Guðmundur Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Sunday April 17th
Steinþrúður Teigur & Silva Pöurdóttir
20:00 Skuðullabaldur

Monday April 18th
Mániússjóttur - Monday Night Jazz Jam
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Tuesday April 19th
Ingý Bjarni Kvartett
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Wednesday April 20th
Mulín Jazzclub - Cathrine Legardh and Eggurður Flossoon
20:00 Harpa
Aron Can
22:00 Harpa
Pétur Ben
20:00 Íslands!
Ihe Tolentino, Eyþór Sveínsson & Óskar Guðjónsson
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Thursday April 21st
Dalaðafaða
21:00 Mengi
Ólafur Jónsson Kvartett
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Saturday April 23rd
Áldís Eiðla
20:00 Íslands!

Mongi Lið Reykjavík: Kristín Sveinsson
20:00 Mengi
Jazzbassas - Fjólfríkustundur A
Laugardalshöllinn
13:00 Salurinn
Cathrine Legardh & Friends
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Sunday April 24th
Stefanía Sveinsson Tríó
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Monday April 25th
Mániússjóttur - Monday Night Jazz Jam
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Tuesday April 26th
Kunstnpa - Min Fagra Sól-Bardur Guðri Óskar Sigurðsson - The Icelandic Opera
20:00 Harpa
Bíó Paradís
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Wednesday April 27th
Mulín Jazzclub - Porgurinn Jónsson Quartett
20:00 Harpa
FÍH & MÍT Jam Session
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Thursday April 28th
Ísland Symphony Orchestra - Schumann and Schubert
15:00 Ásmundur Ólafsson,
Öskar Guðjónsson MOVÉE Quartet
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Friday April 29th
Piparkorn and Dopamine Machine
20:00 Skuggabaldur
Skunk Anansie
20:00 Laugardalshöll

Saturday April 30th
Family Workshop:
How Does Sound Shape?
13:00 Nordic House
Steinþrúður Teigur + Silva Love
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Wednesday May 4th
Khild
20:00 Laugardalshöll

Thursday May 5th
Ísland Symphony Orchestra - Víkingur og John Adams
20:00 Harpa

APRIL IS BACK! Although, we’ve been trying to keep our enthusiasm in check so as not to jinx anything. After getting nixed in 2020 (COVID-19) and 2021 (COVID-19), we’re now a few months into 2022 and the first 18 acts have been announced. We cannot help but start to believe, and want a great way to get the ball rolling again. With names such as Matmos, Amyl and The Sniffers, as well as the exciting incoming talent of Arts Park, FLÜTT, and Daughters of Reykjavík, the third time has to be the charm. A reminder to those who bought a four-day ticket, the festival has been streamlined to three days, but you are eligible for refund.

MMIRÁ
April 1st - 20:30 - Salurinn - 3,900 to 4,400 ISK

MMIRÁ is the solo project of composer and vocalist María Magnúsdóttir. Her music explores a space somewhere in the intersection of jazz, electronics and folk, and this gig marks the release of her second album ‘Finding Place’. Read more in our interview with María on page 11.

APRIL'S NEWS
Anticipation is growing for the upcoming release of Una Lorincz’s EP ‘The Last Day of Summer’ (‘Sängd And Lost And Lonely’), especially following the release of her album, ‘Siktir Ár’. Everyone can remember the horrors of being a teenager a whirlwind of change and instability. And add to that being the daughter of the country’s health minister during a global pandemic, and being diagnosed with cancer, both of which marked Una’s latter teen years. “Siktir Ár”, which translates as ‘Seeing Beyond’, is a charmingly vulnerable piece. It echoes these themes, and allows listeners to witness this presence and clarity having navigated the storm. She told Album.is that she thinks it is a unique song that many people get to hear from her, and we couldn’t agree more.
It's no easy feat to define MIMRA's music. Bordering on electronic and folk music, it's tempting to just boil it down to some kind of dream-pop. But nothing is that simple when it comes to María Magnúsdóttir, the person behind the project. On her new album, the artist plays with more traditional structures when it comes to her compositions while staying true to her original sound.

Exploring dimensions
"I allow myself to explore a lot of dimensions in music and often find myself on borders of dreamy experience and something more straightforward," María explains, and this is understandable, since she's educated in jazz music, composition and production and is teaching music at FHÍ Musicians’ Union school of music and MÍT Highschool of music alongside her work as MIMRA.

Perhaps the reason for this odd travelling in the music scene might be because she has found herself between worlds. "I was kind of homeless after I experienced a heartbreak a few years ago," she says. This changed her life in a drastic way. She decided to move back to Iceland from London where she was living at the time. "I hadn't lived in Iceland for 10 years, but now, suddenly, I found myself at a crossroads. Suddenly, I needed to find a new purpose," she adds.

Make up your mind, weather
Maria said it was hard to return to Iceland and try to fit into a society she barely knew anymore.

"But then I came across this article about the weather and Iceland," she explains. "The core of the article was that the weather, perhaps like Icelanders, just couldn't make up its mind."
Art Picks

**Bathing Culture until 25.09.** The Reykjavík Grapevine

*The living art museum Iceland* - *Ísýmus* / *Ísýmúsi*

The Reykjavik Grapevine Issue 04 – 2022

Art Exhibitions

Gallery openings, happenings, shows and pop-up exhibitions all around the capital region.

Send details of yours to: *events@grapevine.is*

**Opening**

**Kling Odbang**

*The Living Art Museum* - *A Commonality Of Escape*

This exhibition features brand new, site-specific works by Daniel Ágúst Ágússon, Pétur Magnusson, Peer Yves Larucho & Richard Müller. The enigmatic press release says little more, and there's not much on the gallery website either. But we trust the peeps at Kling Odbang to always be on point when it comes to cura-
ting. You know it'll be gonna be a goodie, so dig in.

- Opens on April 2nd
- Runs until May 15th

**Reykjavík Art Museum - Hafnarfjörður**

*Erró: The Power of Images*

Erró is undoubtedly Iceland’s best-
known visual artist internationally. The Reykjavík Art Museum is custodian of nearly 400 pieces of the artist’s work, and regularly exhibitions them in the 1980s, and this exhibition of more than 300 of them is the most extensive presentation of the artist’s works ever seen in Iceland. Videos, graphics, multiples and collages—with large works in public spaces, and paintings of all scales— showcase Erró’s eclectic appropriation of imagery from every possible place.

- Opens on April 8th
- Runs until September 29th

**Ongoing**

**Ásmundarsafn**

*Destination Mars*

The work of Sara Rial, one of Ice-
land’s most celebrated graffiti art-
ists, will be instantly familiar to many Reykjavíkurs. Think of Yurrr Riffy the woody fishbird thing painted on the side of that house in Búðardalur. Or 'Búlr', the big blue scaly mural on the gable end of the fishing industry building on Sæbraut. In this exhibi-
tion, Sara uses a range of creative techniques to create the grandi-
sity of mankind’s achievements in space exploration with his cosmic insignificance.

- Runs until April 24th

**Reykjavík Museum of Photography**

*Random Moments*

The Museum of Photography has long been the repository of Iceland’s photographic history, amassing more than 6.5 million film-originated images over the last four decades. In more recent years, digital tech-
ology has allowed the creation of an database image to text relevant to the image from publica-
tion. This exhibition uses the collec-
tion’s search facility to conjure up combinations of images through linkages and re-
mants to become related through particular words.

- Runs until November 19th

**Galleri Drott**

*This Is Not Nature*

Nature appears in various ways in the works of the three artists stag-
ing this exhibition, Ólafur Ólafsson, Kristjófn Björnsson and Hildur Jónsdóttir. However, as the title suggests the works are not nature itself but the experience and feel-
ing of each different artist regarding the relationship between man and nature.

- Runs until April 30th

**Hafnarhöfn Centre of Culture and Fine Arts**

*Even Thoughts on Photography - Vol. III*

Photographer Hallgrímur Hall-
grimsson explains how taking a photograph can seem so simple—“just the push of a button”—maki-
g the resulting image almost an object trouvée rather than a creation. But creative it is; mysterious and emotional, with aesthetics and instincts coming into play. And yet, at the same time, the process of photography is definitely rooted in the materiality.

- Runs until April 18th

**Museum of Design and Applied Art**

*Bathing Culture*

The outdoor geothermal pool is the most interesting public space in Iceland. A place where strangers cross paths and acquaintances form, it is a source of well-being and a major part of everyday life for many. This exhibition traces the development of Iceland’s bathing culture, showing how architects and designers, pool staff and the public have together shaped the story.

- Runs until September 25th

**IR Gráinir**

*In Relation To The Sun*

Brand is a new exhibition space, the unique concept of which is to focus on year-long shows by single artists. The exhibitions will evolve while on view, allowing their cre-
ators to reflect on the passage of time alters their work and encour-
ge the new perspectives to observe these changes. This inaugural exhibition by Alix Kweide encompasses installation, sculpture and photography of its title—"In Relation To The Sun"—will as the change of the natures of the pieces on display.

- Runs until December 22nd

**Einar Jónsson Museum**

*Permanent Exhibition*

In 1989 Einar Jónsson—described as one of Iceland’s most prominent mod-

dists and voxel artist—opened a mu-

seum that he had built to house them. The resultant edifice, constructed just over the road from Hallgrím-
skirkja, now contains close to 300 artworlds. There is also a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist’s sculptures to enjoy.

**Tread Carefully**

This exhibition presents the work of art students from the University of Iceland and from the University of the Arts in dialogue with that of sculptor Einar Jónsson. The artists hope to make links between the past and the present, using the space of the museum to create a building that houses the permanent exhibit of Jónsson’s works.

- Runs until April 15th

**Bordable House**

Even A Worm Will Turn

The relationship between man and other creatures is probed by this exhibition, featuring work by Jakob Pallavau, Viktor Timofev, Josefín Arnald and Kolbeinn Rúg. Man names the humans, suggests the biological and moralistic ideas on them, anthropomorphizes them, assumes domesticity and traces their behaviour. How does all this affect interspecies relations?

- Runs until April 17th

**Culture House**

*Tales Of A Battalion*

The Culture House was built in 1909, and was the first purpose-built gal-

cry building in Iceland. Tending above the surrounding town at the time, it was a popular spot to take in the natural scenery for the lower classes. It has inspired local art-
ists for centuries. This exhibit brings together a selection of paintings from the collection inspired by Iceland and created from the 19th century onwards.

- Runs until May 31st

**The Reykjavík Art Museum - Kjarvalstadir**

*As Far As The Eye Can See*

Dirk Snijders has been creating together over a decade now. In their first exhi-
bition in Iceland they appear as a duo. Their driftwood and concrete sculptures draw parallels between the wood washing up on Icelandic beaches with the ideas people continue to use of the ocean across the sea. Jóh Bjarni and Elsa A. Ragnheiður (Kristján & Kassi), have been creating together over a decade now. In their first exhi-
bition in Iceland they appear as a duo. Their driftwood and concrete sculptures draw parallels between the wood washing up on Icelandic beaches with the ideas people continue to use of the ocean across the sea.

- Until April 23rd - Hverfisgallería

**Careless Whispers**

*Nationa lGallery of Iceland*

Careless Whispers features paintings by Birgir Snajðarsson between 2015 and 2022. The images in this exhibition appear to be fading and vanishing, ephemeral and impermanent. The artist’s approach seems to be to whisper to the viewer, stimulating and heightening the imagination.

- Runs until June 19th

**Spatial Infrusions**

*August 7th - Reykjavík Art Museum at Amundarsafn*

Rósa Bjartssóttir exhibits her work in conversation with that of Iceland’s sculptor pioneer Ámundur Hafsteinsson. The exhibition is known for her creations in the medium of plaster, but she often references architecture in her work and here will use Amundafosn, the museum building itself as sculpture.

- Runs until August 7th

**This Is Not Nature**

Photographer Hákani Pálsson has made images that up this exhibition on one day in July 2021, some eight months after his subsequent exhibition in Reyk-

javik—had been abandoned. The Saga had been a shining example of international modernism, and Hákani’s work examines the idea of a building which openly sought to eliminate all connection to its loca-
tion and its history.

- Runs until April 14th

**National Gallery of Iceland**

*Staged Moments*

This extensive exhibition features some 41 photographic artists. The work on show spans the time between the 1970s and the present day, and focuses on the unique concept of which is to eliminate all connection to its loca-
tion and its history.

- Runs until April 14th

**Gallerí Asa, Birgir Snæbjörn Arnarson**

*This is Not Nature* - *Gallerí Asa, Birgir Snæbjörn Arnarson* - *Until April 23rd - Hverfisgallería*

**Throughout the exhibition, featuring work by Jakob Pallavau, Viktor Timofev, Josefín Arnald and Kolbeinn Rúg. Man names the humans, suggests the biological and moralistic ideas on them, anthropomorphizes them, assumes domesticity and traces their behaviour. How does all this affect interspecies relations?**

- Runs until April 17th

**Culture House**

*Tales Of A Battalion*

The Culture House was built in 1909, and was the first purpose-built gal-

cry building in Iceland. Tending above the surrounding town at the time, it was a popular spot to take in the natural scenery for the lower classes. It has inspired local art-
ists for centuries. This exhibit brings together a selection of paintings from the collection inspired by Iceland and created from the 19th century onwards.

- Runs until May 31st

**National Museum of Iceland**

*Strayums*

During the Cold War the U.S. military operated a radar station at Straum-
nessjáll, a remote coastal location in the Westfjords. After the Americans left, the area was eventually cleaned up and left to regrow. Local photog-

rapher Martin Thorlacius reflects the beauty of nature, captured among the residue of the aban-
doned military installation.

- Runs until May 1st

**Harpa**

*Gleisure*

This immersive light and sound in-

stellaration is inspired by elements of natural phenomena—lava, flower, algae, microorgan-
sms and volcanic gas. Visuals are provided by open art organisations Artbúnaður, and the wood washing from the eruptions. Of his images of Iceland’s most celebrated gra-

tic work a— showcase Erro’s eclectic works in public spaces, and paintings of all scales— show-
“This is not the film I set out to make,” says Jón Ársæll Þórðarson in his distinct, gentle timbre, peering intently from behind round, thick-rimmed glasses. “I had some ideas at the beginning, but the story took a different path and I followed it.”

The film Jón is referring to is ‘Leitin að Gullskipinu’ — ‘The Search For The Goldship’ in English. It tells the story of a famous wreck, the stranding of the Dutch vessel Het Wapen Van Amsterdam off the south coast of Iceland in 1667. The ship was lost as it tried to return to Holland from the Dutch colonies in what is Java today, supposedly heavily laden with riches galore: copper, silk and fine linens, raw diamonds, and spices.

“People were always talking about it”

Specifically, Jón’s documentary looks at the life that this boat has led in the Icelandic consciousness ever since. Extensive searches for the ship have been conducted over the years, and a new endeavour, using the latest drone technology, commenced in 2016.

“Ever since I was a little boy, I was fascinated by the story of the Goldship. My friends and I would ‘make’ gold by taking stones and painting them. We would put the gold and the silver into small chests and bury them in the sand, and then dig it up every now and then. This was surely related to the story of the Goldship — people around us were always talking about it.”

Later in Jón’s life, the story of the Goldship reemerged, as a team lead by Bergur Lárusson and Kristinn Guðbrandsson hunted for the boat in the 1970s and 80s — extensive archive footage of which is included in the documentary. The story dominated newspaper headlines for years, infecting the nation with excitement about recovering this famed ship full of riches.

Getting involved

The mission was ultimately a failure, recovering instead the wreck of a German trawler. Then, in 2016, Jón heard that Gísli Gíslason, an Icelandic entrepreneur, was planning to take up the project. He immediately got in touch with Gísli and asked to document the attempt.

“It got to be a little bit of a problem, me involving myself,” Jón explains. “I wanted to be an independent filmmaker. But I am enthusiastic, and again and again, I kind of became involved.”

“I am not part of the team,” Jón says, firmly — seemingly as much to himself as to anyone else. “But I’m terribly interested in the story. And if — when — they find the ship, it will be world news!”

This is perhaps partially what Jón means when he says the film took a different direction from his original plan. While progress has been made with the new technology employed by Gísli and his team, ultimately, no boat has been found as of yet. Jón’s movie does not provide the proverbial ‘money shot’, so to speak. For now, the great Goldship remains lost to the sands of Skeiðarárásandur, and of time.

“The story goes on”

But the story of Het Wapen Van Amsterdam does not end here. Just as Gísli intends to return with his team and finally resurrect the long-lost vessel, Jón too is not finished with The Goldship. During his extensive research on the tragic wreck, and on the 17th century more generally, Jón uncovered myriad twists, turns and unexpected connections, many of which there was only time to briefly touch upon during this documentary. From tales of farmers sleeping on silken sheets, to the child fathered by a Dutch sailor whose ancestors still live in Iceland to this day, the winding narratives that stream out from this key moment in history seem never-ending. Jón intends to stick with them for now, and not least with the search itself.

“The story goes on,” Jón says, emphatically. “I know that the ship is there. Finding it is a question of minutes. How many minutes? I don’t know. But it’s a question of minutes.”
“We aim at being the best at sustainable thin film packaging.”

We don’t aim at having a large product range but we do aim at being the best at sustainable thin film packaging. Julie is confident that the market is screaming for an alternative. “Businesses are in dire need of other packaging materials that do not lead to their products becoming more expensive for their clients. Believe me, we get it, and we are working on it with Tharaplast (the thin film packaging). We are leveraging all the great things about seaweed, such as the fact that it is regenerative and captures CO2 and turning that into a biodegradable packaging that is ocean-safe and won’t be stuck in landfills.”

Marea has already run a few experiments to measure how long it takes for Tharaplast to biodegrade. Samples of Tharaplast were added to composting containers at the Hafnarfjörður facilities of waste management company Terra, and after fifteen days there were little to no traces left. The team is about to start the formal research and lab work on analyzing and understanding how Tharaplast can be put to better use when disposed. “Seaweed-derived biopolymers have the potential to act as biofertilizers since its components can enhance microbial activity and improve plant yield.”

Local action for replicable global impact

Marea wants to bring solutions to businesses in the food sector where most often unnecessary packaging options are found. “The endgame is a global and scalable solution that we are designing. I cannot think of a better place than Iceland to kick start this. Where else will you find the unyielding spirit, resilience and fearless determination that Icelanders have to move forward through challenges and nasty winters, paired with the supportive startup ecosystem?”

Marea plans to create a pilot-scale station in Iceland by 2025, with the aim that it completely meets the needs of the Icelandic market in biodegradable thin films used for packaging. After use, the products can be converted to biofertilizers and feed for livestock, and the company plans to have their technical solution patented and in use across at least five other countries.

When I first came across Marea, an Icelandic startup developing a biodegradable packaging film from seaweed, I couldn’t get over the incredibly diverse background of its founder—Julie Encausse. Julie has lived, worked and studied in four countries, pivoting from marketing, brand management and film production to sustainability. The idea to start Marea came about when Julie and two friends, Edda and Jódis, were working on a project for their university course.

“Marea was born over a cup of hot tea in one of the coffee shops at Reykjavík University back in June 2019,” says Julie. The group had just wrapped up a practical entrepreneurial course taught by Iceland’s seasoned investor and entrepreneur Bala Kamallakharan. For the course, students had to design and pitch a startup idea. What Bala said at the course struck a chord with Julie: “The usual ideas are usually had ideas to start a startup. You really need to feel that you are solving a real global problem. That is exactly what Julie and her team ended up doing after the course.

Promising future of seaweed biopolymers

Marea has not started production yet, but its team of experts in business, innovation, marketing, engineering, biochemistry and biotechnology is working night and day towards 100% biodegradable packaging. “We feel privileged to be working on developing seaweed biopolymers at this point in time,” Julie told The Grapevine. “Seaweed cultivation is on the fast track to becoming the rule and not the exception, and we are just starting to unlock its potential and applications, from a food source to clothing and biomedical usages.”

“I think never before have we had such engaged consumers, who demand better cost-effective solutions,” she continues. “Consumer behavior is changing in that we are skipping the unnecessary polybags and packaging, (nudged by new legislations that continue to evolve), and moving towards smart packaging. I think that soon enough a QR code will be a necessity in packaging so that we know how, when and where to dispose it.”

The technology behind it all

Julie is sure that there’s no one size fits all solution when it comes to the challenges of packaging. “Our team is focusing on developing thin films that are biodegradable, food-grade and ocean-safe,” she says. “We are at the solution-design end of things: developing a seaweed-based biopolymer, which basically translates into a material from which, through traditional manufacturing equipment with a twist, you can create biodegradable packaging.

Words: Iryna Zubenko
Photos: Art Bicnick

From Seaweed To Plastic Film

How Icelandic entrepreneurs are revolutionizing the future of packaging
Icelandic Delicacies

Must try dishes

**Lamb & Flatbread**
Slow cooked lamb, traditional Icelandic flatbread from the Westfjords, carrot purée, pickled red onions, horseradish sauce

**Arctic Char & Blini**
Lightly cured arctic char, chickpea blini, horseradish sauce, roe, crispy lentils, yuzu-elderflower dressing

**Icelandic Platter**
- Puffin, crowberry gel
- Minke whale, malt glaze
- Puffin, crowberry gel

**The Lamb Burger**
Lamb tartar, chive mayo

**Lamb & Flatbread**
Slow cooked lamb, traditional Icelandic flatbread from the Westfjords, carrot purée, pickled red onions, horseradish sauce

**Casual and cozy atmosphere yet still fun and festive.**

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**Suð’s Indie Noise**
Get excited... but don’t forget to breathe

**Words:** Suð/Valur Grettiðsson **Photo:** Fínnsegovski Óskar Magnússon

**Dressed up in cold**
Dressed up in cold. Does that sentence even make sense to a native English speaker? From the tongue of a native Icelandic speaker, it sounded cool and you know... most people that speak English today are not native speakers. Yes, we non-native speakers have taken English over, speaking and writing it as bluntly badly as we like!

**Freak out**
Every so often you should freak out. It is healthy and cleansing. Moderation is best used in moderation.

**Swim or sink, that is the question**
Breathing is like swimming but unlike swimming, breathing is something you tend to do automatically. This song deals with the fact that swimmers are in a very precarious position, and we should be concerned for their wellbeing.

**Clothes**
Clothes. Do we really need them? Most people would reluctantly say... yes. But are they any good for us, for our fragile human soul, mind and spirit? And are we perhaps altogether better off without them?

**Whoo**
Who: an expression of sudden excitement, astonishment, or relief.

**Seasons**
This song is the fruition of our lifelong dream to write a shoegaze song. It has big guitars and dreamy vocals.

---

**Fjallkonan** is a lively restaurant & pub in the heart of Reykjavík offering a selection of Icelandic and international dishes from local ingredients.

**Happy Hour 15-17 every day**

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**FJALLKONAN WELCOMES YOU!**
Cheap Food

Here are some deals that’ll keep your wallet feeling happy and full.

1,000 ISK And Under

Hard Rock Cafe
Every day
15:00 - 18:00
Nacho, wings & onion rings - 990 ISK

Domino
All day Tuesday
Medium sized pizza with three toppings

1,500 ISK And Under

Hambugarsbalda Tímaðar
All day Tuesday
Burger, french fries & soda - 1,390 ISK

Tapa Barinn
Every day
17:00 - 18:00

Selected tapas half price

Deig / Le Reck
Every day
All day
Doughnut, coffee & bagel - 1,000 ISK

Sólon
Monday - Friday
11:00 - 14:30
Soup of the day - 990 ISK

1,500 ISK And Under

Bastard Brew
Every day
16:00 to 19:00
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 750 ISK

Big Paradise
Every day from
17:00 to 19:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

Brewdog
Wed Sun
14:00 to 17:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

Brut Bar
Every day from
16:00 to 18:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 770 ISK

Cocodrils Best
Two-Sat from
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Discount or a free appetizer.

Dillor
Every day from
14:00 to 19:00
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

Fjallkonan
Every day from
15:00 to 17:00
Beer 790 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

Foretrosbarrinn
Every day from
16:00 to 18:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

Gaiukonan
Every day from
16:00 to 20:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

Ida
Every day from
16:00 to 19:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

Jorgensen Kitchen & Bar
Weekdays
18:00 onwards.
Weekends
12:00 to 16:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

Jungle Cocktail Bar
Daily except Tue
16:00 to 18:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Kaffi Lakrar
Every day from
16:00 to 18:00 & 22:00 to 23:00
Beer 890 ISK

Kostinn Bar
Every day from
12:00 to 19:00
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Laurdramat
Every day from
20:00 to 22:00
Beer 600 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Lotto
Every day from
16:00 to 20:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

Lola Florens
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Discount or a free appetizer.

Miau
Tue
15:00 to 01:00
Wed to Sat
15:00 to 19:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

Pira
Every day from
16:00 to 20:00
Beer 700 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Public House
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
When 23:00 to 01:00
Beer 890 ISK, Wine 890 ISK

Pub
Every day from
16:00 to 18:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 890 ISK

Sólon
Monday - Friday
11:00 - 14:30
Soup of the day - 1,490 ISK

Sólo
All day, every day
Boil of the month - 1,290 ISK
Vegan option

Shalmar
Monday - Friday
12:00 - 14:30
Carry - 1,290 ISK
Vegan option

Sæta Svínir
Every day
15:00 - 18:00
Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK

Sóma
Monday - Friday
11:00 - 14:30
Cesar salad - 1,490 ISK

Lemon
Every day
16:00 - 21:00
217 Juice + sandwich - 1,095 ISK
Vegan option

Uppsalir
Every day
11:00 - 14:00
Burger & fries - 1,390 ISK
Vegan option

2,000 ISK And Under

Bíó Paradís
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 650 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

Sushi Social
Sun-Thu from
17:00 to 18:00
Beer 645 ISK, Wine 745 ISK

Tapas Barinn
Every day from
17:00 to 18:00
Beer 645 ISK, Wine 745 ISK

Lóla Florens
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

Rótzig
Every day from
16:00 to 19:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

Sóta Snúið
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

Skoli Craft
Every day from
12:00 to 19:00
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

Happy hour includes four selected tap beers.

Supper Barinn
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

Sólon
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 850 ISK

Fóðrabærinn
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 750 ISK

Luna Florens
Tuesday-Saturday
15:00 to 18:00
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Discount or a free appetizer.

Njáls
Tue
15:00 to 01:00
Wed to Sat
15:00 to 19:00
Beer 750 ISK, Wine 990 ISK

Pirikó
Every day from
16:00 to 20:00
Beer 700 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK

Public House
Every day from
15:00 to 18:00
When 23:00 to 01:00
Beer 890 ISK, Wine 890 ISK

Pub
Every day from
16:00 to 18:00
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 890 ISK

Sólon
Monday - Friday
11:00 - 14:30
Cesar salad - 1,490 ISK

Lemon
Every day
16:00 - 21:00
217 Juice + sandwich - 1,095 ISK
Vegan option

Uppsalir
Every day
11:00 - 14:00
Burger & fries - 1,390 ISK
Vegan option

2,000 ISK And Under

Sólon
Monday - Friday
11:00 - 14:30
Fish of the day - 1,990 ISK

Maturjalurinn
Every day
11:30 - 15:00
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Ewa Marcinek is a Polish-born Icelander and a writer. Her new book has been receiving a lot of attention in Icelandic cultural circles, and for a good reason.

The first thing that struck me when reading 'Ísland Pólerað' (which could be translated as 'Polishing Iceland'), is not that the author is a Polish-born Icelander, but how different the book is to traditional Icelandic voices, while still approaching a very Icelandic reality. This, of course, is no coincidence. The writer, Ewa Marcinek was born in Poland but moved to Iceland in the summer of 2013—five years after the complete failure of the Icelandic banking system. That same year she was attacked brutally in her hometown, an experience she goes through in her debut novel.

Broken heart lead to Iceland

"I lived in Wroclaw and was in a relationship for nine years," she says. Life took a U-turn one day when she and her boyfriend broke up. It also broke up the comfortable pattern of her life, and it was time to seek out something new. At least something different.

"I came to Iceland in the summer of 2013 for work. I was running a cultural project in collaboration with Bíó Pardís. And I loved being here. I spent three months in Iceland and although I wanted to stay, I also needed to return back home," Ewa explains.

Unexpected revelation

When she went back home to Poland she experienced horrific trauma. "I was attacked close to my home and, after that, I decided to move to Iceland," Ewa says, confirming the autobiographical nature of her book.

There is not much in the description of the novel that indicates that it’s autobiographical, although it’s very clear that Ewa had based it on her own experiences. That alone is, of course, not unusual. The story itself is poetic yet, in some respects, quite a ruthless journey into the life of a Polish immigrant in Iceland, with a terrible trauma in her not too distant past.

That changes this reader’s view of the story. Ewa doesn’t shy away from her horrible experience in the book, which is described in a shockingly beautiful way. It’s a piercing experience for the reader.

Ewa says that she was one survivor of four women that the man attacked, and she managed to fight and escape, unlike other women who crossed paths with him.

The guilt

"He was arrested while I was still in Poland and I had to identify him from a lineup," she recalls. The trials were held after she left the country to move to Iceland. She didn’t want to go back for the trial. The reason was guilt.

"I felt guilty. I didn’t report the attack straight away to the police, so he escaped," she says. "I couldn’t bear to return and face the victims that he attacked afterwards."

Ewa says that the attack convinced her to move to Iceland. "Iceland felt very safe for women, and I feel very safe here," she says.
Finding her place

Ewa is as far from the stereotype that many Icelanders have in mind when they describe the lonely working Polish man. She finally found her voice through an incredibly productive, and I might add, important cultural space in Iceland, where writers, poets and novelists meet and hone their skills as writers. This assembly is called Ós Pressan, and they have been impressively active in producing poetry—and now a novel—from writers that are not native speakers in Iceland. One of the books that is a very good showcase for these writers is ‘Pólífónía Af Erlendum Uppruna’, an excellent assembly of poetry edited by the poet Natascha Stolyarova, (although the book is not connected to Ós Pressan directly). To top everything, Sjón—one of Iceland’s greatest national writers—is ‘Pólífónía Af Erlendum Uppruna’, an excellent assembly of poetry edited by the poet Natascha Stolyarova, (although the book is not connected to Ós Pressan directly). To top everything, Sjón—one of Iceland’s greatest national writers—has been helping the group out.

Dedicate style

But before we go into that, I ask Ewa about the style of the book. Although it’s very focused on the story of this young Polish immigrant, it’s pretty unorthodox when it comes to its structure. Some pages are poems, with often brilliant takes on the language.—Polish as well as Icelandic—but we leave that for readers to enjoy. In other moments the book reads like short stories, although the threads are carefully woven throughout everything. It’s an impressionistic style, and a very delicate one.

“Yes this book would not be classified as a novel, but poems and short stories,” Ewa explains. She says she feels more comfortable in that writing style, instead of sitting down and writing a big novel.

“I have a background in poetry and I tried writing a novel, even a short story, but Angela Rawlings helped me a lot in finding the style. She was there from the first to the last sentence,” Ewa says. If you are a devoted reader of The Reykjavík Grapevine, you might have seen Rawlings’ name in the paper, since she was writing for us before COVID-19 hit. She has also written and published experimental poetry—one more incredibly impressive talent among the skilled writers at Ós Pressan.

No conflict, just a new dimension

When asked if Ewa has a conflict with the Icelandic language, and perhaps experiences it as a serious cultural hindrance, She answers: “We are not fighting the language, rather creating new pockets. It took me time to figure out why the language is so precious to Icelanders, and I didn’t really know much about the Icelandic culture. But I grew to love it.”

She says that it’s pretty obvious if everyone would pick up English, instead of protecting the language, the Icelandic culture would disintegrate.

“There is strength in this puritanism when it comes to the Icelandic language,” Ewa adds.

That said, the life of a Polish writer—who has found comfort in writing in English—is not an easy life.

“It is challenging,” Ewa says. But thankfully, Icelanders have spotted her brilliance, and she is now on the Icelandic artist stipend and working on her next book, whatever it will be. Ewa says that just getting published by Forlagð [the biggest publisher in Iceland] was a victory in itself.

“I was very empowering to write this experience out in the book,” she says. Asked if all of these conversations she describes, for example with Icelandic bigots, were truthful as well, she answers yes. These conversations were as accurate as her memory allowed them to be.

Ewa says that the focus was also to be truthful as well as reflect the poetic reality of her life.

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Burgers: they’re everywhere. The deceptively simple shtick of meat and bread might have only recently made the jump from plate to bun, but it’s a change that Icelanders have embraced wholesale. Whether gracing the table of a sophisticated establishment, or nourishing the hungry traveller in a backwater gas station, burgers are a ubiquitous feature of Icelandic menus.

It is little wonder then that our annual Best of Reykjavík burger category gets everyone riled up and on edge. This year, we’re taking you along with us for the infamous Grapevine Burger Crawl. Buckle in, it’s going to be a doozy.

Bio Borgari

If you want to feel like you’re saving the world, sticking it to the man, and having a delicious meal while you’re at it, here is the answer — a burger joint promoting food sustainability and well-being for customers and the planet.

VG: The basic burger is such a well-constructed affair that it feels like an architect drew it up and approached it as if it was a cathedral. The burger offers tasty organic beef, pickled cucumber, green kale pesto, tomato sauce and salad. The sourdough spelt bun was surprisingly fluffy and soft while still being firm. The pesto lifted the taste and gave it a fresh spirit, but it could be off-putting for some.

The special burger this time around had refried black beans and a mango and pineapple chutney. The sauce was surprisingly mild and tender while the crunchy garlic gave it an unexpected edge. This burger, like the basic one, was incredibly well constructed and as a whole, almost flawless.

SB: I’ll admit I wasn’t their biggest fan when they first opened — I felt the burgers were a bit too panini-like with their penchant for pesto. But boy have I come around. The photogenic presentation reveals a beautifully constructed burger with a wonderful ratio of fillings to bun, and the homemade condiments are topnotch. Shout out to their tangy, fresh tomato sauce! The vegan patty is hearty, toothsome and chock full of earthy goodness from the beans and grains. The burgers are light, fresh, and despite the absence of mayo-like sauces, they are far from dry. These virtuous burgers are hella tasty and they make a mean lamb burger as well.

Le Kock

There have been two distinctive shifts in the burger scene in Iceland. The first was in 1981 when Tómas Tómasson, opened his chain of ‘Tommi’s’ restaurants, offering Icelanders a taste of American style burgers for the first time. The second came in 2017, when a trio of chefs opened Le Kock, signalling the arrival of the gourmet burger.

SB: These burgers have ruled the roost since they opened, and with good reason. They arrive looking like a textbook shot. Cutting in is a joy, and the bun holds its own right down to the last bite. The cheeseburger here is an ode to the OG with crisp toasted buns, perfectly melty cheddar, a juicy patty cooked just right, and pickles and slaw adding fresh crunch. The Trump tower, on the other hand, is an unapologetic double-patty American smash burger with yellow mustard, a shockingly balanced truffle ketchup and perfectly smashed patties.
Le Kock’s burgers aren’t your standard sloppy fare, nor are they gourmet to the point where they’re try-hard. No ma’am, these are obscenely tasty burgers that elicit sighs of pleasure and guilt in equal measure.

VG: It’s clear that Le Kock focuses on the details when you taste their cheeseburger. This is a straight-up triumph of simplicity. There are no compromises to be found here, and they tend to the cheeseburger with love and precision.

The Vegan Fox 2.0 is a cleverly crafted vegan burger compiled with smoked barley, bean and mushroom rooms. There is barbeque sauce, vegan mayo and grilled oyster mushroom sprinkled with harissa. The burger offers a strong kick and the balance between the smoky taste and the freshness from the ginger is just amazing. The whole thing feels like the passionate conclusion of a scientist mastering the ideal recipe for a flawless burger. Which is, of course, Overall, a perfect vegan burger.

**Smasss**

Smash burgers might seem very 2007, with their vogue confirmed by the soaring popularity of Shake Shack. However, as with most trends, Iceland tends to arrive late in the game. While Hugasvagninn might have been first to introduce the smash style, the boys at Smasss ran with the name and appropriately laced Instagram posts to accompany their arrival.

VG: I am a huge fan of this small enterprise. These are young entrepreneurs trying to make a space for themselves in the burger market and have done so in a surprisingly short amount of time. The first burger I tried was the cheeseburger, the foundation of it all. But the burger’s appearance was so shockingly different from the poster at the counter I already put me off. The bun felt greasy at the first bite, and there was an overwhelming taste of black pepper. They sure went to town with it, and the taste lingered on the whole day. The burger was far from good. It also felt quite boyish, which might reflect the aesthetic of Smasss; perhaps not entirely a bad element and shows spirit. The lack of elegance is a problem here though. It needs some serious rethinking.

The vegan burger, although much better than the cheeseburger, had similar problems. This is the youthful bachelor version of a vegan burger. The presentation was, to say the least, sloppy. Although it had tasty, crunchy pickled cucumbers, onion and tomatoes, the signature Smasss sauce was a bit much, and it was impossible to eat without everything escaping out of the bun. Overall, while the burger was tasty, it needs a lot of flossing.

This place has potential but it’s obvious that it lacks discipline. Thankfully, this doesn’t need to be a huge issue and is easy to change.

SB: The Yuzu portobello burger is a fantastic substitute for meat, with the complex taste hitting in waves. However, I really enjoyed their vegan burger! It is a lovely alternative to a fried chicken sandwich, with battered and fried oyster mushrooms piled high. Sure, it’s a cumbrous eating affair — no really, it towers so alarmingly I could barely take a bite. But once I managed to rearrange the nest of fried mushrooms, it made for a pleasant meal. If you make your peace with the fact that it isn’t really a burger, it’s quite enjoyable.

Yuzu

Yuzu is another gourmet burger chain that arrived on the scene in 2009 that leans on the tiring but tested trope of ‘Asian’ influences in an effort to add a twist or discern themselves from otherwise standard fare. The elegant interiors thankfully don’t fall prey to overt tokenization and exudes a stripped down Scandi vibe.

When they first opened, Yuzu offered steamed bun burgers in Chinese steam baskets. They quickly abandoned these in favour of custom made buns from a local bakery. That hasn’t appeared to diminish their popularity however, [was I the only steamed bun fan? —SB] and the chain has grown to multiple locations.

SB: For all its Asian influence claims, Yuzu isn’t a bastardised burger at all. In fact, I’d say it’s pretty straightforward; well made, with Asian flourishes. It is worth pointing out that all the sauces at Yuzu are vegan and are appropriately laced with either kimchi, yuzu or chilli. I was particularly thrilled with the soy and vegetarian burgers. The former is a portobello mushroom, whole, in the warm glow of sesame oil muskiness and citrusy coriander. Perfect for newly minted vegetarian and meat lovers alike, it’s a nice departure from the standard burger, but still faithful to its roots.

We were surprised to find that we preferred their Beyond Meat cheeseburger to their meat based version. When the cheeseburger failed to impress us (we suspect an under-seasoned patty was the culprit), we tried the Yuzu Chilli. The bun was a little dry and cracked easily and we quickly had a sourdough mess on our hands as it disintegrated, leaving us drenched in sauce. A surprising turnaround from when we last tested them, when they snatched the 2021 Best Burger title.

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VG: The Yuzu portobello burger is a fantastic substitute for meat, with the complex taste hitting in waves. The bread for this one was perfect and the unexpected diversity of the burger was refreshing. The Beyond Meat version, on the other hand, offered a more traditional approach to the burger, but both provide a fun and playful take on the vegan/vegetarian option.

The cheeseburger was a bit of a letdown. Although there were no obvious, significant flaws, it felt too bland for the standard of the place, as well as the price. Smartly enough, Yuzu also offers Yuzu chilli, which is very similar to the vegan option and is only around 200 ISK more expensive.

Overall, Yuzu is as serious about their burgers as they are in their interior design. The foundation is strong and can only grow from here.
Beginner’s Guide to Skiing
in Iceland

Ever wanted to go very fast down a hill with two sticks attached to your feet? Here’s how!

Words: Josie Anne Saltens  Photos: Norris Riman

Say what you like about the Icelandic winter—and you can, because it won’t make the slightest bit of difference—it sure does have staying power. Pasting from pushing your snow-bound car for the umpteenth time to shake your fist at the sky might give you momentary relief, but the true secret to surviving the seemingly endless brumal months is actually to embrace them.

With record-breaking snowfall this winter, skiing seems the obvious way to get out there and at least attempt to enjoy the colder days. If you’re already sampled some other favoured Icelandic winter pastimes, (drinking, going to a cabin, drinking in a cabin), and are looking for an expensive new hobby then you’re in luck! Turns out, skiing in Iceland is totally approachable, even for adult learners.

Step one: where the heck are we going?

There are 11 ski resorts in Iceland, two of which, Hlíðarfjall and Skálfafell are conveniently located near the capital. However, skiing conditions in the south of the country are notoriously unreliable, as the weather tends to lean wetter and milder. It’s unsurprising then that the majority of commercial ski slopes are found in the north. One of the most popular locations is Hlíðarfjall, which is near Akureyri. And really, we mean it’s very nearby: you can basically ski right into town if you want. Hlíðarfjall boasts a total of 24 marked ski slopes, most of which are suitable for beginners.

Step two: acquiring gear

If there’s one thing you probably already know about ski equipment, it’s that it’s not cheap. As a newbie, there is absolutely no need to invest in gear until you’re sure this is something you want to commit to doing regularly. In the meantime, Fjallakofinn offers a full rental service from their base at Hlíðarfjall, including skis (duh), boots, poles, and helmets. The latter is important. You’re going to fall down a lot, my friend, and it’ll be a more enjoyable experience for both you and your fellow mountain dwellers if you don’t mash your noggin into the ice as part of that process.

Besides actual ski paraphernalia, the other element you will require is something to wear. The challenge is picking something light enough that you won’t overheat—skiing is surprisingly energetic, who knew—but still protective against the rushing winds as you gracefully speed down the slopes. As always, check vedur.is for an idea of what the weather will be doing during your trip and dress accordingly. Hiking trousers and a lightweight puffer jacket paired with thermalis is a good option, or alternatively, trawl vintage and secondhand stores for a rad 80s one-piece. Bonus points if you can get all your friends to dress up with you.

Step three: BUT HOW?

So you’re suited and booted, and have somehow already taken enough selfies to fill your grandma’s scrapbook twice over. One slight issue though: you have no idea what you’re doing. Our advice: do yourself a favour and get an expert involved. Even if your kindly pal offers to show you the ropes, you’ll learn more, and faster, from a trained teacher. Plus, it’s never fun to babysit the new kid as they skitter down the nursery slopes like a new-born deer, when everyone else you know is carving it up elsewhere. So tell your friends you’ll catch them later, and book in with Iceland Snowsports. A one-hour one-to-one lesson is enough to cover the basics, and you’ll be flying with the rest of them in no time. Our instructor, Áðís, was patient, informative, and graciously put up with the fact that we were into her, several times.

Once you’re ready to be let loose on the grown-up trails, don’t let your enthusiasm over your new-found skills carry you away—literally. Most collisions are caused by carelessness and a lack of control. Be aware of the people around you, and stay out of the way as best you can. You’ll discover very quickly that with skiing, the line between looking cool and looking like a dickhead is wincingly thin.

Step four: ready for more?

Congratulations! You’ve done it! You’re officially enjoying winter. Your Instagram stories are full of #apresski and you’re already saying insufferable things like, “Gnarly!” for no discernable reason.

If you do decide that you want to stick with skiing and buy your own gear, Fjallakofinn also offers a handy ‘try and buy’ service where you can test run a variety of skis before committing. Secondhand groups on Facebook are also worth keeping an eye on if you’re looking for cheaper options. In the meantime, we’ll see you on the hill!
Easter Edition
Don’t blame us—the stars don’t lie

Words: Josie Anne Gaitens & Andie Sophia Fontaine

This month’s horoscope has an Easter theme. If you’re not familiar with this holiday, it’s when the Easter Bunny was crucified and sealed in a giant egg for three days before emerging again to ascend to the North Pole. It’s true. Look it up if you don’t believe us.

Aries

For a festive twist, consider changing out the enormous ‘JET FUEL CAN’T MELT STEEL BEAMS’ flag that hangs from your window for one that reads ‘RABBITS DON’T LAY CHOCOLATE EGGS’.

Taurus

(Youth pastor voice): Let me tell you about another “weird guy” with long hair and a lot of “crazy ideas” about peace and love. His name is Alan Moore. You should follow his example and spend more time on your writing.

Gemini

Oh my GOD for the last freakin’ time, we KNOW Easter used to be a pagan holiday shut up already jeez. In April you read that the Pareto principle states that roughly 80% of outcomes come from 20% of causes. “Interesting,” you murmur indistinctly, as you stare bleakly at the 6,400 marshmallow chicks strewn around your room after only being able to eat 1,600 from your original purchase.

Sagittarius

This time last year you and your ex were eggs-terribly in love. Now, you could say, she’s just some-bunny that you used to know.

SCOPES

As if I don’t think about this EVERY DAY, have you thought about this? Will be underwater when the ice caps melt, have you thought about this? It looks like 90% of your buildings and force different winds to breed with its predator, the grey wolf? That doesn’t look like Mary to me. Just over $440? Wow, yeah, fuck that guy.

CANCER

Studies of early Christianity point out that there were more denomi- nations of Christianity in the first century than there are now. This included the writing of numer- ous gospels that never made the final cut into the Holy Bible, as they were declared heretical by the Council of Nica. One of those was the Gospel of Mary, a Sethian Gnostic text which contended that Jesus actually taught the true Word of God to Mary Magdalene, who in turn was supposed to be the real leader of the One True Church. There’s no lesson to be learned from this; we just think it’s a cool fact.

Virgo

Yeah, sure, you know it’s great that we don’t have crucifixions anymore. But what about the poor cross-builders? Who’s thinking about them in all this? Have they been crucified too? You sincerely hope so.

Libra

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Scorpio

Judas Iscariot gets a bad rep for betraying Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, but do you know how much that would be in today’s money? Let’s look it up. Just over $440? Wow, yeah, fuck that guy.

Libra

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For a festive twist, consider changing out the enormous ‘JET FUEL CAN’T MELT STEEL BEAMS’ flag that hangs from your window for one that reads ‘RABBITS DON’T LAY CHOCOLATE EGGS’.

Cancer

As if I don’t think about this EVERY DAY, have you thought about this? Will be underwater when the ice caps melt, have you thought about this? It looks like 90% of your buildings and force different winds to breed with its predator, the grey wolf? That doesn’t look like Mary to me. Just over $440? Wow, yeah, fuck that guy.
“There’s no appetite for an Icelandic army, something that Icelanders tend to be very proud of.”
Baldur Hórhallsson, Professor of Political Science at the University of Iceland. P6

“We saw a real nuclear threat, and understood that Russia has zero rationality at this point.”
Nataliia Baburina, resident of the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, relates her experience of war P22

“I was attacked close to my home. After that, I decided to move to Iceland.”
Polish writer Ewa Marcinek opens up about her experiences as an immigrant in Icelandic society, and her book on the subject. P26

One of 25 Wonders of the World

Blue Lagoon Water is unlike any other water on the planet. Born deep underground where freshwater and ocean water converge in volcanic aquifers, this natural marvel is rich in silica, algae, and minerals. These elements give the water its cleansing, healing, nourishing powers—bringing radiance to the mind and body.

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