Is it finally time to face up to our relationship with tourism in the age of social media?

Instagram vs Reality
June has not been a good month for human rights in the world. Finland and Sweden have decided to give a discount on their own human rights policies while negotiating with the autocracy of Turkey, and promise to extradite persecuted Kurds—who have been granted asylum in Turkey for decades.

The same people who fought the fascist monsters in ISIS when few others dared to do so.

Finland and Sweden see this as an acceptable price for joining NATO. Sending people to their open death, to a country where the national leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, stoked power in broad daylight, on live TV, just a few years ago.

Don’t get us wrong, we want Finland and Sweden to join NATO to strengthen the alliance even further against the frantic political madness that is happening in the Kremlin. But befriending one deranged dictator to fight another one feels like an unworthy move for the values we are trying to defend in the western world.

In late June, two people were shot to death in a well-known gay bar in Oslo, Norway. More were wounded in the attack which has been dubbed in the media as some kind of hybrid of Islamist fascist attack on western values—and mental issues. Just to clear it up, mental health has little to do with it. Most people in the world actually handle their mental issues pretty well, unlike unoriginal screenwriters in Hollywood would have you believe. Not that it matters, for this attack was just a straight-up terrorist attack against the LGBTQ+ community.

It was not the first one, and will not be the last attack either. The courageous people in Oslo took it to the streets the day after, disregarding the police’s advice to the community not to hold their heads high on the scheduled Gay Pride. It was the right choice for those who didn’t listen and the only acceptable move against hate. We at the Reykjavík Grapevine bow our heads in respect for you all.

And finally, the US Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe vs Wade 50 years later is no simple thing. First of all, it’s outright laughable that the court didn’t find the right to an abortion constitutional, because there is no mention of the word abortion in the Constitution. Rear in mind that the Constitution was written at the same time as slavery was legal and women were property of their fathers and husbands. The US court system has a serious problem on its hands if they want to join the rest of the world in the 21st century if they try to define their whole legal system and human rights based on wording from a time when human rights didn’t exist.

It’s only a matter of time before there will be an increase in news about ten-year-old victims pregnant with their father’s child being denied an abortion.

The saddest thing here is that the politicians could easily correct this if they wanted, but the Democratic leadership has inexplicably shown no willingness to use the tools at their disposal to defend body autonomy. And Republican leaders are already using the Roe decision to justify denying critical healthcare to trans people. They rely their entire political careers on being dictated to by the Christian fanatics or the gun nuts. Usually one the same person. And by the way, do you know what word is not to be found in the Bible? You guessed it; abortion. Even God doesn’t give a shit if you’re wondering. It’s just straight-up barbaric to refuse people the power over their own bodies.

Valur Grettisson
Editor-in-chief

Joana Fontinha is an Area baby expressing her soul through photography. She’s been obsessed with Icelandic culture since her teens, so much that at 20 she threw herself headfirst on a plane to Iceland. She’s been obsessed with Icelandic culture since her teens, so much that at 20 she threw herself headfirst on a plane to Iceland. She has a photographic eye and has been producing photojournalistic work tirelessly to undermine each underbelly. She’s often found travelling, unspoiled by a Malaysian musician and writer, once erroneously from the Scottish Highlands. She was once erroneously referred to as the Queen of Scotland by a Malaysian newspaper and has been falsely using the title ever since. In addition to her Lágavúinn duties, she is currently on a mission to have his photo in every bar in 101.

Josie Anne Gaitens is an arts worker, musician and writer from the Scottish Highlands. She was once erroneously referred to as the Queen of Scotland by a Malaysian newspaper and has been falsely using the title ever since. In addition to her Lágavúinn duties, she is currently on a mission to have his photo in every bar in 101.

Iryna Zubenko is a Ukrainian who has been working on the cross-section of media and technology for the past five years. While she is still figuring out what to do in life, this time her love for travelling, unspoiled nature and local design has brought her to Reykjavík. One day she’ll write a non-fiction book.

Catharine Fafner is a writer who has been involved with Lágavúinn for many years—possibly too many—serving as journalist, food edi- tor and news editor before settling on copy editor. When not wielding her red pen she’s often found spooning over Icelandic politics (profession- al), and bitching about Icelandic politics (for fun).

Asha Edmondson studies and takes on just about everything back home in the States. From communica- tions to dance to psychology to sailing, there is almost noth- ing she hasn’t tried. An intrusive thought of ‘What if I spent my summer in Iceland?’ turned into reality, bringing her to the Lágavúinn.

Andiie Sophia Fontaine has lived in Iceland since 1999 and has been report- ing since 2003. She was the first foreign- born member of the Icelandic Parliament, an experience she recommends for anyone who wants to enjoy a workplace where colleagues work tirelessly to undermine each other.

Andie Sophia Fontaine has lived in Iceland since 1999 and has been report- ing since 2003. She was the first foreign- born member of the Icelandic Parliament, an experience she recommends for anyone who wants to enjoy a workplace where colleagues work tirelessly to undermine each other.

Valur Grettisson is an award-winning journalist, author and playwright. He has been writing for Icelandic media since 2005. He was also a theatre critic and one of the hosts of the cultural program, Djúlægjaskóli on RÚV. Valur is not to be confused with the dreadball football club that bears the same name.

Cover photo: Joana Fontinha

For our cover story about the influence of well-known influences on tourism in Iceland, here Joana has taken a person capturing photos of Iceland, and made them the subject of another photo themselves. In so doing, she is turning the lens back on the lens that captures, and sells, the image of Iceland.

Iryna to Reykjavík.
Summer is here
Stay like a local
[8 HOTELS, RESTAURANTS & SPAS IN THE HEART OF REYKJAVIK]

What Are Icelanders Talking About?
The hot topics rockin’ the comment sections

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine Photos: Art Bicnick

We had a peaceful few years, but now, thanks to one dude, we are all forced to talk about whale hunting again. Hvalur hf., the last company in Iceland still hunting fin whales, and its CEO, rich Boomer and enfant terrible Kristján Loftsson, have resumed hunting whales again after a four-year hiatus. So once again, Iceland is making international headlines for this bizarre and cruel practice that cannot even be defended financially — not only does it hurt Iceland’s biggest industry (tourism), whaling itself fails to generate a profit. On the bright side, Minister of Fisheries Sandís Svaravsdóttir has intimated that she will likely let Hvalur’s whaling license expire, but that won’t happen until the end of 2023. As such, we will most likely have to go through this same song and dance next summer, too.

Another unfortunate subject that has entered the discussion again is Reynisfjara, and not on account of its beautiful black sands or striking basalt columns. Rather, because of its beautiful black sands or striking basalt columns. Rather, because it has prompted renewed discussion over the past seven years. The latest death there — the fifth such death in the past seven years. The latest death has prompted renewed discussion about what to do about the beach:

In happier news, the Minister of Justice’s controversial bill to amend the Law on Foreigners has failed to pass. Jón Gunnarsson, the Minister in question, withdrew the bill before it could be debated, vowing to submit it again in the autumn. If he does, this would mark the fifth attempt by the Independence Party to make life more difficult for immigrants in Iceland, particularly those seeking international protection. There are no indications that his bill will have better chances in September.

NEWS

Close it altogether? Install greater security measures? Close it sometimes? Or do nothing at all? So far, it seems the government is most willing to set up an early warning system in the area. Whether this will make a material difference remains to be seen.

Oh, we also had another shooting. This time, it wasn’t in Reykjavik, but in the normally calm and friendly town of Rafnararfjörður. There, a man in his sixties allegedly fired shots from an unidentified firearm at a vehicle that had an adult and child inside. Fortunately, neither were physically injured. After a stand-off with police that lasted a few hours, the man surrendered to authorities. It is uncertain what his motivations were, but this recent uptick in shootings has caused many Icelanders to worry that shootings may soon become a more common occurrence.

In happier news, the Minister of Justice’s controversial bill to amend the Law on Foreigners has failed to pass. Jón Gunnarsson, the Minister in question, withdrew the bill before it could be debated, vowing to submit it again in the autumn. If he does, this would mark the fifth attempt by the Independence Party to make life more difficult for immigrants in Iceland, particularly those seeking international protection. There are no indications that his bill will have better chances in September.

TEAM

CONTACT US:
—» Editorial: +354 560 3600
info@grapevine.is
—» Advertising: +354 560 3605
info@grapevine.is
—» Distribution: +354 560 3604
info@grapevine.is
—» Events: +354 560 3601
events@grapevine.is
—» Press releases: news@grapevine.is
—» General Inquiries: info@grapevine.is
—» Distribution: +354 560 3604
distribution@grapevine.is
—» Editorial: +354 560 3601
editor@grapevine.is
—» Sales: +354 560 3600
ads@grapevine.is
—» Design: +354 560 3601
design@grapevine.is
The taste of Icelandic lamb is unrivaled. Our pure bred lambs graze free in the pristine wilderness of Iceland, eating luscious green grass, berries and wild herbs such as red clover, Arctic thyme, sedge, willow, thrift and angelica. The end result is a tender fine-textured meat that is both naturally rich in Omega-3 and iron and infused with the flavor of nature. Icelandic lamb is a taste experience beyond compare.

www.icelandiclamb.is
Inflation: What’s Causing It & What To Do About It?

The Central Bank, management and labour at odds

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photo: Art Biencik

There is no disputing that Iceland’s inflation rate has been steadily rising—from 4.5% in July 2021 to 7.6% in April 2022. The real question is what to do about it, and the Central Bank, business leaders, and union representatives all have different approaches that indicate a tough road ahead in the upcoming wage negotiations.

Chair of the Central Bank Asgeir Jónsson announced June 22nd that the bank would raise its policy rate by another percent, taking it to 4.5%. This is the seventh such increase in the past year. The raising of the policy rate is, of course, an attempt to quell inflation, but from there, things get more complicated.

Purchasing power and wages

While reluctant to say whether he believed it is likely that the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA) will be able to convince unions to settle for a small wage increase, SA chair Halldór Björnsson pointed out that Iceland’s purchasing power is nearing its peak. Data from Statistics Iceland shows disposable income rising steadily, and Halldór added that “sometimes you need to take one step back in order to take two steps forward later. I think that applies well to the fragile state of the economy today.”

The union response

Meanwhile, Drífaprinsráðinn, the president of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ), pointed out that the policy rate is higher now than it was three years ago, when the previous wage agreements were approved. Rather than seeing wages driving inflation, she believes the inflation rate can be attributed to a runaway housing market.

Wages, housing and inflation

The housing market can have a real and significant effect on inflation, brought about by demand outpacing supply to a great degree. It is no secret that housing prices in Iceland have been rising dramatically while supply remains constrained — and rising policy rates contribute to the cost of owning a home. This has in turn affected the rental market, which hits lowest income earners especially hard.

Whatever the next few weeks and months bear out, one thing is certain: upcoming wage negotiations are going to be hard fought.

The Sea Bids Farewell—To Itself

Climate change is really taking a turn for the (even) worse, with the ocean recently deciding to call it quits and bid us all adieu. But wait, that’s not the only thing wrong with this headline. Apparently the sea has only been working for half a century—a miscommunication that would make any historian, oceanographer, or geologist run screaming for higher ground.

This headline conjured up images of the ocean rising out of the ground, or worse, disappearing entirely—leaving Iceland and the rest of the world high and dry. We at The Reykjavík Grapevine were mightily baffled by this reported turn of events, until we looked out the window and realized good ol’ Google had muffed it up again, pulling a fast one on all of us in the process.

The original headline reads “Kveður hafíð aftir rúma hálfs öld á sjó,” but our friends at Google translated it to “The sea says goodbye after more than half a century at sea.” Believe it or not, Icelanders have multiple words for “sea.” In this confusing kerfuffle of a sentences, “hafíð” and “sjó” are effectively both referring to that big body of water—but in fact fishermen Kristján Bjornsson is saying farewell to the sea (hafíð), after he spent over 50 years at sea (sjó). It’s a happy retirement message with a nautical twist.

So it looks like we’re safe from a doomsday, waterless future—for now. Maybe the folks over at Google were trying to send us a warning message. They are, after all, in California, so they know a thing or two about drought. So don’t make the water mad, or it may retire...forever.

The sea says goodbye after more than half a century at sea

Kveður hafíð aftir rúma hálfs öld á sjó

The Reykjavík Grapevine
June 13, 2022 11:58 pm

If you have ever driven through the Icelandic countryside, you have likely caught glimpses of majestic Icelandic horses standing in farmers’ fields. Perhaps your first introduction to Iceland was its special eqine. But what makes the Icelandic horse so special and culturally significant? We asked Jelena Ohm from Horses of Iceland.

‘With the settlement of Iceland they brought along the horses, and it’s many peoples opinion that without the horses Icelanders would have never survived in this harsh environment. At the time, they were the main means of transportation, they were means for food, they were means for shelter,” explains Jelena. “I don’t think you can really talk about the history of Iceland without the Icelandic horses because it is so interwoven within the Sagas and the history.”

‘That relationship kind of progressed over the years and with the Industrial Revolution and cars coming in, Jelena continues. “I changed the relationship between the horses and Icelanders because they started to turn more into life companions.’

The relationship developed, and now Icelandic horses are used for hobbies, competitions, tourism and breeding. As the relationship between Icelanders and horses shifted, it is needed for more professionalism, innovation and opportunities for the continued symbolism of the Icelandic horse.

‘So many people are here because of the Icelandic horse. I know so many people who first became aware of Iceland because of the Icelandic horses, and who now live and work here with them,’ adds Jelena. ‘We think of them today as the best ambassadors for Iceland.’

Why are horses important to Icelanders?

Words: Asha Edmondson
Photo: Jelena Ohm

SMASHED BURGERS
AND NASHVILLE-STYLE HOT CHICKEN IN DOWNTOWN REYKJAVIK

HAFNASTRIÐI 101 REYKJAVIK

STÉL
**UNFORGETTABLE FOOD AND DRINK EXPERIENCE**

HÉDINN KITCHEN & BAR

Seljavægur 2, 101 Reykjavík, www.hedinnrestaurant.is
Tourism was the unexpected saviour of the Icelandic economy after the financial crisis of 2008, and since then social media platforms like Instagram have facilitated a huge boom in visitors. Fourteen years later, with tourist numbers expected to return to pre-pandemic figures rapidly and infrastructure struggling to keep up with demand, is it finally time to face up to our relationship with tourism in the age of social media?

It’s an image you’ve seen before: the dark basalt columns, lined up in almost unnatural uniformity, shaded soft grey and black from passing rain squalls. A person is perched on top, their bright orange jacket contrasting with the monochrome background. Around them: nothing. They are alone, a sole vivid spark in the vast expanse of Icelandic nature.

Except, of course, they’re not. The image is captured—sometimes repeat-edly, until the exact correct angle is achieved—and then immediately the subject’s place is filled by another person, and another almost identi-cal photo is taken. And so it goes on. In fact, the beach is crowded. People queue, jostling each other for a spot to pose on the shore. Behind them others take selfies. Facetime their families and send up drones, dodging the encroach-ing waves that continually batter the shoreline.

This is the reality of travel in the era of social media. Reynisfjara, the site of these iconic rock columns—which feature heavily on Instagram’s Iceland feed—has already received more than 100,000 visitors this year, according to statistics collected by Visit Iceland. What’s more, it’s also the location of a number of recent tragedies: a man in his 80s was killed after being caught by a so-called ‘sneaker wave’ just last month. In total there have been five deaths—as well as numerous near misses—at Reynisfjara in the past seven years. All of them were tourists.

Tourism has changed substantially since the turn of the century, and this is in no small part due to our burgeoning relationship with—and increasing reli-ance on—social media platforms such as Instagram. While individuals might previously have engaged the help of a specialist travel agent to assist them in running and booking their holidays, nowadays more and more of us are turning to the photo and video sharing app for inspiration and knowledge about our intended destinations.

However, it turns out that despite the internet generation’s aversion to in-person commercial interactions (see also: the rise of supermarket self-checkouts and online clothes shopping), when it comes to travel we are still looking for figures to guide and inform us. These modern-day equiva- lents to travel agents are social media ‘influencers’, individuals who craft well-rounded feeds and attract thousands, sometimes millions of followers. Their power to shape and change the way that people travel cannot be down-played, especially in a small country like Iceland where changes to trends and norms can be felt very quickly.

Kyana Sue Powers admits she was not an avid Instagram user before she started planning her first trip to Iceland.

“Before coming here I lived under a social media rock,” she explains, laugh- ing. “I didn’t know that everybody had Instagram, I just followed family and friends.”

Despite not considering herself a particularly engaged Instagram user, Kyana felt it was an obvious choice when it came to planning her first visit to Iceland. “I went to Instagram to research because that’s just where Millennials and younger people go these days to get inspired for their next trip, or to know where to go when they arrive at their destination,” she says. “I basically started following any account that had to do with Iceland, and that’s when I was opened up to this world of travel influencers.”

But the concept of tourism has evolved and shifted in the context of Instagram, and the digital age more broadly. In this time of online-enlight- enment, tourism has become embedded in the ugliest internet debate of them all: the inescapable cult of authenticity. The impassioned hunt for experiences which can be considered ‘authentic’ is one of the most significant drivers of postmodern tourism, and it’s an arena in which countries like Iceland, which would have once been considered unde-rly tourism as holiday destinations, have excelled. Even Syria—still battered and burying its war dead—has been met with a marked increase in requests for tourist visas in recent years.

There’s this whole “Instagram vs Reality” trend, she says. “Up until the past couple of years, I don’t think people would have really been into it. But recently it’s been much more, ‘give me the raw’—along with ‘I want it to look really beautiful’.”

Jewells Chambers, who has a popular Youtube channel, podcast, and vari- ous other social media platforms under the umbrella name “All Things Iceland,” recognises that the idea of authenticity can sometimes feel like a trap. “It’s about the photo and video sharing app for inspiration and knowledge about our intended destinations.”

There is a huge misconception of what [influencer] means, “Jewells explains. “A lot of people think of Kim Kardashian—a huge figure in terms of pop culture. But they also think of sell- ing or pushing things that you might not ever have had experience with, or that you don’t really believe in, or that it’s all just for the money.”

Jewells is quick to contradict that opinion. “For me one of the most important parts of my sharing is that it comes from an authentic place, and that I have experience of something, whether that’s an activity or a particu-lar circumstance,” she clarifies. “Every- one has influence to a degree, whether they are die-hard Instagram fans or just within your immediate circle. I think of it as you, trust that person and their advice or orvar’s advice.”
In the image of one page of a document, the text reads:

**“This is What to Expect During Summer in Iceland”**

At the top of the page, there is an image of a hot spring in Iceland with the text: **“This could kill you”**

Below the image, the text continues:

What Kyana sees as a real concern, however, is the way that social media may be encouraging people to interact with Icelandic nature in ways that risk harm to individuals—or the landscape itself.

“We’re all the same: we go somewhere new and think, oh I have to take that photo, we’re never coming back, let’s just do it,” she says, with empathy. “But in some cases in Iceland you could really regret doing it.”

Kyana continues: “For example, the volcano: I know we were lucky in that there were no deaths or major injuries, but there were a lot of people who messaged me saying they were going to go up, even if there was a big storm.”

Jewells shares similar worries regarding safety at Fagradalsfjall: “People were walking on the lava like it was fine,” she says, incredulously. “But it’s like no, this could kill you!”

Jewells also believes, however, that it is the responsibility of her and others in her industry to set a standard of behaviour that others can follow: “If you’re an influencer, and you’re doing something reckless, there’s a good chance that people will copy you and try to get that same picture.”

“I’m not saying it’s one person’s fault,” she adds. “But let’s not try and encourage behaviour that could have people jumping off a cliff, or standing on the moss.”

**“If you’re doing something reckless, there’s a good chance that people will copy you.”**

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Issue 07—2022

9

---

**“This could kill you”**

What Kyana sees as a real concern, however, is the way that social media may be encouraging people to interact with Icelandic nature in ways that risk harm to individuals—or the landscape itself.

“We’re all the same: we go somewhere new and think, oh I have to take that photo, we’re never coming back, let’s just do it,” she says, with empathy. “But in some cases in Iceland you could really regret doing it.”

Kyana continues: “For example, the volcano: I know we were lucky in that there were no deaths or major injuries, but there were a lot of people who messaged me saying they were going to go up, even if there was a big storm.”

Jewells shares similar worries regarding safety at Fagradalsfjall: “People were walking on the lava like it was fine,” she says, incredulously. “But it’s like no, this could kill you!”

Jewells also believes, however, that it is the responsibility of her and others in her industry to set a standard of behaviour that others can follow: “If you’re an influencer, and you’re doing something reckless, there’s a good chance that people will copy you and try to get that same picture.”

“I’m not saying it’s one person’s fault,” she adds. “But let’s not try and encourage behaviour that could have people jumping off a cliff, or standing on the moss.”

**“If you’re doing something reckless, there’s a good chance that people will copy you.”**

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Issue 07—2022

9

---

**“This could kill you”**

What Kyana sees as a real concern, however, is the way that social media may be encouraging people to interact with Icelandic nature in ways that risk harm to individuals—or the landscape itself.

“We’re all the same: we go somewhere new and think, oh I have to take that photo, we’re never coming back, let’s just do it,” she says, with empathy. “But in some cases in Iceland you could really regret doing it.”

Kyana continues: “For example, the volcano: I know we were lucky in that there were no deaths or major injuries, but there were a lot of people who messaged me saying they were going to go up, even if there was a big storm.”

Jewells shares similar worries regarding safety at Fagradalsfjall: “People were walking on the lava like it was fine,” she says, incredulously. “But it’s like no, this could kill you!”

Jewells also believes, however, that it is the responsibility of her and others in her industry to set a standard of behaviour that others can follow: “If you’re an influencer, and you’re doing something reckless, there’s a good chance that people will copy you and try to get that same picture.”

“I’m not saying it’s one person’s fault,” she adds. “But let’s not try and encourage behaviour that could have people jumping off a cliff, or standing on the moss.”

**“If you’re doing something reckless, there’s a good chance that people will copy you.”**

The Reykjavík Grapevine
Issue 07—2022

9
“There has to be a conversation about the capacity of what Iceland can handle.”

Regardless of what else that potential future holds, what is clear is that tourism and social media are both here to stay, and it is time to have an honest conversation about what that means in Iceland. In this experience economy, people are willing to spend great swathes of their income to immerse themselves in an imagined version of authentic Icelandic life. That we, as a country, benefit hugely from this is without doubt. Tourism is Iceland’s biggest industry, after all, and there is barely anyone living here who doesn’t gain some level of income or benefit from the tourism industry.

But Iceland is not a theme park. It is a home to 370,000 people, as well as a natural environment that is delicate and sensitive to change. At the height of the summer, walking down Laugavegur can feel like being an extra in someone else’s fantasy of Iceland—a fantasy that is often sold to people through social media.

The joys of the job

Despite the challenges that can be present in her line of work, Kyana is vocal about how much she loves her job.

The summer, walking down Laugavegur can feel like being an extra in someone else’s fantasy of Iceland—a fantasy that is often sold to people through social media.
School Of DIY

Some things are just better when you do them yourself

With three days of music from underground Icelandic artists and several favourite foreign bands, Norðanpaunk is the place not only to get your punk on, but to experience Iceland’s “DIY” culture at its finest. Here— at a cozy venue in North Iceland—event organizers, musicians and festival goers unite under the belief that if you want something done right, you should do it yourself.

Anti-consumer mindset

“If you sit around to wait for things to happen in Iceland, there wouldn’t be much happening,” says festival co-founder Árni Þorlákur Guðnason. Norðanpaunk exists because music lovers decided to take things into their own hands, stepping beyond the all-too-common commercialized festival scene. “We wouldn’t have those special, unusual acts without people committing to the inherent value in that happening. There are certain things that are only possible when people are engaged because of passion.”

The people who do the work make the decisions, which is extremely empowering, Árni says. The crew members are extremely dedicated, returning year after year, because of this.

When it comes down to it, Árni believes DIY-ers are creative problem solvers and community builders. “It’s a school for learning important skills. There’s a different atmosphere that grows out of it,” he says.

At Norðanpaunk, if you aren’t part of the DIY community when you arrive, you will be when you leave. On the first day of the festival, people often have what Árni dubs the “consumer mindset,” liltering at the campsites and not tending to the inherent value in that happening. There are certain things that are only possible when people are engaged because of passion.

“The people who do the work make the decisions, which is extremely empowering,” Árni says. The crew members are extremely dedicated, returning year after year, because of this.

When it comes down to it, Árni believes DIY-ers are creative problem solvers and community builders. “It’s a school for learning important skills. There’s a different atmosphere that grows out of it,” he says.

Norðanpaunk exists because music lovers decided to take things into their own hands, stepping beyond the all-too-common commercialized festival scene. “We wouldn’t have those special, unusual acts without people committing to the inherent value in that happening. There are certain things that are only possible when people are engaged because of passion.”

The people who do the work make the decisions, which is extremely empowering, Árni says. The crew members are extremely dedicated, returning year after year, because of this.

When it comes down to it, Árni believes DIY-ers are creative problem solvers and community builders. “It’s a school for learning important skills. There’s a different atmosphere that grows out of it,” he says.

At Norðanpaunk, if you aren’t part of the DIY community when you arrive, you will be when you leave. On the first day of the festival, people often have what Árni dubs the “consumer mindset,” littering at the campsites and not tending to the inherent value in that happening. There are certain things that are only possible when people are engaged because of passion.

The people who do the work make the decisions, which is extremely empowering, Árni says. The crew members are extremely dedicated, returning year after year, because of this.

When it comes down to it, Árni believes DIY-ers are creative problem solvers and community builders. “It’s a school for learning important skills. There’s a different atmosphere that grows out of it,” he says.

At Norðanpaunk, if you aren’t part of the DIY community when you arrive, you will be when you leave. On the first day of the festival, people often have what Árni dubs the “consumer mindset,” littering at the campsites and not tending to the inherent value in that happening. There are certain things that are only possible when people are engaged because of passion.
A Crazy Microcosm On A Fjord

Art lovers unite in Seyðisfjörður—it’s LungA time

Words: Iryna Zubenko  Photos: Provided by LungA

In the middle of July, people from all over Iceland and beyond flock to Seyðisfjörður, an East Iceland fishing town that is unremarkable at first sight. The reason for the migration: LungA, an arts festi- val like no other. We chatted with Festival Director Björt Sigfinnsdóttir and Head of Music Simon Bergkjær about what makes the 2022 edition special. While the thing that first caught our attention was the waterfall gig, in reality, there’s so much more.

The evolution of LungA

Björt has been running the festival with her mother since she was 15. In 22 extraordinary years, they have witnessed LungA take on many forms and evolve tremendously. “When we started, it was just one weekend with 20 participants,” she shares. Today, it spans more than a week and brings together 2000 to 3000 people. “We started out very, very small, calling out to people and begging them to participate. And then in 2005 or 2006, it all of a sudden exploded,” Björt recalls.

The festival is based on four pillars: workshops, art-related performances and exhibitions, a youth exchange with Erasmus Plus, and the music programme. “It is this kind of the big bang of the whole thing,” says Björt.

Thinking deep

Every year, LungA picks up a socially relevant topic as the main theme of the festival. “A topic that we think is needed to talk about in a bigger setting from a social perspective,” explains Björt.

In the past, the festival centred on such topics as gender and empa- thy, and this year it will revolve around equality. “For most people, the first thought is probably ‘whoa, that’s a big topic,’” Björt admits. But the team chooses the main topic with the intention that the artists can take it in whatever direction they want—whether it’s equality for the LGBTQA+ community, equality on the dance floor or whatsoever. “That has not been decided beforehand, as we don’t want to direct the conver- sation in a certain direction,” says Björt.

Refuge for art lovers

The more we speak with Björt and Simon, the more LungA starts to sound like a utopian paradise. But who is it for, exactly? "I think we might represent a crazy microcosm," says Simon. “We have almost the entire spectrum,” Björt adds. “We have people who are coming here to take the first steps into any kind of art interest. And we also have people who have done masters and have long-term careers in art.”

“I feel that as a festival in East Iceland, we also represent some sort of a cultural hub, a meeting place for a lot of people who live on opposite ends of a very large geographic country,” Simon adds. “It makes a lot of sense to talk about differences and celebrate differ- ences and maybe break down some stereotypes. Seyðisfjörður and LungA is a very good place to do that.”

Embracing change

“In December 2020, a big mudslide hit Seyðisfjörður which devastated a lot of the town and affected every- one living there,” recalls Simon. “It rendered our festival site useless for hosting LungA going forward.”

The situation, however, didn’t leave the team disheartened. Instead, it pushed them to explore other options. “We kind of took it as a gift that we were forced away from one of the only obvious festival sites in town,” Simon admits. “We sat down and started to brainstorm where we would like to take this. What do we have that no one else has? We found that what we have is Seyðisfjörður.”

“Seyðisfjörður is a magical, beautiful place. It’s overwhelming in its natural glory,” continues Simon. “We thought that we wanted to utilise that more.” For the 2022 edition, LungA will feature smaller events spread around town—in side the ecosystem of Seyðisfjörður. “We want to utilise the waterfalls, we want to have a concert in the meadow, we want to do a little party on the beach,” shares Simon and you can feel his palpable impatience for the festival to kick off. “All these kinds of things that were before restricted a little bit to a more classical, one or two-stage festival site.”

Final countdown to LungA

“We have a high-quality interna- tional event programme, where most of the things that you will see here for free, cost a lot of money if you see them anywhere else,” says Björt. “This has also been a part of our philosophy—to keep the prices down to a minimum to ensure access to art and cultural experiences for everybody, unrelated to status or background.”

Björt recounts her personal high light at the upcoming festival: “We’re having a memorial exhibi- tion for Tóta Van Helzing who was a long-term LungA family member.” Tóta, an Icelandic designer and artist, died last year. “This year, we’re very happy to bring an American ambient producer called Hoeco S—he doesn’t play a lot and he really wants to come to LungA and play one of his rare sets with a Scottish electronic musician called Perko,” adds Simon. “Those two are coming up to make a completely unique once-in-a-lifetime live set that’s going to take place a little bit up the mountain next to a waterfall. We’re gonna use under- water mics to mic up the waterfall and use nature as part of the instru- ments to create this performance.”

As if the water- fall gig wasn’t enough to get us excited, Simon adds: “DJ Sexy laser is going to do a DJ set—Simon Sauna—a beautiful event down on the beach on the Saturday.”

All roads East

“I think a lot of our audience comes for an experience that is a bit deeper than maybe most festival experiences,” says Simon. “Where you actually take time out of your normal day to deep dive into issues that maybe you’ve thought a lot about—or maybe you haven’t thought a lot about before.”

Simon and Björt agree LungA not only has a lot of good places to see art, dance, but also “good places to go sit quietly, in retro- spect or in introspect and have a think.” You can’t really plan how your festival experience will turn out—and that’s the beauty of it.

“The sky is pretty much the limit in Seyðisfjörður and LungA,” Simon concludes. 

LungA takes place July 10th-17th in Seyðisfjörður, East Iceland. Find out more and buy tickets at lunga.is

Coffee & Sandwiches

Hafnarstræti 11  © kaffi_o_le

The most special coffee from specialists in speciality coffee.
Let’s Go Camping!
Grapevine’s guide on where to pitch your tent this summer

Words: Iryna Zubenko  Photos: Maria Shpak, Julia Staples & Art Bieniek

The season is here. Grab your sleeping bag, a tent (that you definitely forgot to wash since that festival a few years ago), a disposable grill and go on an adventure. Bear in mind that wild camping is widely prohibited in Iceland—but with dozens of designated campsites, you’ll be spoilt with choices for where to stay. We’ve narrowed down a few of our favourites to help you out.

Skógar
While being located right in the middle of the Golden Circle and in the midst of tourist buzz, Skógar campground offers million-dollar views right at your doorstep. Imagine waking up to the rumbling of Skogafoss waterfall, lush greenery and hiking trails close by (you can hike all the way to Þórsmörk from there). Obvious disadvantages include the lack of kitchen and charging stations. Showers are available for an extra fee.
Distance from Reykjavík: 156 km
Price: 1500 ISK/night

Kirkjubaer II
If camping sites usually give you anxiety (and we don’t blame you)—there’s nothing worse than being woken up in the middle of the night by drunk Brits singing “Wonderwall”), this campground is perfect for you. Located in a secluded valley at the foot of a mountain, away from the main road and harsh winds, it’s perfect for those looking for some downtime. The campsite has a well-equipped indoor kitchen, laundry room, and showers. Charcoal grills are available outside for your convenience. In addition, Kirkjubaer II also offers small cabins for rent.
Distance from Reykjavík: 259 km
Price: 1500 ISK/night

Atlavík
There are not many forests in Iceland, so when you’re recommended to camp in one, take your chance. This particular campground is located in the Hallormsstaður National Forest, considered to be the largest woodlands in the country. The campsite is equipped with all the basic facilities, but unfortunately doesn’t have electric outlets. No worries—use one of the many outdoor barbecues to cook dinner. The view over the lake Lagarfljót will definitely spoil you with beautiful sunsets this summer.
Distance from Reykjavík: 663 km
Price: 1800 ISK/night

Þórsmörk
Tent life is not for everyone, and if you fall into this camp (sorry), we totally get you! If you want to stay away from wet polyester and hairy showers this summer, try glamping. Húsadalur valley in Þórsmörk offers comfortable yurt-style tents that come with a double bed and a heater. Sauna and hot pool are just a few steps away. Unlike other camping options, you will need to stretch your budget a bit with this one—but keep in mind that Þórsmörk has accommodation options to suit every pocket, including the traditional campground.
Distance from Reykjavík: 155 km
Price: 24,650 ISK/night

Hauganes
Unremarkable at first sight, this campground has something to offer that will make your jaw drop: hot tubs! Imagine soaking in the hot water with a drink of choice and watching the sunset change into sunrise over the ocean. For an extra 1000 ISK hot tub fee, you can turn a regular camping experience into a night to remember.
Distance from Reykjavík: 401 km
Price: 1750 ISK/night
Blær Örn Ásgeirsson

Blær Örn Ásgeirsson is a 19-year-old disc golfer from Reykjavík. Don’t let his young age fool you though; he has already won The Reykjavík Open three times. Before embarking on a European disc golf tour, Blær shared his perfect day.

Completely head over heels with passion and love for the sport, it is unsurprising that his perfect day includes a LOT of disc golf.

**Breakfast of champions**

I would wake up, not too early, probably around 10am. Then I’d get a banana and strawberry smoothie and oatmeal at Nútrí for breakfast. If I’m feeling it, I might also get an açaí bowl.

**Disc golf**

After breakfast I would head to the Brautarholt Disc Golf Course with some friends. I would spend pretty much all day there just playing and hanging out with friends. This 18-hole course is the most advanced in Reykjavík, and I work here, so I’m able to change up the course to make it more or less difficult.

I started playing disc golf when I was around 12. I was on holiday in the west with a friend and we decided to try playing. I loved it and for my next birthday I got a starter kit. Ever since then, I have played or competed in disc golf almost every day. I graduated school about a year ago which opened up my time to play more disc golf and work at the course. I spend most of my time here and I hope to keep playing as long as it is still fun and I’m still able to. I actually taught an 80-year-old man how to play recently, so I should be able to play for many, many years. At some point I’d go out and get lunch. I’d probably get a burrito at Serrano.

**Play, eat and friends**

After my day playing disc golf, I would go bowling at Keiluhöllin with some friends. I usually go bowling with friends about twice a month. We’d hang out, get pizza for dinner, and have a fun night together. I’d then go home and play some “Call of Duty” before going to bed around midnight. It wouldn’t be too long of a day and I’d spend most of the day playing disc golf. I think that would be my perfect day.
Dining

1. Le Kock
Tryggvagata 14

The craft burger SB has never been better. No one toasts potato buns to crisp perfection like they do; or cooks patties to such medium rare goodness. Everything is made from scratch, including the condiments! This is gourmet fast food, with all of the attention to detail and none of the sacrifice on fun and flavour.

2. Flatey
Grandagarður 11

Educatings a country beyond their diet of pizza-chain pies is no small feat, but that's exactly what Flatey sought to do when they burst onto the scene—starts at 12:00 everyday and lasts until 20:00. Located in the city,“It’s crazy how it’s continued to dominate the bar scene in Reykjavík,” one panelist raved. “But it’s just got so many elements.It works for every vibe, which is rare for a bar.” Despite only appearing on the downtown scene a few years ago, the place already cemented itself among the nightlife legends.

3. Fine
Thorvaldseyri 9

Sono overlooks a wild-flower meadow and a spectacular view of the Reykjavík skyline. Languorous and stylish, the menu too is shaped to suit the landscape. The chefs look beyond Iceland for inspiration, while still showcasing seasonal, local produce in all of its colourful glory. Foraged herbs, berries, fruits, stems, and flowers all feature on the menu—resulting in a fun affair that serves as a reminder that good vegan food goes beyond better fried cauliflower.

4. SÓNO matselijur
Samundargata 11

Sono is a no nonsense, no frills, Sichuanese Chinese restaurant that steadfastly opens Reykjavík’s mind’s and palate to the regional cuisine. The Mala Chicken is a tingling explosion of flavour literally, thanks to the sichuan peppercorn. For something simple yet exciting, we recommend the Hot and Sour Pork.atoos.

5. Laundromat
Austurstraeti 9

Laundromat offers a cool ’50s diner-meets-maximalist library vibe, decorated with bright furnishings, maps and colour-coded books. It’s great for families in general, but teens in particular like the fun décor: burgers and milkshakes. We especially love their vocal support for breastfeeding, as well as the fact that you can actually do laundry here!

6. Deig Workshop
Tryggvagata 14

Deig’s poor man’s offer is as good as it gets on this alarmingly expensive island. For 1100 ISK, you can choose from a handmade bagel with a filling of your choice, any daughet or pastry from their selection, and a simple drink (coffee, juice or kombucha, basically). Even better, they open at 7 a.m., and the offer is valid every weekday, for as long as the bakery is open.

7. Sushi Social
Pinghollsstræti 5

If you are a group of friends looking for a fun night about town, Sushi Social is the place to be. The menu is ideal for sharing—although, who’d want to share something as delectable as langoustine tempura. Order one—or several—of those colourful drinks with names that recall a tropical holiday to make a fun night even more festive.

8. Sumac Grill + Drinks
Laugavegur 28

Sumac is one of the few places that cooks lamb with none of that sous-vide nonsense. An unpretentious cook with fried almonds, a splash of thinned spice, a kissed with smoke and licked by fire is precisely hard to top. Sumac serves it with blistered grapes, fried almonds, a splash of thinned spice, a kissed with smoke and licked by flame is precisely hard to top. Sumac serves it with blistered grapes, fried almonds, a splash of thinned spice, a kissed with smoke and licked by flame is precisely hard to top. Sumac serves it with blistered grapes, fried almonds, a splash of thinned spice, a kissed with smoke and licked by flame is precisely hard to top. Sumac serves it with blistered grapes, fried almonds, a splash of thinned spice.

9. Borgin 29
Borgartun 29

This is one of the more comforting food halls to be at, with wide variety of choices to please most anyone. “Almost every place makes small plates, which is excellent for sharing,” observed one panelist. She’s right, one can choose from such as the lamb chops, to grilled meats at All, to healthy skew bow at Scala.

10. Fish Company
Vesturgata 2a

For the definitive seafood experience in Reykjavík, you’d be hard pressed to find a better spot than Fish Island. Their tasting menus are a great way to try the best Icelandic waters have to offer, from Atlantic cod served Japanese style, to harissa wolf-fish. The sushi platter makes for a great lunch while their fish of the day is usually a generous pan-fried dish with a luscious sauce.

11. Prið Frakkur
Baldursgata 14

This cozy, tucked-away restaurant has not let anything sway them from tradition—you’ll spot everything from fines herbes to crostini to plokkfiskur on their menu. Opened in 1989, the restaurant has run by aunts of their Eyjafjallajökull and a family ever since. A visit to this place underlines that good traditional Icelandic cooking can be all kinds of memorable.

Drinking

12. Röntgen
Hverfisgata 12

This place has it all. “It’s crazy how it’s continued to dominate the bar scene in Reykjavík,” one panelist raved. “But it’s just got so many elements, it works for every vibe, which is rare for a bar.” Despite only appearing on the downtown scene a few years ago, the place already cemented itself among the nightlife legends.

13. Jungle Cocktail Bar
Austurstraeti 9

“Jungle vibe naturally caters to an early-night crowd. It’s stylish and airy, and, of course, they have the most innovative and delicious cocktails in the city,” enthused one panelist. The bar’s diversity-noting how attendees spanned all ages and demographics.

14. Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1

Kaffibarinn is still here and full of innovative and delicious cocktails and, of course, they have the most heart of Laugavegur. It’s also a prime people-watching spot.

15. Gaukurinn
Tryggvagata 22

With dim lights, leather sofas, and free taprooms, this bar /venue is the preferred hangout for the unorthodox Reykjavikins. So you’re looking for like-minded peeps in the alt and queer scene, there you go. From heavy metal fans to quieter indie shows, this second floor haunt does it all.

16. Bravó
Laugavegur 22

Bravó is a dark room with amber- hued lighting, richly textured furniture and cozy bohemian pillows. Their happy hour—perhaps the most prolific in the city—starts at 12:00 everyday, and lasts until 20:00. Located in the heart of Laugavegur, it’s also a prime people-watching spot.
bottled. Session is a place that, while cozy enough, is made for serious craft heads. Whether you’re hankering for a lip-puckering gose, or an IPA packed with more flowers than a funeral, Session has got your back.

19. Skuggabaldur

Pósthússtræti 9

A weekday bar is all about atmosphere. You want something lively but cozy, bustling without being jam-packed, and above all else, full of good vibes. Skuggabaldur has perfected this delicate combo, with the best of Reykjavík’s jazz scene showing up nightly to entertain patrons and make even a Wednesday memorable. Despite only opening last year, the bar has quickly become a favourite with everyone from downtown artists to suburban folk.

Shopping

20. Yeoman

Laugavegur 7

2021 saw Yeoman being donated by international celebrities while also continuing her reign as the primary fashion tastemaker for Reykjavík women. “To talk about modern Icelandic style is to talk about Yeoman,” one panel member said.

21. Lucky Records

Bauðhúsvígur 10

Lucky Records is the one-stop-shop for anything Icelandic music. They’ve got it all; new titles, CDs, rarities, vinyl, cassettes, second hand 7”, 7” singles, you name it! Notably, the store is very in touch with the local underground. Basically any Icelandic release—no matter how big or small—will be sold there, and trust and believe, their shopkeepers will know them inside and out.

22. Hringekján

Pírinnarrót 2

Similar to a consignment shop, Hringekján is a space where people can rent out spaces to sell their own clothes and accessories. It’s the most eco-friendly way to keep your closet fresh, which, in light of our current world, is something we should all be thinking about. “I don’t know how they get such chic people to sell their clothes there,” laughed one panel member. “If you want something groovy this is the place to go.”

23. Apótek Átæli

Laugavegur 16

Apótek Átæli is quite new on the scene, but this small boutique has already made quite a splash. Created by designer Fríbrósárdóttir, Hafðaðóra Sigurjónsdóttir and Sævar Markús Ískarson, Apótek Átæli blurred the line between studio and store, functioning as both the designers’ workspace, as well as the place where one can purchase their wares.
As we step into Post-þúsið, the headquarters of Reykjavík-based music collective Post-dreifing, we see Diego Manatrizio gesturing over odd-looking objects: a toy xylophone, tiny piano, alarm clock, even a traffic cone—like a wizard conjuring a spell over a bubbling cauldron of magic potion with his trusty wand. Well, replace the wand with a drumstick and Diego is nothing short of a modern-day wizard, extracting magical sounds from ordinary objects. Tonight we are at ‘Allt er hljóðfæri’ or ‘Everything is an instrument’—one of the many improvisation nights Diego leads.

“Right now I am a full-time musician,” says Diego, who is perhaps better known by his stage name Flaaryr. Diego’s work knows few if any boundaries. “I never place myself in a particular genre,” he says. “But I think my music has elements of minimalism, rhythmic experimentation, a little bit of noise, a little bit of ambient, a little bit of math rock.” He continues, noting these are genres that were very influential for him growing up. “What defines it more is just ranges. “I make improvisations out of trash with contact mics when I think the moment in which I decided to start using trash with contact mics was when I thought, ‘What if instead of modifying conventional musical instruments like a guitar, I just put all the focus on these random objects and the objects are the instruments themselves?’”

One of the objects with musical qualities that surprised Diego turned out to be a mirror. “A mirror doesn’t have much resonance. If you bang on it, not much will happen,” he says. “But if you put water on it and move your fingers, it makes a screeching sound that is really interesting. Depending on how much pressure you apply with your fingers, the pitch of that sound changes in a really surprisingly wide range.”

**Guitar or flamingo?**

In one of his upcoming shows at the RUSL sustainable design festival, Diego won’t play guitar at all. “In that set, I will only play with a mirror and a garden decoration that is a flamingo made of metal. It’s gonna be completely different from what I have ever played,” Diego shares. “The theme of this festival is about sustainability and reusing objects that are usually considered waste. I thought that it was interesting to make my set very close to the concept of the festival. It’s a good situation to see what happens if I don’t have a guitar and will have to rely on those objects that are very unpredictable.”

**Intuitive music to the masses**

In addition to preparing for live performances, Diego has been working on a new album, ‘Dagur Tönlístr Innsæisins’ or “A Day of Intuitive Music, which will be released in November. “This is my first composition project in which I will not be the performer,” he explains. Starting in July, Diego plans to launch an open call for people willing to participate in the project. “I will invite 24 people who don’t know how to play any instruments. Each of them will play one hour of improvised music, with a lot of instruments and random objects that I will give them and I will record them playing solo improvisations one by one. Out of those 24 hours of completely improvised music, I will make 24 short pieces only by cutting and rearranging them, without doing any sound processing or anything like that. So I will compose using improvisations as my source.”

**Choose your own instrument**

The idea of the project was born a year ago when Diego started to organise improvisation nights, just like the one we are at while speaking. “The concept is pretty straightforward,” he says. “It’s just 100% open improvisation in a space full of instruments. And everyone, absolutely everyone is welcome to join and play any instrument they like. It doesn’t matter if you have never played an instrument before, or if you are a guitarist and you want to grab a trumpet, you are totally welcome to do it. There are no musical guidelines.”

The bottom line of this project is to tell people that everyone is qualified enough to make music. Music can mean so many things and, in this case, there are no boxes that you have to tick.”

He beams with a smile so sincere that you start to believe it is true. “You can have no training and still make amazing music.”
Upcoming Events

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

This month is packed with so many great events that we can’t possibly fit them all! Check them out on events.grapevine.is and don’t hesitate to add yours!

Friday July 1st
Blómhóri (with Kusu/Kerkiðtú Ólafur) 20:00 Sæta Svinið
Minus 20:00 Máli og Manning
Elín Schaffrin & Friends 21:00 Sluggabalsgat
DJ Frímann 22:00 Kaffibærinn

Saturday July 2nd
Buxur 22 15:00 Fiski Bufunes
Lucey in Blue 20:00 Sæta Svinið
Fríngin Closing Party 01:00 Horra
Guide to Iceland 10th Anniversary Concert 20:00 Ingólfstorg
DJ Simon Ridsimson 23:00 Kaffibærinn
Sparximeine Charlie, Captain Syrup, Fjara 20:00 KEX

Sunday July 3rd
Doombomber: Primitive Man 20:00 Sæta Svinið
Fríngin Award Ceremony 18:00 Súgand
Beginnings Burlesque 21:30 SMG
• Pikknikk Summer Concerts - Yana 15:00 Börðó House

Monday July 4th
Comedy Night 20:00 Sæta Svinið
Múlinn Jazz Club - Bóludverk 20:00 Harpa

Tuesday July 5th
Karaðó 20:00 Sæta Svinið
Kjos & Ólafur 20:00 Sæta Svinið
Marocus Miller 20:00 Harpa
Party Karáns 21:00 Sæta Svinið

Wednesday July 6th
Sunday July 10th
23:00 Kaffibærinn
DJ Kjarðú 23:00 Kaffibærinn

Sunday July 17th
23:00 Kaffibærinn

Sunday July 24th

July 1st—August 4th
Art of Defiance

Ukrainian art comes to Iceland

Words: Alice Poggio  Photo: Öskar Hallgrímsson

Öskar Hallgrímsson and Mariika Lobynsveva, power couple behind textile art collaboration “Comfortable Universe”, join us on video call from Kyiv, Ukraine, with bursts of technicolour visible in the background of their art studio. They have only recently been reunited with their art. For the first six weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine, the Ukrainian military had been utilising the building.

Their art consists of brightly coloured wall hangings, hand-sewn from wool and acrylic, depicting minimalist characters engaging in beautifully mundane activities that we often take for granted.

Confined once again, they made the best out of their situation, using art to express what words cannot. It is this feeling of safety that Comfortable Universe has focused on for their upcoming show, “Ljómandi Pægilegt”, at Gallery Port from July 16th to August 4th. They will be bringing the work over to Iceland soon, in as many checked-bags as soldiers will stop and search you.

“Our art this time is not meant to be an escape, we are merely ‘dressing’ our reality. It’s about defiance,” Öskar clarifies. “We don’t want to use obvious war imagery, but it’s better that we don’t want to acknowledge the pain and the hurt. We know there’s a lot. We have seen it.”

The only exception to this rule of theirs is what Öskar and Mariika like to refer to as “a symbol of defiance.” One of their little beings, "Ljómandi" translates to "glowing" but it is often used colloquially as a synonym for “great.” It describes the glow we can feel inside “like a candle-light—warm, comforting, cosy,” Öskar says.

Defiance is the other pervasive theme in “Ljómandi Pægilegt.” It can come in many forms. A person buying a bouquet of flowers, the trees blooming for spring in cities yet to be liberated, or creating art under a sniper occupied rooftop. It’s a soldier taking up gardening tools while on break, to make sure the roots of their city’s beloved trees get enough air. His AK47 rested on his back, swinging from side to side with every motion of the trowel.

 Unexpected Influences

In these newer pieces, beings peek from behind objects, hiding. Mariika sketches the designs, which are then reworked and adapted by both Öskar and Mariika. “Art evolves as you go along,” Mariika explains. “Often you don’t realise until later, when you exhibit your work and people see all kinds of meanings you didn’t even realise were there.”

Flowers are prominent in their latest work, with giant daisies and flower-covered barricades. “I was never into bouquets, but now when we see people selling them, we buy one if we can. It’s a little bit of happiness,” Mariika smiles. “There are a lot more flowers in my work now.”

Dressing Reality

“Our art this time is not meant to be an escape, we are merely ‘dressing’ our reality. It’s about defiance,” Öskar clarifies. “We don’t want to use obvious war imagery, but it’s better that we don’t want to acknowledge the pain and the hurt. We know there’s a lot. We have seen it.”

The only exception to this rule of theirs is what Öskar and Mariika like to refer to as “a symbol of defiance.” One of their little beings, “Ljómandi” translates to “glowing” but it is often used colloquially as a synonym for “great.” It describes the glow we can feel inside “like a candle-light—warm, comforting, cosy,” Öskar says.

Defiance is the other pervasive theme in “Ljómandi Pægilegt.” It can come in many forms. A person buying a bouquet of flowers, the trees blooming for spring in cities yet to be liberated, or creating art under a sniper occupied rooftop. It’s a soldier taking up gardening tools while on break, to make sure the roots of their city’s beloved trees get enough air. His AK47 rested on his back, swinging from side to side with every motion of the trowel.

Russian officials will try to have you believe that Ukraine won’t even exist in a few years’ time. Öskar and Mariika assured us it is just noise, and every small act of defiance helps to get through it. Becoming another voice that joins the ever louder chant: “we’re not going anywhere.”
Art Expositions

Gallery openings, happenings, showings and pop-up exhibitions all around the capital area.

Send details of yours to: events@grapevine.is

Opening

**ÁSMUNDARSAALUR**
Essentially untitled
The multidisciplinary French artist Claire Paugum’s exhibition focuses on questioning. With common rules and representations in mind, she confronts the sensitive at previous, demonstrating the unstable nature of images. Exploring themes of shadow, memory, entropy and letting go, her art lives in the space as living beings would. Some criss cross on the floor and walls, some become fluid matter, integrating seamlessly into the space yet challenging the spatial perspective.

- Opens on July 15th
- Runs until August 14th

Ongoing

**REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM – HAFNARFÓR**
Erri: The Power of Images
Erri is undoubtedly Iceland’s best-known visual artist. The Reykjavík Art Museum is custodian of nearly 4000 pieces of the artist’s work after he began donating them in the 1980s, and this exhibition of more than 300 of them is without question the most extensive showing of Erri’s works ever seen in Iceland. Videos, graphics, and collages—with larger works in public spaces, and paintings of all scales—showcase Erri’s eclectic appropriation of imagery from every possible domain.

- Runs until September 25th

**AUSTÍVÖLLUR**
Bitapagi
The reality of being disabled and living in poverty in this prosperous country is something Halfr Hjörleifsson Jonsson (aka Krummi) draws attention to with his photo exhibition. Krummi explores what it is like to suffer natural deprivation in a society that makes you believe money can buy happiness.

- Runs until July 31st

**HALLGRÍMSKIRJUHÖL**
Armors
When artist Steinunn Pórarinsdóttir visited the Metropolitan Museum in NYC roughly ten years ago, she became fascinated with its extensive armor collection and what armor can symbolise today. In collaboration with said museum, she displays three armoured pieces of armour. Their armour, 3D scanned and turned into cast metal sculptures is based on three precious mediæval armors originating from Italy, France and England.

- Runs until August 9th

**MUSEUM OF DESIGN & APPLIED ART**
Bathing Culture
The outdoor geothermal pool is the most interesting public sphere in Iceland. A place where strangers cross paths and acquaintances meet, it is a source of wellbeing 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 all contributed to the story.

- Runs until September 25th

**Virtual Water**
Taking a philosophical approach to the Iceland bathing culture, Hrud Atladóttir describes diving into water as entering another dimension full of contradictions. In connection with the museum’s current ‘bathing culture’ exhibition, this work challenges viewers to dive into this dimension through virtual reality and experience the effect water can have on perception.

- Runs until October 23rd

**ÆLANDIR**
In Relation To The Sun
I Íó 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 creators to reflect on how the passage of time alters their work and encourage repeat viewers to observe these changes. This inaugural exhibition by Ailóra Kæladarson encompasses installation, sculpture and work on paper. Its title—initially ‘In Relation To The Sun’—will change as the nature of the pieces on display evolves.

- Runs from December 22nd

**National Library**
Sir Joseph Banks - Island Expedition
Joseph Banks joined Captain James Cook on his first voyage around the world. Already a year after they returned, he led the first British scientific expedition to Iceland in 1769. Over the years, the National Library has put on an exhibition to celebrate the anniversary of his voyage.

- Runs until November 20th

**Hafnarborg**
In the Depths of Your Own Awareness
This retrospective exhibition features works spanning Sunnarr Gunnarrsson’s almost 40-year career. His first exhibition raised considerable interest in Iceland, and he set the precedent for what would be his lifelong inspiration: human interactions with modern digital experiences. This highly participatory exhibition features works spanning his career, embodying the artist’s space-time continuum.

- Runs until August 28th

**Hverfisgallerí**
Inner Space
The dimensional wall works, reliefs, and a colour palette ranging from untreated wood, to principal colour tones to neon, Belgian artist Jeanine Cohen’s solo exhibition explores the effects colour and shapes can have on the human experience. While each piece is a stand-alone work of art, she uses the exhibition space to stimulate a collaborative dialogue between them.

- Runs until September 29th

**Ásmundarsafn**
We the Mountain
For this solo exhibition, the Danish artist Evmarie Clausen (b. 1976) follows the poem of Þýrsey frá Blöllum Leifurðarins’ works are made using wool, traditional techniques and needle felting she was introduced to in her ancestral home town Húsavik and, driven by female and needle felting she was introduced to in her ancestral home town Húsavik and, driven by female

- Runs until October 2nd

**Kjarvalsstaði**
Stitches and Threads
Local artists explore and confront social issues, the poetry of everyday life, and the transcendence of nostalgia through embroidery and use of needlework. The exhibition focuses on this sub-discipline within textile art, and where some honour its heritage traditionally, others approach it via progressive mixed media experiments.

- Runs until September 18th

**Reykjavík Art Museum – Ásmundarsafn**
Spatial Infractions
Rósa Ísladóttir exhibits her work in conversation with that of Icelandic sculptor pioneer Ásmundur Sveinsson. Rósa is best known for her creations in the medium of plaster, but she often references architecture in her work and here will use Aluminium to build a museum building itself, as a sculpture.

- Runs until August 17th

**National Gallery**
Ljúfrafélagi / 16 to Join
Margrét H. Blöndal’s exhibition honours our connections with the title refers to the notion of moving between three themes that come together: 16 to Join consists of drawings made with powdered pigments and oil, amongst which a re-creation of a workshop that were made within the space of the museum. Each individual work of art is intended to work in conjunction with the surrounding pieces, becoming almost a symphonic poem where all are joined together.

- Runs until October 2nd

**Gardaríðar 210**
**Gay & Lesbian Art Museum**
**The Reykjavík Grapevine**
**Issue 07 — 2022**

**REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY**
Light Space — Shadow Space
Einar Johannesson’s work explores how abstract forms and shadows can be transformed into clear, graspable imagery through photography and the use of natural light. The exhibition displays her photographs of buildings, both inside and outside at different times of day, exploring the relationship between opposites as darkness re-treats with increased natural light.

- Runs until August 18th

**Gardaríðar 210**
We can talk
This exhibition marks the end of a collaboration between prominent cross-disciplinary artists and institutions located in five Nordic countries, initiated by Platform GÁTT. Nine artists showcase their work, reflecting on what it means to be part of the Nordic Region and exploring both the positive and the negative aspects of a shared identity.

- Runs until September 4th
The winner of this year’s Skjaldborg film festival truly proves the saying “you’re never too old.” The film, “Velkominn Árni,” follows 77-year-old Árni Jón Árnason on his life-changing journey to discover his American half-brother. Over the course of the film, audiences watch as Árni’s life changes through his travels and he shifts from being a socially-forgotten, quiet man to a creative visionary with a new spark in his eye.

Meeting Árni
Director Viktoría Hermannsdóttir first came across the story through her radio show about the children of Icelandic mothers and foreign soldier fathers from World War II. When American David Balsam called, searching for his half-brother, Viktoría went on the hunt—and met Árni.

Viktoría immediately became enamoured with Árni’s life and character. “He’s the most open person that I’ve met; the most genuine person,” Viktoría said of meeting the septuagenarian for the first time.

From radio to film
Following the original radio show, Viktoría knew that Árni deserved more. Listeners reached out begging to know more about Árni and his story, Victoria was intrigued as well and decided to create a documentary centred around him.

She knew director Allan Sigurðsson through a friend and asked him to work with her on the documentary. “When Viktoría called me and asked me if I wanted to join in, I hadn’t heard the radio show. So I went and listened to that and said ‘no doubt about it’ and I’m very glad that I did,” beamed Allan.

Árni on camera
The film chronicles David and Árni finding each other after going their entire lives without knowing about the other’s existence. We get to see David’s extended family completely embracing Árni into their lives and acting as if they’ve known each other forever.

Along with a deep dive into the familial relations, the viewer gets a completely raw and genuine look into Árni’s life and character. It’s refreshing to see someone so open and relaxed, completely embracing themselves and their story.

Throughout the interview, Viktoría and Allan are very careful not to spoil anything about the film. They clearly believe the intrigue of Árni is captured in the magic of the film and want to preserve that first meeting feel for all the viewers.

“Many people change their behaviour when they see a camera and he’s just always himself and lets everything out. He’s always very genuine and super open and there’s not one second where he’s pretentious or anything like that. So, that’s very rare to find,” Allan said with love for his new friend.

“It’s just being himself in every situation,” Viktoría continued.

“It’s not just an Icelandic story”
The film resonates with any audience member and leaves you feeling warm and hopeful. The journey leads the loveable Árni to his first true family, a feel-good story that makes you think about your own familial history.

“It’s not just an Icelandic story. It’s a story that can go around the world because it has connections to America, children of war, and people who are lonely and not assimilated into society,” Viktoría says about the breadth of the story.

“It’s a story many people can relate to in many ways,” Allan recounted.

This truly is the case. We can all find resonance with Árni’s story and the film clearly captures the deep-rooted human need for belonging shared by humanity. Be sure to look for “Velkominn Árni” at film festivals near you and keep an eye out on the RÚV schedule at the end of the year so you, too, can have the privilege of knowing Árni.
“This has never been about making money.”

Brotherly Beer

Jóhann Guðmundsson on inadvertently turning passion into a job you love while bettering his home, the island of Heimaey

Words: Alice Poggio & Iryna Zubenko
Photos: Joana Fontinha

“Now I can have as much free beer as I want,” says Jóhann Guðmundsson beaming with pride. It seems like he has already achieved all he wanted in life, and frankly, it’s infectious—we want this, too. We stopped by his lifelong project, The Brothers Brewery in the Westman Islands, to grab a pint, and ended up talking to Jóhann for hours.

Let’s start brewing

First things first: Who are the brothers? Jóhann clarifies: “We’re best friends. This is actually the third company we started. Back in 2012, we were getting drunk in a summer house and we looked at a bottle of beer and thought: ‘Wow, this is disgusting,’ but we kept on reading and reading, ‘he says. From that, I just began to research. He started with the self-proclaimed “nerd of the group,” Jóhann, a computer programmer and member contributed their skills.

Brothers Brewery came to life. Each of the brothers decided to look for a place to rent. In March 2017, they opened a tap room and a small brewery thinking it was too much space, but in six months’ time, they had outgrown it. Now they are using 600 kg of grain per week, in a building they bought and refitted themselves.

What’s brewed in Heimaey, stays in Heimaey

Surprisingly, The Brothers Brewery doesn’t sell their beer beyond Heimaey. “The only place that has our beer in Legs is Gött [the restaurant next door],” says Jóhann. We sometimes put it in some of the craft bars in Reykjavík, but most of it is just sold here.”

“We have beer from Akureyri, and when people come in and get that we sometimes make fun of it,” shares Jóhann. “Do you know how big the carbon footprint of your beer is? You can actually just drink this and have pretty much none,” he jokes, pointing to metal containers with freshly brewed local beer.

“This has never been about making money,” continues Jóhann. “This has been about having fun, having free beer, and what we can do to actually make the island better.”

Every year, The Brothers Brewery makes a special beer for Fishermen’s Day, a big Icelandic holiday, honouring a local fisherman. “The beer is named after the fisherman and put into three bottles. One bottle is for us, one for the fisherman or his family, and then we take one bottle and auction it off,” explains Jóhann. Over the last few years, the brewery has raised 7.5 million ISK for local charities.

From wonky veg to beer

Sustainability has always been important to the brewers. “We were using lactose in a lot of beer earlier,” Jóhann recalls. “Three years ago, we thought ‘Why use animal products when we don’t have to?’” The brewery opted to stop using any animal products, except for one style—their famous Skyr Sour.

The team is also striving for a holistic approach to reduce their environmental impact, such as donating spent grains (one of beer’s byproducts) to local farmers. Their zero-waste attitude led to another experiment: turning wonky vegetables into beer. “We were given ugly carrots that couldn’t be sold,” shares Jóhann. “We cut them into pieces, dumped them into the mash and made beer,” says Jóhann.

Chasing ‘The Dream’

At first the brewers only intended to sell beer to a neighbouring restaurant, and have it pay for the extra grain that would allow them to drink their own beer for free. But their beer kept selling out. “I was waking up every morning and heading to the brewery from six until lunchtime. Then I went to my day job, finishing at maybe eight or nine,” Jóhann recalls.

That is when the brothers decided to look for a place to rent. In March 2017, they opened a tap room and a small brewery thinking it was too much space, but in six months’ time, they had outgrown it. Now they are using 600 kg of grain per week, in a building they bought and refitted themselves.

Find what you love

When asked what the secret of The Brothers Brewery is, Jóhann doesn’t hesitate: “The passion that we have for what we’re doing,” he replies.

Since the brewery opened in Heimaey in 2016, the attitude towards alcohol consumption on the island has changed for the better—Jóhann and the team take pride in their contribution to challenging social biases around the topic, which was until recently considered taboo.

“We just had fun drinking beer, and now we can have as much free beer as we want,” reiterates Jóhann, adding: “A lot of time I just walk here, have a beer after work and walk home. I think it’s paradise.”

Jóhann sharing all he knows about beer
"Ox" by Gyða

Iceland's muse does it again

Words: Gyða Valtýsdóttir & Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photo: Eva Schram

Info
Gyða's latest album, "Ox," has been garnering accolades the world over lately, as the artist continues to exceed expectations. But what was the inspiration, the stories, the processes behind the songs on the album? Gyða breaks it down for us, track by track.

Alphabet
The name of the album comes from this song as most alphabets start with aleph, originating from the Egyptian hieroglyph which depicts an ox's head.

A
lphabet is about reading between the lines, to connect the dots of the sensory waves that make up our reality and the empathy it takes to see into others.

This song has many muses, including Virginia Woolf and Nikola Tesla. I owe its existence to Kjartan Sveinsson who was in the room with me when it was born, asleep on the sofa. He also left his DNA firmly in the arrangement. It was recorded live with him and Merope, then I recorded an orchestra of cello and flute overdubs in the basement of Figure8 Studio in NYC, where I lived for most of the pandemic and where most of the album came into existence.

Black Swan
I wrote the text in a stream of consciousness while sick. It is a quite visceral praise to embodiment, as well as a love letter to my shadow side, the importance of embracing both darkness and light and to hold non-dualistic thinking when it comes to morality and to accepting ourselves and thus others.

In Corde
The lyrics are from the 12th century nun Hildegard von Bingen. I played the hymn on cello on my first album "Epicycle,", so now I decided to sing the lyrics of that same hymn. The melody poured out effortlessly with the words. It was inspired by a documentary about nuns, which I was pitching for. Didn't get the job but this song was born.

Cute Kittens Lick Cream
I was watching these cute kittens lick cream and inside the amalgamation of their purrs I could hear music. I grabbed a pen and wrote down what I heard, so the song came into existence.

Miracle
It's perhaps the most personal song I've ever written because I allowed myself to go inside a pain which I want rather to keep private.

Prism
An attempt to create a rift in the membrane of existence, so, to see or feel for a moment what lies there beyond.

Heavenly Piracy
The lyrics burst forth in an email to a lover just after a volcanic eruption in 2014. I never thought it would end on an album but I've performed it live many times, usually a cappella. It is the most collaborative song on the album. I'd written out most of the arrangements but here everyone improvised freely. The drums are mostly samples from Julians Sartoris's Beat Diary, recorded onto my phone from my record player, Shahzad Ismaily added his highly unique bass playing, Alex Sopp goes wild on flute, Merope added their magic and there is a sample from Efterklang from the original version I did back in 2014 — an incredible ingredient to cook with along with master chef Úlfur who co-produced the song with me.

Tell It
One of three songs from the album which was born during a song-a-day session. This one is simply the lo-fi demo I sent in one day.

Amaying
This might be the only true love song I've ever written. It was recorded live with Kjartan and Merope. I wanted the song to blossom like a nocturnal Datura and Úlfur wrote this incredibly glorious cello arrangement for it. I've made a video of me dancing a duet with a ballerina. Coming soon!

You can catch Gyða at Gamli Bió on July 2nd at 21:00. Tickets available at tix.is. Ox is available via our online store shop.grapevine.is, or on smekkleysa.net
Cheap Food

Toppings pizza with three Medium sized Every day Tuesday Dominos onion rings - 15:00 -18:00 Every day All day Android stores Happy Hour Great bottomless bar. They offer a special so quickly. It was 2021 that the Radisson Blue 1919 Hotel cleared their ground floor to make way for this fancy yet accessible restaurant and bar. They offer a great bottomless brunch for a fair price, their wine list is more like a book, and their accessible menu can be easily combined with side dishes. It’s just the right amount of fancy! It’s also right next to the infamous hot dog stand so it’s perfect for making taunting eye contact with those who decide to make do with suða and a hot dog. They don’t know what’s up! Kw 9

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

1,000 ISK And Under Smoke / Le Keek Week days all day Doughnut, coffee & bagel -1.000 ISK
Hambugara-bëlla Timasar All day Tuesday Burger, french fries & soda - 1.390 ISK
Glo All day, every day Board of the month - 1.290 ISK

sandwich 1,095 ISK Vegan option
Uppsalir Every day 11:00 - 14:00 Burger & fries - 1.390 ISK Vegan option
Boodle Station Every day 11:00 - 22:00 Vegetarian noodles -1.100 ISK
2,000 ISK And Under Matarakkjallarinn Monday - Friday

11:30 - 15:00 Fisherman’s fish soup -1.990 ISK
5,000 ISK And Under Apótek Every day 11:30 - 16:00 Two-course lunch -3.390 ISK Three course lunch - 4.390 ISK
Bröt Weekdays 12:00 - 16:00 Bottomless brunch - 4.800 ISK

Full of exciting facts about Icelandic history, nature, culture, celebrities, artists and more.

ICELAND’S LARGEST BOOKSTORE Forlagið bookstore I Fiskislóð 39 I www.forlagid.is
Open weekdays 10-18 I Saturdays 11-17

Cheap food

BASTARD BREW Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.
KAFI LAUKUR Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. 2 F1 on wine and beer on tap
KOFINN BAR Every day from 12:00 to 19:00. Beer 860 ISK, Wine 950 ISK.
LOFT Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 860 ISK, Wine 950 ISK.
LULA FLORENS Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.
LUNA FLORENS Tuesday - Sat from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK. Discount or a free appetizer.
EPAFFI Wednesday - 16:00 - 18:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

Toppings bowls - 1,390 ISK

Every day Tuesday Tapas Barinn

Tapas Barinn Every day 17:00 - 18:00 Selected tapas half price

500 ISK And Under

Sandwiches 800 ISK

Hard Rock Cafe Every day 15:00 - 18:00

Nachos, wings & onion rings - 990 ISK

Dominos All day Tuesday Medium sized pizza with these toppings

5,000 ISK And Under

sandwich 1,095 ISK Vegan option
Uppsalir Every day 11:00 - 14:00 Burger & fries - 1.390 ISK Vegan option
Boodle Station Every day 11:00 - 22:00 Vegetarian noodles -1.100 ISK
2,000 ISK And Under Matarakkjallarinn Monday - Friday

11:30 - 15:00 Fisherman’s fish soup -1.990 ISK
5,000 ISK And Under Apásk Every day 11:30 - 16:00 Two-course lunch -3.390 ISK Three course lunch - 4.390 ISK
Bröt Weekends 12:00 - 16:00 Bottomless brunch - 4.800 ISK

Full of exciting facts about Icelandic history, nature, culture, celebrities, artists and more.

ICELAND’S LARGEST BOOKSTORE Forlagið bookstore I Fiskislóð 39 I www.forlagid.is
Open weekdays 10-18 I Saturdays 11-17
Words to live by

Karítas Hrundar Pálsdóttir brings Icelandic learner fiction up to date with her new book “Dagatal.”

Learners of Icelandic have a notoriously rough time. Not only is Icelandic supposedly one of the hardest languages to master grammatically (although some language experts have tried to debunk this myth), but the ubiquity of English across the western world means that even for those who really make the effort to learn, immersion is nigh-on impossible. Pair that with the fact that the available lessons are almost always dry, academic and eye-wateringly expensive, many foreigners who live in Iceland feel that learning the language is an unachievable goal.

It was partly this situation that inspired author Karítas Hrundar Pálsdóttir to write her first book of short stories for learners of Icelandic.

“The resulting book, “Árstíðir”, was published in 2020 and has quickly become a go-to text for Icelandic newbies. Now Karítas has published a second collection of stories, “Dagatal”, which is aimed at slightly more advanced readers, while still focused on straightforward grammar and accessible text.

Similar to Árstíðir, Dagatal is a series of extremely short stories—“flash fiction,” as Karítas calls them. The stories sometimes take on different or quirky forms, like a text message conversation, or a short play, making them very engaging for the reader.

“In both of my collections I’ve tried to be innovative and creative in the presentation of the story,” Karítas explains. “So there are some that are set up as poems, or dialogue, as a journal entry, or email or messenger communication.

“But there’s also a lot of diversity in the content and the genre,” she continues. “Some are more exciting than others, some are more melancholic, and there’s a lot of funny ones that have a play on words and a punchline of some sort.”

The stories’ length obviously help with their readability for those newly acquainted with reading Icelandic fiction, but Karítas also feels like she is able to express her own creativity through this style as well.

“It’s about capturing a moment in time, or just an emotion,” she says. “Of course it is a strict form, linguistically, and sometimes creates limitations. But that’s also the beauty of the writing process, of being creative within a restrained form. Many writers do that in different ways. For instance in poetry and playwrighting there’s a strict form, but then you get creative within it.”

Icelandic life in context

As well as introducing learners to the grammar and structure of the language, it was important to Karítas that her books give people some context to Icelandic life, culture and customs. To that end, the main theme for Dagatal is around calendar days and the special events that only Iceland celebrates.

“There’s a lot of introduction of main traditions and how they might be different in Iceland than elsewhere,” says Karítas. “Even though we do celebrate the same holidays as many countries, we also have our own individual unique things.”

“I hope that the books help people advance their reading competence, but I also hope that it adds to cultural literacy and gives people an insight into Icelandic values, traditions, and views on life,” she adds.

Design matters

It’s clear that a huge amount of care and thought went into the overall design of the book to make it appeal to readers. The presentation is sleek and stylish, steering well clear of anything infantilising or that might feel textbook-y. Karítas worked with cutting-edge artists and designers Krot & Krass to produce the look, including creating individual icons which indicate the language level of each story, without being intrusive into the experience of reading the book.

How the stories are presented is important,” Karítas confirms. “It’s important to honour learn-
ers as general readers. The style gives them a sense that reading should be a journey, and reminds them that it should be pleasant. I’m trying to make language learning fun.

The best way to learn

Until Karítas’s stories were published, it was common for Icelandic learners to be recommended children’s books in order to be able to practise their reading and comprehension skills. However, Karítas says that this approach is not always effective.

“Icelandic children’s books may be about simple topics, but have complicated grammatical structures that children learn early but second language learners learn later,” she explains. “Adult learners might need that simple grammatical structure, but they’re able to handle different topics. They have a bigger world view.”

Another issue that Karítas has seen in the teaching of Icelandic is how it is almost always delivered through English, making the process of learning very difficult for those who come from different backgrounds.

“It excludes people from other language backgrounds who don’t have strong English, like is the case for some people from Eastern Europe or the Middle East,” she says. “Because of that I wanted my writing to be inclusive, and the best way to do that was to have only Icelandic in the book.”

This includes the prologues of both Árstíðir and Dagatal, which are both written by non-native Icelandic speakers. First Lady Eliza Reid wrote the forward for Árstíðir, while the intro for Dagatal was written by Claudia Ashanie Wilson, a prominent human rights lawyer.

A more tolerant approach

Karítas believes that having strong role models is an oft-overlooked aspect to encouraging non-native residents in Iceland that learning the language is more than possible. Beyond that, she feels there needs to be a broader cultural shift in order for learners to feel more comfortable in using their newly adopted language.

“There’s a lot of things the government and employers could do to facilitate easier access to Icelandic language courses, reducing fees or eliminating them,” Karítas says. “But it’s also about society being more tolerant.”

By any means, Karítas’s books are a step towards making that tolerance and understanding a reality. Luckily for learners, she has no plans to stop writing.

“I would definitely say I’m not done yet,” she says with a wry smile. “I have more ideas for stories to come.”
Chef Gísli Matthías Auðunsson serves originality by the spadefuls and continues to redefine Icelandic cuisine with razor sharp focus on provenance of produce, while challenging the spectre of cookie-cutter sameness that plagues fine dining.

Words: Shruthi Basappa
Photos: Art Bicnick

Food at Slippurinn is unlike any you will encounter here in Iceland. For 10 years now, the family-run restaurant has opened each summer, for a few short months, delivering consistency and steadfast focus on what Icelandic cuisine could be.

Restaurants in Iceland tend to be plagued by a curious affliction of profit margins and appealing to a mythical diner who apparently wants the same food no matter where they’re dining. At Slippurinn, owner chef Gísli Matthías Auðunsson is freed from such expectation and sends out dish after dish of memorable plates that you’re unlikely to taste anywhere else.

On the heels of the success of his debut book, “Slippurinn: Recipes and Stories from Iceland” published by Phaidon, the restaurant is now open for the 2022 season.

Of guillemot eggs and glistening skies

Dining at Slippurinn can feel like a pilgrimage. For those who dine at the restaurant religiously each year (and there are many), getting there is a big part of that experience. The hour long drive to Landeyjahöfn is a canvas of vast skies, hills and famous waterfalls. Then there is the 40 minute ferry. As the boat draws closer, towering oceanic islands appear in the horizon. Various sea birds squawking overhead foreshadow the forthcoming meal in more ways than one. Slippurinn does both set and a la carte menus. The flexibility allows for fantastic sampling and warrants multiple visits as the menu changes with the season’s produce throughout the summer.

For instance, the opening weeks coincide with the guillemot egg season. Larger than your average chicken egg with a pronounced pointy profile, the aquamarine, speckled egg has a history of being a fresh treat after a harsh winter’s diet of soured foods. The birds nest on precarious craggy cliff sides, and the eggs are harvested by hand, in an almost sport-like manner today. Gísli’s guillemot eggs are always a layered trifle—it is best to dig deep and get everything in one bite. On this occasion, they hide a layer of kitchen scrap ‘XO sauce’, topped with an ethereal pine needle sour cream. The ascorbic acid in the needles curdles fresh cream and it is a citrusy revelation that tastes like a promise of summer. Gísli might insist that what he makes is not Icelandic food, but then he goes and revives a rooted-in-the-island ingredient and elevates it to a fine dining treat that is an Instagram dream.

Food

Laugavegi 28
537 99 00
sumac@sumac.is
sumac.is

Chef Gísli Matthías Auðunsson foraging for seaweed
with gay abandon across the page. But then you sip a cold glass of bartender David Mood's excellent Dandelion Sour (1500 ISK) with Brennivin and skyr whey, and you realise that the pesky weed is not just edible, but also delicious. It is also a reminder that the once weak cocktail game has finally come into its own.

Gísli once said that foraging is a no-brainer in Iceland and lamented the incredulity of importing ingredients from Peru when our own backyards are literally ripe for the picking. The restaurant exudes this belief without resorting to gimmicky garnishes of chervil that otherwise haunts restaurants that proclaim backyard foraging. Here, they arrive in all their jewel-like splendour like the stars they are.

Of particular delight this time are the hand-dived sea urchins (1950 ISK) from the Westfjords—the creamy coral uni sits in its once spiny home on a pool of zippy horseradish cream, crowned with briny seaweed capers and the soft bite of oyster leaves and flowers. A beautiful layering of distinct saltiness of the ocean cohabitants weaves in and out of each bite, reminding you of the adage, "what grows together goes together."

Another show-stopper is the 'Þari' or sugar kelp, the broad, belt-like seaweed that lines Icelandic shores and has to be slow cooked for 18-24 hours to be edible. It is then dried, fried and served like a chip. A decadent snack to shame every other snack you'll encounter hereon. The broth from boiling the kelp is served as a consomme alongside; its dashi-esque flavour an unwitting reminder of Japan, but the heady slick of brown butter gently draws you back to Iceland.

Beyond the cod head

One of the most popular dishes at the restaurant that has garnered Gísli well deserved attention is the whole cod head. There might, however, be a new usurper to that throne. The whole lemon sole (1550 ISK) has been a steadfast fixture on the menu, but the iteration served up this year is likely its most prist. Gísli has always turned to fish, approaching everything from the ground up—starting with the butchering. Like with the 'cod wings' (with an even spicier, earthier hot sauce this year, 1500 ISK), he turns the heat up on the lemon sole by filleting it on both sides, snipping it at either end—thus removing all the bones, while leaving the fish 'whole'. It's then cooked en papillote with a fish stock butter sauce that is at once bright, voluptuous and rich. Batons of fresh apples and wedges of radish are an inspired touch of earthy sweetness to the expertly cooked fish. Yet again, Gísli shows that he is no hostage to technique as he revels in marrying his honed skills with home cooking methods, a rare quality that explains the approachable quality to the restaurant despite its audacity.

What makes for a unique dining experience at Slippurinn is a combination of several different factors that really shouldn’t work, especially if one were to listen to listless norms in fine dining lately: that value for money meals come at the expense of originality, that luxury translates to tired tropes of beef carpaccio, caviar quenelles and a New Nordic hangover, and that one can only have one or the other. Slippurinn celebrates Iceland and shines a light on its ingredients both abundant and obscure with dishes that are at once old, new and original appealing to a cross-section of diners. Gísli eschews of-the-moment popularity in favour of the unbridled joy of discovery, be it his experiments with ageing fish like with the cured halibut, or that butter and fish can be more than the sum of its parts, as he shows us with his birch-speared scallops served in a satisfying puddle of fermented garlic butter and pickled dulse. Dining at Slippurinn can feel like a journey of enlightenment: you come out changed and wiser for it.

"Slippurinn: Recipes and Stories from Iceland" is available for purchase from our online store shop.grapevine.is.

Happy hour / 4–7pm

Beer / Wine / Cocktails

The infamous cod’s head dish

For the average diner, a brief perusal of the menu might seem intimidating with ingredients like dandelion, lovage, chervil and angelica running

Backyard treasures and foraged finesse
Where does one go when you only have one day off from work this week, but you’re long overdue for an adventure, something to remind yourself that you are actually in the Iceland that you fell for? Dramatic landscapes, geysers and waterfalls? We say Laugarvatn. Only 50km past the traffic-jammed confines of Reykjavík, we found the small lakeside town, enveloped by nature.

**Weather Schmeather**

Laugarvatn is situated along the Golden Circle. The lake has geothermal springs under its surface, which has attracted crowds since the first people settled in Iceland. The weather started out pretty foul, but that was not going to stop us, and as Icelandic people love to say: “There’s no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing,” we made sure to come prepared.

**Google’s shortcuts**

The way there is smooth sailing, but if you are using Google Maps, be aware that it will often try to find a shortcut. When you are using a small electric car, without four wheel drive, faster is not better. From Reykjavik you take Route 36 towards Þingvellir and then Laugarvatn. As you get closer, to your left there’s an unassuming, safe-looking road. Follow your survival instinct, that little voice saying ‘hmm, maybe not,’ drive another five minutes, and turn left on Route 365 (an easy way to remember this is 365 days per year of smart decisions). Spare yourself the nightmare of accidentally travelling on what appears to be an unmarked F-road—aka FU-road. Rant over.

**Cave People**

The Cave People is a guided tour of a restored home dug into the soft volcanic rock on the side of a mountain. It is in Laugarvatnshellir and has been open to the public since 2015. Over the past 100 years it has been a home to many sheep, and two separate families, one of which even gave birth to two of their three children inside the cave.

Driven by their passion to preserve Icelandic history, the staff spent a year researching and renovating, making this a very unique stop that should definitely be part of your Golden Circle tour. The staff will entertain you with true tales of those who lived in the cave, as they dealt with freezing winters, harsh living conditions, and encounters with the hidden people, often referred to as elves.

It’s also a great chance to try the local delicacies in the section of the house where sheep were kept, now the Cave Café. Have a hot beverage with your kleina (Icelanders’ favourite pastry), or some traditional lamb soup. The caves are open every day from 10:00 to 18:00. We highly recommend you go on the 25 minute tours, which are available every half hour.

**Paddleboarding**

With full, happy stomachs we headed to another of Laugarvatn Adventure’s tours just ten minutes down the road: paddleboarding. Our guide was knowledgeable, patient, and very helpful, especially when it came to putting on the dry suits which are a challenge in itself. Paddleboarding was surprisingly easier than expected, and even if the weather was not on our side, we were not going to let it spoil our fun.

The beautiful scenery and patches of warm water of the shallow lake helped too. We recommend going with a large group of friends, so you can play some bolder paddleboarding games, such as running across lined up boards, or trying to form a pyramid. Or try your hand at some paddleboard yoga—but be prepared to fall in the water several times.

**Fontana spa**

Nothing beats treating yourself to a spa following your afternoon of splashing around the lake. Fontana harnesses the geothermal waters underneath the lake to create natural hot pools and steam vents. It also has a lovely little pier, from which you can access the colder waters for a dip. Thankfully it is close enough for you to give your Wim Hof life a try, but then run back to the comfort and safety of the bubbling tubs.

Laugarvatn makes for the perfect day away from the hubbub of the city, allowing you to reconnect with nature and the wondrous and magical side of Iceland that we love. We cannot wait for our next day off, rainy or not.
There’s a sense of calm after a storm that can only be felt after a crushingly busy Friday night at Tides. A waiter approaches the last guests. “If he’s not too busy, we would love to see this evening’s chef, we can talk,” he says.

“Waiter, there’s a problem.”

“Problematic Bugs and Unfortunate Dating”

What is dating life like in Iceland? This question brought about lots of discussion in the office, as many of us have not personally experienced the Icelandic dating scene. The most conclusive answer we got is that dating in Iceland involves drunkenly hooking up with someone enough times that it is more convenient to move in with each other than not. If you’re trying to find your rom-com-esque love story, Iceland is not the place for you. However, if you’re done with the back and forth of normal dating and you just want to settle down with the first person you meet, Iceland is perfect for you.

What are your mosquito populations like? The universe knows that Icelanders have to put up with enough climatic and environmental hell, so it’s decided to give us the gift of no mosquitoes. The blood-sucking bugs of dismay are clearly not as cut out for Icelandic winters as us Icelanders are, so Mosquitos: 0, Icelanders: 1. Don’t fret through! If you are visiting Iceland and you’re homesick so you can get a reminder of home sweet mosquito-ridden home by visiting the midges at Lake Myvatn. The midges are so similar to mosquitos that tourists often claim to have found mosquitoes in Iceland. Don’t be like them, you now know better.

What do Icelanders do in a (rare) heatwave? If you can consider 15°C (disregarding wind chill of course) a “heatwave,” then Icelanders do the same exact thing as every other day, except with maybe one less jacket. In fact, while the rest of the world has been melting in puddles of their own sweat for the last few weeks, we in the north Atlantic have actually been able to enjoy a nice stroll outside in short-sleeves on a few occasions. Thanks for your sacrifice everyone else, finally a weather win for Icelanders!
“Everyone is qualified enough to make music.”
Diego Manatrizio, aka Flaaryr, is confident that you don’t necessarily need training to be a musician. P18

“Our art this time is not meant to be an ‘escape’, we are merely ‘dressing’ our reality. It’s about defiance.”
Óskar Hallgrímsson and Mariika Lobyntseva, now based in Ukraine, speak about art during wartime and their upcoming exhibition in Reykjavik. P20

“We can have as much free beer as I want.”
Jóhann Guðmundsson shares how his love for beer came to life in The Brothers Brewery. P23

The Wonder of Our Water
We know it well after 30 years. We have unlocked its secrets. Its healing power. Its radiant universe. All for your wellbeing.