

POSTCARDS FROM ICELAND

Autumn 2009

Tea with an Elf Expert?

Iceland Retreats launch unique Icelandic authentic experiences

Iceland Retreats has launched a unique new menu of experiences that offer a taste of authentic Icelandic life for travellers interested in getting to know a bit more about the people who live in this fascinating destination.

The experiences include having fish soup with an Icelandic grandma, lunch with a poet, tea with an elf expert and exploring Reykjavik's legendary nightlife scene over cocktails with a local DJ.

Peter Leigh from Iceland Retreats said: "This sort of experience is usually hidden if you're just staying in Reykjavik for a day or so. It's different, sustainable and most of all a lot of fun."

Iceland Retreats' 10 "in the know" experiences were developed as a result of feedback from guests who consistently rated experiencing Icelandic life first-hand as the highlight of their stay. Full details can be found at www.icelandretreats.com/experience

New Glacier Ski Tour from Borea Adventures

Icelandic operator Borea Adventures has added a new Glacier Ski Tour for true winter adventurers to its growing portfolio of expeditions based in the Westfjords in north-west Iceland.

With departures in May 2010, the six-day trip explores the uninhabited Hornstrandir Nature Reserve, one of the most remote areas of Iceland.

The tour begins crossing the Drangajökull Glacier and discovering its magnificent ice craters formed by geothermal heat before skiing down to the lonely, but beautiful Reykjafjörður Fjord where there are no roads, or electricity.

Three nights will be spent camping on the glacier and two nights in a mountain hut located next to a geothermal swimming pool before returning back to civilisation.

The tour costs Euro 1250 per person and includes all food and drink, tent, polkas (sledges) and cooking equipment, accommodation in a basic mountain hut, transportation to the Nature Reserve and the services of an experienced Mountain guide. International flights and transportation to the departure point in Isafjordur is not included.

For more information visit www.boreaadventures.com

New website launched on Free Things to Do in Reykjavík

A new website has been launched showcasing activities in and around Reykjavik which visitors can enjoy for free www.freecitytravel.com.

Former economist and local Reykjavik resident Inga Jessen created the site after becoming unemployed following Iceland's recent financial crisis when she started to look for free activities that she could participate in to pass her time.

"I've been working on this website since April and it has been incredible fun. With this I would also like to say to those who are unemployed that anything is possible and that giving up is not an option," Jessen added. "I took all the pictures myself and wrote all the text. Even though you're unemployed you can always find something interesting to do."

Jessen's brother-in-law, who is a programmer, helped her launch the website. The first edition is in English and is designed for foreign tourists.

www.freecitytravel.com

Visit Reykjavik adds more value for money with improved Reykjavik Welcome Card

Budget conscious travellers can now get more value during a visit to Iceland's quirky capital thanks to the new and improved Reykjavik Welcome Card.

The Reykjavik Welcome Card now offers free admission seven of Reykjavik's thermal swimming pools and museums including the National Museum, the Reykjavik 871 +/-2 Settlement Exhibition, Culture House, Reykjavik Family park and farm animal zoo, *Árbæjarsafn*- The Reykjavik City Museum and The Reykjavik Maritime Museum – *Vikin*.

The card also allows unlimited travel on Reykjavik's buses, free ferry rides to Viðey Island, discounts at selected shops, tour operators and restaurants as well as complimentary internet access in the Visit Reykjavik Tourist Information Centre.

The cards are priced at 1,400ISK (around £6.65) for 24 hours, 1,900iSK (around £9) for 48 hours and 2,400ISK (around £11.50).

For more information on the new card visit www.visitreykjavik.is

Quirky new restaurant opens in Reykjavik - Fish Company

Reykjavik's thriving restaurant scene has seen yet another addition with the opening of Fish Company in July 2009. Located in the heart of downtown Reykjavik, Fish Company's innovative and experimental chefs invite diners to take an adventurous journey around the world through a quirky internationally inspired menu and its colourful and eclectic surroundings.

Dishes focus on one core ingredient, linking it back to its native roots, but using fresh Icelandic ingredients to construct the meal. Examples include Rhubarb from Iceland - Icelandic lobster served with rhubarb, and Brennivinn – a potent Icelandic schnapps, and Lemon from Brazil - lemon skate and tigerprawns served with black bean puree, cashew nut crust and boiling vapata.

Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a, Grofartorg

101 Reykjavik

www.fishcompany.is

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Reykjavik International Film Festival

17- 27 September

Now in its sixth successful year, the Reykjavik International Film Festival aims to promote Iceland's diverse film industry. During the festival, seminars and courses are offered introducing important local as well as foreign filmmakers and film specialists. Around 100 movies will be shown in different categories with lots of special and unique side events. www.riff.is

Imagine Peace Tower

9 October - 8 December

A work of art by Yoko Ono dedicated to the memory of John Lennon. A wishing well, from which a strong and tall tower of light emerges. Every year the Imagine Peace Tower emerges between Lennon's birthday and the day of his death.

www.imaginepeace.com

Iceland Airwaves

14 - 18 October

This ultra cool annual festival first hit Reykjavík in 1999 and has since attracted an impressive list of international performers. Some 170 bands, solo-artists and DJs performed at Iceland Airwaves in 2008. Over the past few years the line-up has included some great British talent such as Keane, Babyshambles, The Zutons, Kaiser Chiefs, Fat Boy Slim. Icelandic musicians Mugison, Sigur Ros and Gus Gus are also festival regulars. www.icelandairwaves.com

NOVEMBER

Unglist, Young Arts Festival, Reykjavík

6 - 14 November

This annual festival in Reykjavík showcases an array of young Icelandic talent in the arts. The programme consists of music, design, fashion and photography reflecting current trends within the country.

Sequences

31 October – 7 November

Sequences is a real-time art festival with a focus on urban and public spaces. Its emphasis is on time-based work, performance, sound art, video and music.

<http://sequences.is>

DECEMBER

The Yuletide Lads

12 December

The Yuletide lads including Gully Gawk, Window Peeper, Bowl Licker, Pot Scraper, Door Slammer descend from the mountains on December 12 each year to make mischief! Icelandic children enjoy the fun for 13 days as a different elf visits each night. Visitors should remember to leave a shoe in the window overnight and hopefully, the 'Lad' of the day will leave a small gift!

Yol, Christmas

25 December

Leading to Christmas, restaurants around the country offer lavish Christmas buffets serving traditional Icelandic foods such as succulent lamb, *hangikjot* (smoked lamb), venison, goose, fresh seafood, and *laufabraud* (deep-fried paper-thin bread). The dessert tables overflow with Christmas cookies, *kleinur* (fried dough), delicate tortes and cream-laden cakes. Communities illuminate the long dark nights with thousands of Christmas lights.

Gamlarskrold, New Year's Eve

31 December

New Year the Icelandic way starts with dinner, before huddling around a blazing bonfire to join in a chorus or two of some traditional folk songs. Across Iceland almost every family sets off colourful fireworks at midnight to welcome in the New Year, but Reykjavik is the place to be if you want to party long into the early hours.

ENDS

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