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## POSTCARDS FROM ICELAND – Inspired by Iceland

### CULINARY NEWS

#### **Award winning chefs set up Sjavargrillid Restaurant in Reykjavik**

Acclaimed Icelandic chefs Gústav Axel and Lárus Gunnar Jónasson spent 2010 scouring Iceland for its authentic tastes and objects in order to create *Sjavagrillid*, which recently opened.

The restaurant is based in central Reykjavik and focuses on Icelandic cuisine and style. The menu consists of fish and meat dishes which are all sourced directly from farmers ensuring the freshest taste. Additionally, wood and coal fires are used to cook the food giving it an unusual smoky but natural taste.

The interior of Sjavagrillid is decorated with driftwood and other objects collected on the chefs travels to give customers a truly Icelandic experience.

[www.sjavargrillid.is](http://www.sjavargrillid.is)

### NEW TOURS

#### **Four day 'Icelandic Sagas and Modern Literature Tour' starting in October**

Those looking for an Icelandic culture fix can join the four day 'Sagas and Modern Literature Tour' with Iceland Travel. Available from October 2011, the tour takes culture vultures on a route through Reykjavik covering Iceland's literary side from the medieval times to the present day.

On the trip the group will have two separate guided walking tours of Reykjavik- one to see the famous sites from modern literature and the other to visit the settings of Sagas which have shaped Icelandic history. The latter includes following in the footsteps of the Viking warrior and poet Skallagrimsson and visiting the Icelandic Settlement Centre in Borganes. There is also a visit to the home of Snorri Sturluson who was the most significant Nordic poet and historian of the Middle Ages.

Tour prices start at £196 per person based on two people sharing. The price includes three nights accommodation at the Centerhotel Klöpp, breakfast and both tours. Price excludes flights.

[www.icelandtravel.is](http://www.icelandtravel.is)

### **... and for some modern Icelandic crime**

Reykjavik City Library now offers guided literary tours of the city which focus on thrillers by Iceland's award winning crime novelist Arnaldur Indridason. The two hour tour focuses on his series about the detective Erlendur Svenisson and participants can visit scenes from the book and recent film adaptation, *Jar City*.

For further information and bookings, contact Kristin Vidarsdottir at [Kristin.vidarsdottir@reykjavik.is](mailto:Kristin.vidarsdottir@reykjavik.is)

### **Killer Whales and Northern Lights on Discover The World's new tour for 2012**

Discover The World has released a short break to Iceland which takes in Killer Whales and the Northern Lights on the stunning Snaefellsnes Peninsula. Guests will spend four days on the peninsula in western Iceland and stay in the idyllic fishing village of Grundarfjordur. The tour is available in February and March 2012.

Large groups of Killer Whales are commonly sighted in this area between February and March and can often be seen from the shore or even from hotel room windows. The trip will include two whale watching boat trips out into the fjord with a knowledgeable tour guide.

The remote area is also an ideal place for spotting the mystical Northern Lights, thanks to little light pollution and guests can watch the lights from the hotels outdoor hot tubs.

Other excitements over the four days include a full day tour of the Snaefellsnes Peninsula with a local guide taking in lava fields and a glacier on top of a volcano. Guests can also visit a Shark Museum where the daring can taste Iceland's iconic putrified shark and signature liquor, Brennivin.

The tour costs £850 per person and includes four nights full board accommodation in a private room at Hotel Frames, whale watching boat trips, a driver/guide and entrance to the Shark Museum and Blue Lagoon. Price excludes flights.

[www.discover-the-world.co.uk](http://www.discover-the-world.co.uk)

## **ADVENTURE TRAVEL**

### **Take a thrill down Iceland's rivers with the Riverjet**

Iceland is the only country in Europe which offers the exciting Riverjet experience which is famous in New Zealand. Built to withstand the brutal forces of Iceland's rivers, the boats speed down deep lava canyons, white water rapids and through shallow deltas.

Iceland Riverjet offers boat trips on the glacial river of Hvita on the famous Golden Circle Route. The boat ride lasts for an hour and guest can enjoy the standard jet boat ride or get an extra thrill on the VIP Extreme boat ride. This has the added excitements of larger waves and grade three rapids.

The rides run daily at 11 am and 1 pm and prices start at £67 per adult and £32 per child.

[www.icelandriverjet.is](http://www.icelandriverjet.is)

### **Locals lead travellers on scenic Icelandic runs**

Visitors can exercise with the locals in an Icelandic tradition by joining weekly runs along the Reykjavik coastline followed by a dip in the Atlantic or a hot tub.

Adventure company, Wanderlust, organises weekly nine or 17 kilometre runs. These are led by locals who know the most interesting running routes through the city. Runners will not only enjoy the sea views on the run but also mountainous scenery, a small island with an old lighthouse on it, abundant birdlife, a salmon river and those doing the 17 kilometre run will be running along Nauthólsvík geothermal beach.

To soothe the muscles after the run, the group can relax in outdoor hot tubs and the most daring can plunge into the freezing Atlantic.

The nine kilometre run costs £22 and the 17 kilometre run costs £30.

[www.wanderlust.is](http://www.wanderlust.is)

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **New additions to officially approved Icelandic names**

Three new names have been added to the pre-approved list all Icelanders must be called, by the Icelandic Name Committee. The committee is a special body which legally approves or rejects new names for Icelanders. Names are chosen which demonstrate that they have featured significantly in Icelandic history. Annarr, Jane and Dennis are the new additions for 2011.

Annarr was rejected last year but brought up for review in light of new evidence that the name was featured in the famed Snorra-Edda poem. Dennis and Jane are not names one would expect to find in an Icelandic Saga and were only approved under certain conditions. As Jane is an English name it has to be pronounced in Icelandic as 'YAH-neh'.

### **Prada, Dior and Nike emulate Icelandic fish leather fashion**

Icelandic fish leather has hit the fashion lines of internationally known brands such as Prada, Dior and Nike. Produced in the Saudarkrokur tannery in northern Iceland, it is the only fish leather made in Europe and reinforces the county's prominence in avant garde fashion.

Fashion lovers can now visit the fish leather tannery in northern Iceland, which is open until mid-September. There are daily guided tours of the tannery where fish skin is expertly processed to make high-quality leather. Fish leather is made from the skins of salmon, ocean perch, spotted wolf-fish and cod.

Entry per person costs £5.

<http://www.sutarinn.is/>

### **Iceland's famous horses available to ride online!**

Horse riding enthusiasts can now experience a digital riding tour on the brand new website [www.icehorse-experience.is](http://www.icehorse-experience.is). This has been set up by the Horse Breeders Association of Iceland and simulates the viewer on the country's famous horses on a ride of their choice.

The website enables riders to walk, trot or gallop across some of Iceland's most beautiful landscapes such as the Thingvellir National Park, south Iceland's volcanic landscape, black sand beaches, lava fields and lush grassland. Users can choose from a number of activities such as herding a group of horses, riding over a flowing river or enjoying the smooth gait tolt which is unique to Icelandic horses.

The website also has detailed information about Icelandic horse breeding, horse riding tour operators and equestrian traders.

[www.icehorse-experience.is](http://www.icehorse-experience.is)

### **SAVE THE DATE!** **Upcoming events and festivals**

#### **Ultra Marathon, Laugavegur**

**16 July**

From Landmannalaugar in the Highlands to Thorsmork nature reserve in the South Highlands, this 55 km race is not for the faint hearted. The route through beautiful scenery and challenging terrain crosses sand, snow and ice and is the ultimate endurance test.

[www.marathon.is](http://www.marathon.is)

#### **Reykholt Music Festival**

**27-31 July**

This classical music festival takes place in the atmospheric Reykholt church in West Iceland. The weekend will delight classical music connoisseurs as the church fills with the sounds of Schumann, Haydn and Beethoven performed by Iceland's finest musical talent.

[www.reykholtshatid.is](http://www.reykholtshatid.is)

#### **Innipúkinn Festival**

**29-31 July**

Innipúkinn is an annual music festival, which takes place in Reykjavik. Past guests include Cat Power, Blonde Redhead, Mugison, Raveonnettes, Hjálmar, Trabant, Seabear, Jonathan Ritchman, Mínus and Dukta

#### **Verslunarmannahelgi, Labour Day Weekend Bank Holiday**

**31 July- 1 August**

Icelanders escape towns and cities and head to the country for a long weekend of Icelandic folk or pop music, huge bonfires and alfresco living. There are numerous events organised throughout the country this weekend, the most famous of which is a huge concert on the Westman Islands.

### **The Flight of the Puffling**

#### ***Early August***

On Heimaey, in the Westman Islands the flight of the Pufflings is one of the highlights of the birding year when millions of baby puffins leave their nests in the cliffs for the first time. Visitors and locals often help rescue those whose fumbling attempt at flight has not gone to plan!

### **Reykjavik Gay Pride**

#### ***8-10 August***

Everyone must dress to impress at this boisterous celebration in Reykjavík. The colourful event brings tens of thousands of people together in the city centre every year and has expanded to become the second biggest festival in Iceland, after Reykjavik Culture Night.

[www.gaypride.is](http://www.gaypride.is)

### **Reykjavík Jazz Festival**

#### ***14-29 August***

The annual Reykjavik Jazz Festival features many acclaimed international Jazz players as well as the majority of Iceland's leading jazz musicians. Performances are held all over Reykjavik, ranging from new Latin compositions to pure gospel, avant-garde music to children's jazz.

[www.reykjavikjazz.is](http://www.reykjavikjazz.is)

### **Reykjavik Culture Night**

#### ***20 August***

Culture Night is the pinnacle of the cultural calendar in Iceland with a variety of eclectic events and activities ranging from traditional shows to one-off exhibitions. Galleries, shops, cafes, churches, restaurants and bars in downtown Reykjavik stay open until late and the event ends with a spectacular fireworks show at midnight!

[www.reykjavik.is](http://www.reykjavik.is)

### **Reykjavik Marathon**

#### ***20 August***

This annual event involves thousands of participants from Iceland and abroad. Races include a full marathon, half marathon and a fun run (4.3 miles). [www.marathon.is](http://www.marathon.is)

### **Tango Festival**

#### ***25-28 August***

The annual Tango Festival in Reykjavik offers the chance for everyone to learn the stylish dance. Internationally respected teachers run workshops and tango bands and DJs hold a show that lasts until dawn.

[www.tango.is](http://www.tango.is)

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