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## **POSTCARDS FROM ICELAND – May 2011**

### **The Land of Fire & Ice**

#### **New openings**

##### **Reykjavik to open landmark new ‘Harpa’ Centre in May**

Reykjavik’s new and long-awaited Harpa Concert and Conference Centre will officially open on May 13. With its ideal geographical location between continental Europe and the United States, the centre has been developed to host international business, music and cultural events.

Harpa is made up of four main conference halls and several meeting rooms, the largest of which accommodates over 1,800 guests. These are all equipped with the most technologically advanced equipment and spacious exhibition and reception areas.

The centre is already proving to be popular with forward bookings until 2015 and among its first events are Reykjavik Arts Festival and a concert from English jazz pop sensation, Jamie Cullum.

With an impressive multi-faceted glass façade, Harpa mirrors Reykjavik city and Iceland’s dramatic mountainous landscape. This sleek, modern appearance was designed by renowned Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson and architect Henning Larsen.

Additional amenities include restaurants and bars overlooking Reykjavik harbour, a ground-floor bistro, catering services and parking facilities.

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

##### **First spa on Iceland’s Golden Circle route steams onto the scene**

The famous Golden Circle route is to see its first geothermal spa this June. Laugarvatn FONTANA sits above the steamy waters of Lake Laugarvatn and is en route from Pingvellir National Park to Iceland’s shooting geyser fields. The spa will provide an indulgent stopover between the impressive natural sights of the Golden Circle.

The spa will include three geothermally heated open air baths, a sauna, a warm sand beach and access to the pristine waters of Lake Laugarvatn. FONTANA focuses on wellness and follows a century-old tradition of locals using the healing powers of Lake Laugarvatn's natural stream baths.

FONTANA will be open daily in summer and winter from 11am – 9.30pm. Entrance will be £12 for adults and £6 for 12-16 year olds. Children under 12 go free.

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

### **New Eyjafjallajökull Volcano Centre receives over 1,000 visitors in first two weeks**

Iceland's brand new volcano centre, 'Iceland Erupts', saw an incredible 1,150 visitors within its first two weeks of opening. As the centre is located at the base of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in a rural area this is testimony to the growing interest in Iceland's volcanoes. The centre documents last year's ash cloud with photographs and films of the eruption.

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

### **New tours**

#### **Pink Iceland- Iceland's first tour operator dedicated to LGBT clientele**

Recently launched tour operator, Pink Iceland, is the first of its kind as it deals wholly with LGBT visitors to Iceland.

Tours on offer include whale watching, visiting the Blue Lagoon, superjeep volcano tours, river rafting, diving, helicopter tours and gay culture walks.

To make travel even easier for the LGBT community, Pink Iceland has developed an app downloadable to mobiles called the Pink Pass. This gives regular updates of LGBT events in Iceland, lists Pink Iceland's partners and has an interactive gay map. There is also up to 25 per cent off regular tour prices with the Pink Pass.

Pink Iceland can also help recommend night-life venues, events and accommodation with the best gay friendly atmosphere.

<http://pinkiceland.is/>

### **Relish a bit of rural Iceland with Discover the World's new farmstay holiday**

Discover the World has introduced a self-drive farmstay holiday following Iceland's scenic Route 1. Covering 1,760 km in 11 days, visitors stay at

working farms, get to know the farming community and enjoy fresh and natural local produce.

Route 1 takes in the best of Iceland's beauty as it winds along the coast, through the highlands and Myvatn's lava fields and along the base of the Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon.

All accommodation has been carefully selected to provide guests with the best rural experience. Overnight stays include a beach guesthouse with views of the Snaefellsjokull glacier, a sheep farmer's guest cabin and the charming coastal village of Seydisfjordur which sits on the tip of a fjord.

The self-drive holiday allows guests to drive at their own pace and stop along the way to see wildlife, thundering waterfalls, shooting geysers and the impressive cliffs of Dyrholaey.

The trip is available from June until September 2011 with prices starting at £1,280 per person. The price includes accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis, car rental, insurance but excludes return flights, fuel and oil.

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

### **Transport news**

#### **Icelandair to Fly Non-stop from Glasgow and Manchester to Iceland**

Icelandair is to launch new non-stop flights from Glasgow and Manchester to Iceland on 20 September 2011. These flights will replace the current Manchester- Glasgow- Reykjavik "triangle route" and connect to Icelandair's North American destinations.

The Glasgow flights will operate three times a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays and the Manchester flights will operate up to three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

The result will be additional flying capacity from Glasgow and Manchester, as well as quicker flying times to Icelandair's North American destinations.

[www.icelandair.co.uk](http://www.icelandair.co.uk)

### **Iceland on TV**

**Iceland enjoys a week of films, comedies and documentaries on BBC4 from tonight!**

'Iceland Week' hits BBC4 today with a selection of Iceland themed programmes throughout the week including films, comedies and documentaries. Highlights include Julia Bradbury's hour-long special, *Icelandic Walks*, with a hike up the Eyjafjallajökull glacier, and photographer Ragnar Alexsson's documentary, *Capturing the Faces of the North*. Kirstie Allsopp and Phil Spencer don't miss out on the Iceland action either with a luxury Icelandic adventure on Channel 4's *Vacation, Vacation, Vacation*- to be screened on Wednesday May 11.

<http://bbc.in/j9V1bx>

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

### **Upcoming events and festivals**

#### **Whale watching high season-** April- October

Orcas, humpback, pilot, minke, sperm, fin and blue whales are all waiting to be spotted in Icelandic waters.

#### **Reykjavik Arts Festival-** 20 May- 5 June

The Reykjavik Arts Festival is the oldest and most respected arts festival in Iceland and is dedicated to the promotion of Icelandic and international culture in all fields of the arts. Many of the acts will take place in the brand new Harpa Concert and Conference Centre.

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

#### **The Festival of the Sea-** 4-5 June

The festival celebrates the importance of the sea to Icelandic history, its economy and its people and everyone is free to join in. Fishermen lead festivities in fishing ports around Iceland with strongman and rowing competitions, rowdy parties, parades, tug of war, sea rescue displays, food fairs and sailing competitions.

#### **International Annual Viking Festival-** 16-20 June

The Viking Village in Hafnarfjör hosts this annual festival which celebrates the heritage of the wild Vikings who were the first to settle in Iceland. Enthusiasts from around the world dress in Viking costume ready to display their battle skills to whoever challenges them! Arts and crafts, games and a traditional Viking feast are also on the schedule.

#### **National Day-** 17 June

Icelanders take to the streets to celebrate independence from the Danish crown in 1944. Festivities include colourful ceremonies, parades, street theatre, sideshows and dancing under the midnight sun.

[www.17juni.is](http://www.17juni.is)

#### **Summer Solstice Festival-** 21 June

A magical event when Icelanders gather throughout the country to celebrate the midnight sun on the longest day of the year. Some believe that if you roll naked in the dew on this day, all your dreams will come true! Get-togethers often involve bonfires, a feast and merriment throughout the night during which the sun never sets.

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