

THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

Special Issue

Autumn 2023

Best Of Reykjavík



The Reykjavík Grapevine City Awards

DINING: Sate your appetite at these certified Best™ eateries

DRINKING: Quench your thirst, party hearty and dance the night away

ACTIVITIES: Do as we say and as we do — we know how to have fun

SHOPPING: Spend your krónur wisely at Reykjavík's top shops



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REYKJAVÍK  GRAPEVINE

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK



BEST SPA



AN INTRODUCTION

Crisp & Cool

The end of summer doesn't mean the end of enjoying all the best that Reykjavik has to offer. With the crisp autumn weather comes more opportunity for cosy meals out with friends, popping into the nearest (and Best™) bar for a quick drink to escape the wind and rain, enjoying the autumn colours while hiking in the capital area, or shopping for cosy woollens and new home decor for the season.

Speaking of eating out with friends — why not start with breakfast? Turn to **pages 18-19** for Shruthi Basappa's rundown of the best places in the city to break your fast. Shruthi also makes the case for Iceland as a true gastronomic destination over on **pages 28-29**. If you're in the mood for some activity, you may want to check out Cate Magnúsdóttir's account of her zipline adventure in Hveragerði on **pages 32-33** or plan your fall hiking routes with tips from Jóhannes Bjarkason and Jón Trausti Sigurðarson on **pages 38-39**.

If the colder, darker autumn season is really getting to you, there's always

the pick-me-up promised by surrounding yourself with beautiful things. We compiled a Best of Reykjavik shopping bag of some of our favourite items du jour over on **pages 45-46**.

This volume of the Best of Reykjavik is a whole lot of new — with many new winners picked by new panels of picky locals. Panellists contributed their fresh perspectives on the dining, drinking and shopping experiences the city offers and give hot recommendations for the best things to experience in and around town. We've even given space to one Reykjavíkingur who dares question our authority to deem anything "best" (see **page 6**) — we're nothing if not fair.

Give it a read, give it some thought and try out our recommendations. Maybe some of our Bests™ will become some of your new favourites. Let us know. You can find us on our preferred patio, smiling in the sunshine. 🍷

Catharine Fulton
Editor in Chief

Best of Reykjavik:



DINING

8

+ Move over brunch, it's breakfast's time to shine P:18



DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

20

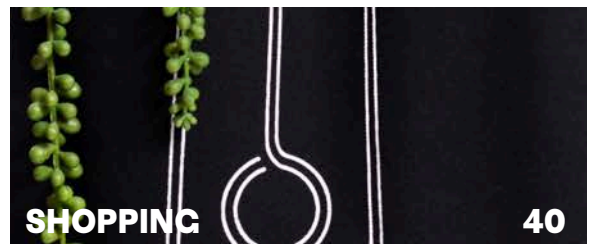
+ Non-alcoholic drinks are having a moment. Sip without getting sloppy P:28



ACTIVITIES

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+ You can fly like a falcon not far from Reykjavik. We spill the details P:36
+ Walking on flat surfaces is lame. Our top places for adding incline P:38



SHOPPING

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+ We went on a Best Of Reykjavik Shopping spree. Check out our haul P:46

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Farmers Market

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OUR STORES IN REYKJAVÍK: FARMERS & FRIENDS

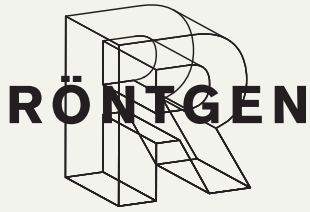


Laugavegur 37



Hólmastóð 2 / Grandi

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Hverfisgata 12



Happy hour / 4–7pm

Beer / Wine / Cocktails



Foreword From A Hater

The annual Best Of Reykjavík magazine is once again upon us. We waited patiently while the Icelandic culture gods debated, argued and fought until they finally came to a consensus. Now, they are ready to bless us with their conclusions.

You might get lucky and see them throughout the streets of Reykjavík, plastering their iconic Best Of Reykjavík stickers on this year's crop of worthy establishments. As their power grew through the years, so did the stickers. What started as cute badges of encouragement have ballooned to multiple square metre crests that you shall never dare take down. Business owners have described a nirvana-like experience of achieving the ultimate goal of covering their windows entirely. They call it "The Blackout." Some were not able to handle it and barricaded themselves inside, refusing to let anybody in, such was the burden.

Let's go back in time. The humble beginnings of the Reykjavík Grapevine's nominations were treated lightly, even with amusement. It was fun. Locals flipped through the pages. "This is cute," they said, with a smirk on their face. "But who are they to tell me anything?"

Fast forward to Iceland becoming the must-visit travel destination. Move over Paris and London, you're old news. Screw off Pyramids. We have Geysir coming through — oh and who is that cool cat with the sunglasses in the back-seat? Well it's just little old Blue Lagoon, of course.

The streets of Reykjavík flooded with travellers searching for something

to do. Lost souls looking for something to eat and drink. Maybe even buy a traditional Icelandic garment. But where should they go?

Thus began the rise of Grapevine's influence.

Not only were they the sole outlet recommending how to spend your time and money in Reykjavík, but they were telling you what the absolute "best" was. They took the power nobody else dared claim. They became the official judge of Icelandic culture. Why them and not some food blogger with the same sense of self confidence?

The answer is twofold. No one challenged the Grapevine. No one questioned their evaluation process. Has there been progress from the early days? While I imagine the staff and various local legends once sat down over a beer and had some fun making a list of things they like, I assume the process is much more sophisticated today. With the weight these awards carry, surely it is. Right?

But let us not forget the part that the people receiving the awards play in this saga. They could have refused to acknowledge the Grapevine as the new rulers of Icelandic taste making. But there is a sinister correlation between the success of a business and being mentioned in this magazine, thus creating a silent agreement between all parties.

But no more, my friends. The revolution has started. Yes, I will be spat on by people on the streets. Yes, I will have to isolate myself from my family to protect them. Am I a martyr, you ask? Your words, not mine.

But if I can get you to open your eyes and read and enjoy this magazine for what it really is — a lovely and well executed recommendation pamphlet and nothing more — then I have achieved my goal. 🍷

Pavel Ermolinski
Basketballer, Martyr
@pavelino15

THE GUIDE-GUIDE

How To Spot The Winners

Establishments deemed "best" can be identified by the Grapevine's iconic (Pavel's words, not ours) Best Of Reykjavík stickers, which we distribute in a very tasteful standard size. 🍷



Icelandic design made in Reykjavík

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Home of Icelandic designers

1



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2



2

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Dining

Remember when everyone became a home baker? Yeah, they didn't make the list

Reykjavík's dining scene has never been more vibrant. Breakfast might prove to be too early for Reykjavík, but get down to local bakeries like Deig or if you are feeling fancy to Tides, and see what a difference a spot of warm grub in the wee hours can do. Lunch offers abound and dinner is ripe for experimentation — be it sampling Pueblan tacos at La Poblana, rediscovering Mat Bar, experiencing Nordic fine-dining at Dill, or tucking into tapas inspired plates at weeks old Skreið or blistering pizzas at BakaBaka. Whatever you fancy, dear gourmands, whatever your proclivities or budgets, our esteemed panel has done the hard work to bring you the best of the best of Reykjavík. Skál!

Best Bakery



Sandholt

Laugavegur 36

Amidst the Scandi fever that has firmly gripped Reykjavík bakeries, Sandholt stands tall with its Parisian vibes. Beautiful marble counters piled high with freshly baked goods are a sight to behold, even for the gluten intolerant. Even the less-than-perfect service doesn't seem to dim its popularity, "what can I say? I'm a die-hard loyalist," one panellist confessed. There is hardly a place in town that could hold a candle to Sandholt's croissants, vinarbrauð or legendary sourdough. A current favourite are the new born baby sized, olive oil drunk, warm focaccia — if you're not careful, you could easily eat the whole in one sitting.

Runners-up



Brauð & Co. Multiple locations

"They source the best, ethical raw ingredients," notes one panellist privy to the supply chain of Brauð og Co, "and it shows in their bakes." That care and sensitivity shines through the city-wide Danish-style bakery chain and over the past two years they have noticeably addressed their once incoherent QC concerns. Sure, the cinnamon snúður rules the roost, but make room for the granola version, their often warm jammy hjónabandssæla — there are few who make this better — and their weekend special croissants. Other must-do's include the bronzed pretzel croissants and the dense, seeded rye.



Hygge Coffee & Microbakery Seljavegur 2

Sandholt alumni Þórey Lóvísa's palette skews sweet for some panellists, but it cannot be said enough that she is making some of the prettiest pastries and bakes in the city. Seasonal tarts constructed with house-made jams, frangipane and other fillings are a treat and the pistachio croissant and vegan blueberry danish are set to become classics in their own right.

Previous Winners

2022: Sandholt and Deig
2021: Sandholt and Deig
2020: Sandholt

Best Burger



Le Kock

Tryggvagata 14

Le Kock's gourmet tuck-shop burgers aren't too sloppy, nor are they so fine to the point where they're try-hard. No ma'am, these are obscenely tasty burgers that elicit sighs of pleasure and guilt in equal measure. Here is an ode to the OG cheeseburger with crisp toasted buns, perfectly melty cheddar, a juicy patty cooked just right, and pickles and slaw adding fresh crunch. The Trump tower, on the other hand, is an unapologetic double-patty American smash with yellow mustard, a shockingly balanced truffle ketchup and perfectly smashed patties.



2 Guys

Hlemmur Square

2 Guys have got us between the bun and patty, and how! Last year's newbies and this year's one of two top dogs, this homage to hip-hop and sweaty burgers are a panel favourite. Each burger is assembled with such precision that it never slides or falls apart. What is particularly striking is that the chef lets the burger truly shine, without the weight of unnecessary frou-frou. A rule they break with aplomb with the candied jalapeno and crushed Dorito studded 2Pac that feels like a levelled up midnight munchie.

Newcomer



Beef & Buns Bildshöfði 9

"You guys should venture out to suburbia more," quipped one of our panellists cheekily, before making a case for newcomer Beef & Buns. American smashed burgers continue to reign supreme in popularity and this outpost too pays homage to the lace edged, singed fringed burger. It's a tough world out here for burgers and we fervently wish for this one's continued success.

Previous Winners

2022: Le Kock
2021: Yuzu
2020: Le Kock & Hamborgara Bullan

Best Coffeehouse



Reykjavík Roasters

Brautarholt 2

As you'd expect from the name, RR roasts their own beans and makes a mean cup of joe. Roasters have hit upon that perfect balance of Scandi cool vibe without being pretentious, even if their baristas refuse to engage in banter — an expectation oddly reserved for baristas and bartenders. Perhaps it's Scandinavian pain. Despite the absence of small chat, the coffee is third-wave loyal, the teas are brewed to temperature and time perfection, the hot chocolate isn't hot cocoa, the wi-fi is strong for some solitary work or small meetings, and the space large enough for parent-child outings — all of which make for excellent people-watching.

Runners-up:



Kaffi Ó-le Hafnarstræti 11

Nostalgically named after a genX cool kids only spot, Kaffi Ó-le in its current avatar firmly looks forward. With its pastel chic interiors that connect to both the 101 Radisson hotel lobby and the streetfront, this urban cafe focuses on precisely roasted and brewed beans (from Kaffibrugghúsið), poured to exacting standards. Several on the panel shared their love for the "city's best matcha latte" as well.



Kaktus Espresso Bar Vitastigur 12

This cute-as-a-button cafe is the perfect spot to meet a friend for a chilled catch up, or settle in with your laptop for a productive work session. Adorned with cacti (but of course) and plants in the many nooks and crannies, Kaktus feels like a twee urban oasis. The cafe's goal seems to be to please everyone, thus making it one of the few places a coffee snob and a vegan sweet tooth can hang.

Previous Winners

2022: Reykjavík Roasters
2021: Reykjavík Roasters
2020: Reykjavík Roasters

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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Dining

Iceland's not cheap, so it had better be good

Best Goddamn Restaurant

Joint winners



Austur-Indíafjelagið

Hverfisgata 56

It doesn't matter if you are new to Indian cuisine or a seasoned consumer of curries, this place welcomes you with its warm embrace of Indian teak coffered ceilings, antique bronze and vermilion hued artwork on the walls. While we've shared our love of their tandoori meats, old-timers know that it is the hariyali salmon that is the dark horse. And if you haven't yet experienced the joy of a biryani, render that to the past stat. This is a restaurant where there is more to discover with each visit, and the exemplary service ensures you keep going back.



La Primavera

Grandagarður 20

It's no surprise that the best goddamn restaurants in town would be the stalwarts of Reykjavik. With views overlooking the bustling old harbour and Harpa in the distance, La Primavera is a sly old creature that is always delightful. No matter what time of day or year you dine here, you're sure to have peak season ingredients, handled with the devotion of someone who deeply understands that good produce needs so little. So whether it's rare legumes like roveja from northern Italy, is-it-a-rose or salad conundrum of pink radicchio or the many pasta dishes, Primavera's food is only matched by its service.



Skál

Hlemmur Mathöll, Laugavegur 107

With a revamped menu and a drinks programme to match, Skál continues to be the small place with a big heart; its food hall location is no deterrent for their die-hard patrons. This year we've enjoyed their ice-cold scallops, served sliced, in their shell. Sometimes, thin slices of rutabaga are tucked between them, others there is crimson granita of tart berries. Always refreshing. Then there are the fried shrimp heads with a punchy aioli. The steadfast beets, and butter bathed trout. A crisp glass of mineral natural wine alongside and you've got yourself a banger of a meal each and every time.

Best Place for a Fancy Meal



Dill

Laugavegur 59

Now with a green star in addition to their Michelin star, Dill has steadfastly steered the country's culinary ship towards a future firmly rooted in its traditions. Chef Gunnar Karl's dedication to sustainable kitchen practices is more than laudable generally, but even more so in the context of fine dining. Utilising vegetables and protein in their entirety, the menu is a celebration of the whole, eschewing dining diktats that no two proteins are repeated in one meal. For a true taste of Icelandic hospitality, Dill is where you need to be, special occasion or not.

Runners-up



Tides

The Reykjavik Edition, Austurbakki 2
The Edition has managed to lure the reclusive Reykjaviking into its fold, proving to be the 'it' spot. The gorgeously designed restaurant is more than mere luxury. "The fat was rendered so skilfully in the Iberian ham, and so well cooked, I could taste it long after the meal," cooed a very satisfied panellist. The mocktails are as good as their cocktails and while the wine menu is priced fairly steep, you're bound to find a number you wouldn't elsewhere.



Sumac Grill + Drinks

Laugavegur 28
Walking into Sumac recalls being on food streets in warmer places elsewhere around the world. The open grill lends its smokiness to more than just the food and the buzz of happy guests make for a vibrant evening out that is both fancy yet curiously laid-back. Especially popular with big groups, it's best to approach the food here as a meze and order a little bit of everything. The flatbreads are the one sore spot in their otherwise flavour-some menu.

Previous Winners

- 2022: Dill
- 2021: Dill
- 2020: Grillið

Best Value for Money



Deig

Tryggvagata 18

Deig's "poor man's offer" has been the offer to beat for some time. They recently upped their price to 1500 ISK for a toasted and filled bagel of your choice, plus a doughnut and drink. Available only on weekdays from 10am onwards, the price rise hasn't affected the quality on offer. While the offer alone is tempting, the panel urges you to try one of their special bagels for the princely sum of 1700 ISK. It's a steal on this rocky, windy, expensive as heck island.

Runners-up



Icelandic Street Food Lækjargata 8

A family-run business built on their amma's recipes, this establishment has been meeting that "taste of Iceland" craving that many travellers have. Unlimited refills of soups — both of the fish and lamb variety are on offer — and that sweet deal is best topped off with a slice of their "happy marriage cake." Our astute panel does note that seasoning is not always their forte, but a quick sprinkling of salt usually does the trick.



Flatus Skúlagata 28

It's undeniable that Reykjavik is expensive. But if you dig a little deeper you'll find attractive deals like the beer and pizza lunch at Flatus for 2000 ISK. A 10" pizza, frosty beer, views over Esja. What's not to like?

Previous Winners

- 2022: Deig
- 2021: Sægreffinn
- 2020: Icelandic Street Food



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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Dining

It's not all shark and sheephead

Best Family Restaurant



Osushi

Tryggvagata 13

Like many curious things about Iceland, sushi has managed to become a common culinary love easily shared between generations. A firm panel favourite, what makes Osushi tick is that it is “perfect for the younger kids who love sushi, to the teen who still likes going out with the parents.” The sushi is freshly rolled before being sent out on the conveyor belt, which means there is zero waiting time before everyone can tuck into their favourite bite. The staff is attentive and is happy to entertain their young guests’ many requests, be it wanting mochi ice cream before dinner, or sending out those mango hosomaki stat.

Runners-up



Hornið
Hafnarstræti 15

Hornið has been around so long now that chances are you went there as a child and you’re taking your own kids there now. One of the first to introduce Italian food to Icelanders, this restaurant knows that pasta is a secret comfort food and they cater to this nostalgia with unabashed pleasure. Think Italy by way of Iceland. And the pizzas are an ode to simplicity. Sure, rings of raw onion may sometimes mysteriously appear on a pie, and the service can sometimes seem harried, but Hornið remains ideal for when nothing but the comfort of familiarity will do.



Jómfrúin
Lækjargata 4

“You wouldn’t think that a Danish smorrebrauð place would be super child friendly, but Jómfrúin not only is, but is also accommodating of picky eaters,” mused a panellist. “I’ve been a regular for over six years now,” added another, “and from my 70-something grandmother, to my teenagers, there is something for everyone. But the attentive service and genuine consideration for kids is what makes this a hidden gem for families.” How can we argue with testimonies like that?

Previous Winners

2022: Kaffi Lækur
2021: Osushi
2020: Hamborgarafabrikkan

Best Vegan Meal



Joint winners

Hnoss

Harpa, Austurbakki 2

While chef Fanny Dora’s legendary smoked carrot dish inspired copycats everywhere, she herself has moved onto focussing her attention to showcasing vegetables and legumes front and centre at her Harpa restaurant, Hnoss. This is one of a handful of restaurants that borrow from non-European cuisines, successfully marrying them with Icelandic produce. Take the grilled miso rutabaga, for instance. Hefty chunks of this often overlooked vegetable is marinated with savoury Japanese miso, then branded on the grill; the smokiness a lovely foil to the spicy peanut-sesame-chilli based sauce at once recalling both West African stews and South Indian chutneys. The Omnom praline cake is perhaps “the most sumptuous dessert in town right now,” gushed our panellist dreamily. This is food both vegans and non-vegans can enjoy heartily.



Fönix

Bildshöfði 12

Long before the city caught up to veg-an dishes, let alone full-fledged menus, Fönix was the first to have a menu dedicated entirely to vegan classics at their industrious industrial outpost, a secret many kept to themselves and with good reason. The vegan mapo tofu overshadows the original, the darkly sweet braised eggplant arrives blistering hot, their velvety slinkiness perfect to scoop over rice. The dumplings are hand-pleated parcels of love, stuffed with glass noodles and chewy wood ears and shitake, a wonderful juxtaposition of texture and flavour. Don’t sleep on Fönix. Here you’ll find no battered cauliflowers pretending to be chicken in sight.

Previous Winners

2022: Sono Matseljur
2021: Sono Matseljur
2020: Vegnaes (RIP)

Best Brunch



Brút

Pósthússtræti 2

The brunch at Brút is so of-the-moment chic that makes it worth waking up early-ish on a weekend. Brút shakes things up by leaning into that fresh, good for you energy without any of the crystal healing vibe. There is a salad for every preference, a couple of warm dishes, often an excellently prepared fish, plenty of fruit juices, mimosas and cocktails, and always something thoughtful for the vegan too. It’s at the dessert table that Brút loses their mind and there are whole cakes running the gamut from cheesecakes and pies to tarts and macarons.

Runner-up



Hnoss
Harpa, Austurbakki 2

Hnoss channels generosity of spirit, transforming into a laid-back yet elegant family-friendly brunch over the weekend with long rows of fresh salads, steamy soup, fried to order eggs and a house-made dessert table often surrounded by eager kids and adults alike. What sets Hnoss apart from the other brunches besides the usual suspects is their love for Icelandic classics.

Newcomer



The Roof
Bryggjulgata 6

If a decadent location is non-negotiable for your brunch pals, then The Roof is certain to please. With a large wrap-around terrace, floor to ceiling windows and breathtaking views, this is a place that impresses even before the food arrives. “Perfect for a hangover,” the menu is very American — there are crispy waffles, stacked with fried chicken and eggs, avocado toast and mac and cheese. The boozy milkshakes are “slightly strange at first, but mad delicious once you try them.” This isn’t a hurried affair but a fashionable brunch lightened with the playful menu.

Previous Winners

2022: Coccoo’s Nest (RIP)
2021: Coccoo’s Nest (RIP)
2020: The Coccoo’s Nest (RIP)



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YEAR

REYKJAVÍK GRÁPEVINE

REYKJAVÍK GRÁPEVINE

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK

2023

2023

BEST SEAFOOD

BEST BRUNCH

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Dining

Fun fact: Iceland derives its name from our love of ice cream

Best ice cream



Skúbb

Laugarásvegur 1

When asked for their top choice for best ice cream, panels old and current have been unanimous in their love for Skúbb's creamy treats. "I'm in love with their espresso — nice, clean flavours," said one. Is it simply the deliciousness of their ice creams, or the straightforward simplicity of flavours, or their commitment to values that shines through that have made them a consistent winner? It's all of the above and consistency. Skúbb's scoops haven't succumbed to cutting corners in the run up to popularity. They use BioBu's milk for all their dairy-based scoops, and whatever on offer is bound to knock your socks off. The sorbets are bursts of pure fruit and the vegan flavours give stiff competition to their dairy-based brethren. Skúbb, we love you.

Runners-up



Gæta Gelato Aðalstræti 6

From the moment they opened their doors, Gæta quickly became the name on everyone's lips for authentic Italian gelato. Our astute panel did note that their gelato has in recent times become sweeter than it used to be. But that shouldn't deter one from the excellent gelato here. Nut forward flavours rule the roost, although store attendants do confess that the local palate skews sweet (perhaps that is what they are addressing?) with their soft spot for salted caramel and Oreo cookie flavours. Seasonal flavours are aplenty at Gæta, so when mango season strikes, that is the one to try. Recently they've taken to offering cannoli and twee krikri gelato cones as well.



Ísbúð Vesturbæjar Hagamei 67

Chocolate dipper, blitzer of candy streaked bragðarefur and the one-stop shop for all the essentials needed for a good ol' ísbíltur is local haunt, and neighbourhood jaunt Ísbúð Vesturbæjar. If you really want a sneak peek into the Icelandic psyche, the ice cream shop is where it's at — a childhood treat of simple vanilla soft serve, swirled into that papery cone becomes the vehicle for a veritable spread of dippings and toppings. For a true taste of the local, hit up this institution.

Previous Winners

2022: Skúbb
2021: Skúbb
2020: Skúbb

Best Seafood

Joint winners



Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a

For over a decade now, Fiskfélagið has been delighting diners with their fresh-off-the-boat, bonkers good seafood. Whether it is the shrimp-langoustine salad that has gained cult status amongst lunch goers, or their elegant sushi, or the achingly good cod and ling prepared in a multitude of ways, Fiskfélagið always delivers. "I can't remember ever having a bad meal there," echoed many of our panelists. And with good reason, too. This restaurant seems to attract the very best talent and it has managed to stand tall in a sea of restaurants all peddling similar fare.



Brút

Pósthússtræti 2

In their small yet mighty menu, Brút showcases the best seafood that Iceland has to offer. Just the sheer variety — from char to cod, monkfish to haddock, scallops to sea snails — is a celebration of the bounty of the sea. No matter what you choose, each dish is carefully prepared in a thoughtful fashion that effortlessly converts even the stoic seafood reluctant. Even skate haters turn into skate lovers — and if that isn't high praise, then it's time you go see what the fuss is about for yourself. The award-winning wine list spans the globe.

Runner-up



Fiskmarkaðurinn Aðalstræti 12

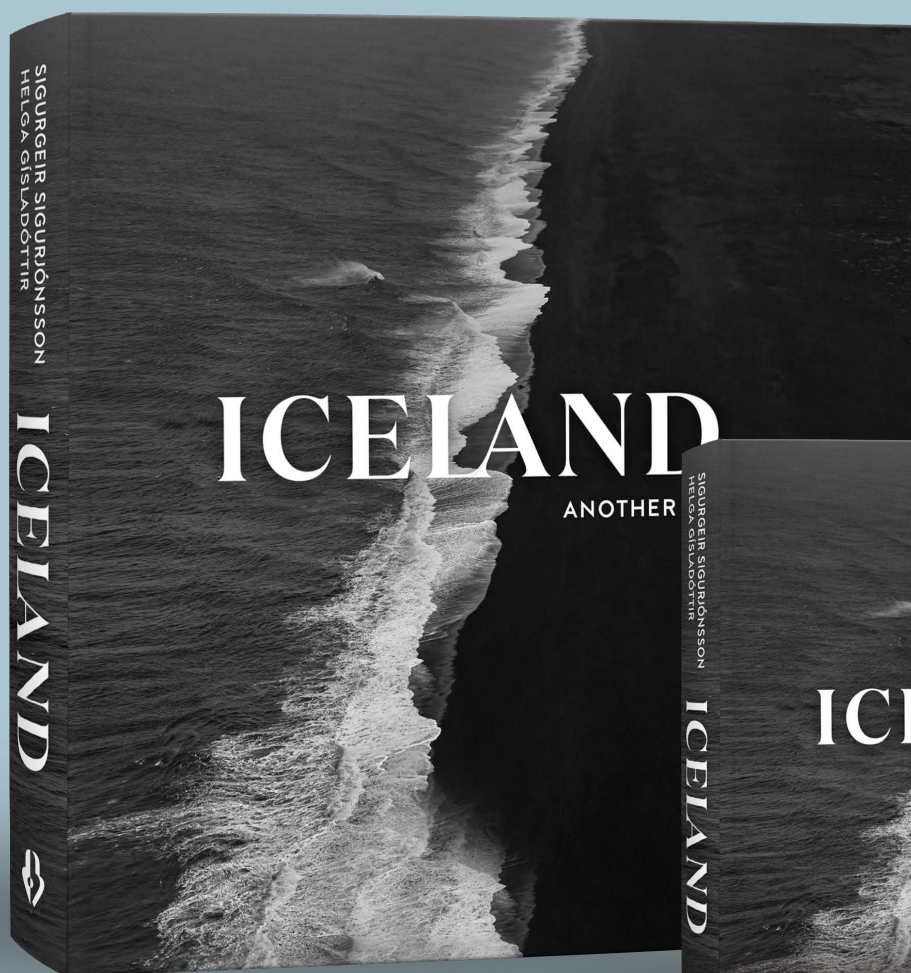
Fiskmarkaðurinn may have undergone several changes to their menu over the years, but what remains steadfast is the presence of the lightly salted cod with apples and their robata grilled salmon. The portions here aren't dainty like their sushi. Instead, these are hearty cuts of high quality fish that truly reflect local seafaring traditions.

Previous Winners

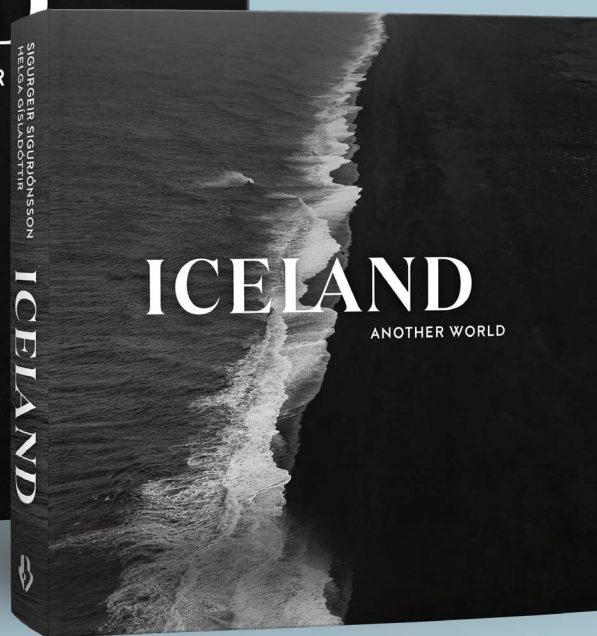
2022: Fiskfélagið
2021: Fiskfélagið
2020: Fiskfélagið



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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Dining

At this point we're just waiting for a viking-themed foodhall. Working title: Foodhalla

Best Food Hall



Hlemmur Mathöll

Laugavegur 107

What Hlemmur Mathöll lacks in size, it makes up for in the quality of its establishments. The OG, it is precisely its size and careful curation of cuisines on offer that underlines its cool-beyond-trends vibe. While other mathölls are dealing with deafening decibels and toe-tripping crowding, Hlemmur is still a comfortable haunt. From uber cool Skál to truly Danish smorrbrauð at Tivoli, to the champagne selection at Kröst, hearty Vietnamese pho or some Napoli pizza by Flatey, this is the best place to sample a cross-section of Icelandic restaurant fare without having to worry about reservations and wait lists. We still miss the fresh produce stand, if that could be brought back, it'd be golden, baby.

Newcomers



Pósthús Mathöll
Pósthússtræti 5

The cross stitch art on the wall says "Sorry, this is yet another food hall" — but that brash declaration belies the selection on offer at Pósthús. "Cannot get enough of the heritage details of this place," cooed our panellist. Reykjavík's youngest mathöll is perhaps the prettiest, too. Once a post office, now a refurbished food hall, the room by room layout allows guests to meander and discover for themselves the broad selection on offer. Moving beyond the now tired formula of the usual suspects offering the trifecta of sameness — burger, pizza and some insipid "Asian," Pósthús gives one hope that perhaps ambition in the F&B industry isn't dead yet. There is fresh pasta at Enoteca, fun drinks at Drykk, fresh sushi and poke bowls at Djúsi Sushi and Indian food via Scandinavia at Funky Bhangra.



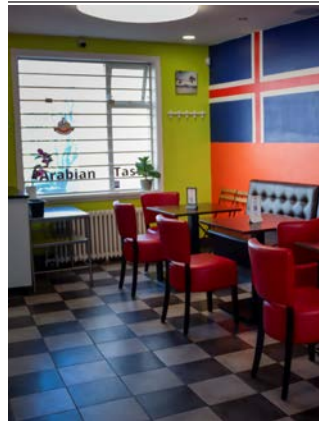
Hafnartorg Gallery
Geirsgata 17

The design of this mathöll left our panel split between "cushy comfy" to "sport bar vibe" to "airport lounge" — it's a good thing we are the food panel and not the design panel. The aesthetics aside, what seemed to win the panel over was the selection of food on offer, proximity to ample parking and the comfortable seating. Hrefna Sætran's behind La Trattoria, an Italian restaurant, there is Brand, by the same team as Bál, Mexican tacos at Fuego, NY style slices, and a poke bar.

Previous Winners

2022: Borg 29
2021: Hlemmur Mathöll

Best Late Night Bite

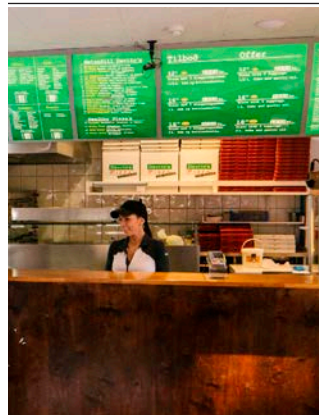


Arabian Taste

Laugavegur 87

"The service is so friendly!" seems to be the common refrain one hears about Arabian Taste. The Syrian family-run restaurant has been channelling their pain into joy for us on their plates of torpedo lookalike kibbeh — pounded bulghur wheat stuffed with spiced minced meat, deep fried to crusty goodness — smokey lamb kebabs, spectacular baba ghanoush and fresh tabbouleh. We strongly recommend getting a side of pickles, and some extra spicy sauce alongside your falafel wrap. Late nights don't translate to a grift here; the family is all smiles no matter the time of day.

Runner-up



Devitos
Laugavegur 126

Even bad pizza is good pizza and Devitos is better than bad, it's good. Another staple of the Icelandic late night bites for over 25 years, this place is sure to sort you out at the end of a long shift at the hotel or a long line at the bar bathroom. Now stop your yapping and grab a slice with pepperoni, pineapple and cream cheese like a real native.

Previous Winners

Renewed category

Best Newcomer



Óx

Laugavegur 55

After a few years as a speakeasy restaurant tucked away inside another restaurant, Óx has grown wings and leaves its old nest behind, with a newly minted Michelin star in tow, and has moved to a new location further up the high street. The sense of arrival is intact as a non-descript graffiti'd wall spares no hints as to the gastronomic delights awaiting diners inside. A speakeasy bar, named in honour of chef Þráinn Freyr's grandmother, Ammadon, is the sort of welcome that is a sign of all good things that are yet to come. Now seating 16, the new space is ambitious and the food just as memorable. Reykjavík fine dining has arrived, and how.

Runners-up



Fröken Reykjavík Kitchen & Bar
Lækjargata 12

"Didn't expect anything and was pleasantly surprised," has been the consistent feedback about Fröken, Reykjavík's newest restaurant. Housed in the new Íslandshotel, the art deco flourishes carry on from the lobby to the restaurant. Perhaps it is a sign of a booming economy, or the post-pandemic longing for beauty, but restaurant decor has firmly moved away from industrial grunge-chic to plush velours and gilded accents. The menu may sound like usual suspects, but the delivery is near-perfect.



Funky Bhangra
Pósthússtræti 5

Indian-ish burgers? That's exactly what Yesmine Olsson's Funky Bhangra does. Inspired by India by way of Sweden, this mathöll restaurant sets its sights firmly on Northern Indian cuisine and is loosely based on chaat flavours. The popular burgers are lamb or vegetarian, served with a mint chutney, fried papads and raita. The grilled skewers of meat are rather delicious too.

Previous Winners

2022: Brut
2021: Dragon Dimsum
2020: Makake (RIP)

Dining

The Grapevine Recommends

Hungry for some more best of the best? We got you.

We've done something a little different in this edition of Best Of Reykjavik, morphing some of our dining categories into these quick and snappy Grapevine Recommends lists. It's a quick and easy way to see what's Best™.

The Reykjavik Grapevine heartily recommends these hot spots, as determined by our expert dining panel. Go try them all back-to-back-to-back (to back-to-back-to-back) for the most delicious day of your life.

Best Vegan Burger



Kröst

Hlemmur Mathöll

Runners-up

Yuzu, Multiple locations
Le Kock, Tryggvagata 14

Previous Winners

2022: Yuzu
2021: Junkyard
2020: Bio Borgari (RIP)

Best Pizza



BakaBaka

Bankastræti 2

Runner-up

Flatey, Multiple locations

Newcomer

Pizza Popolare, Pósthússtræti 5

Previous Winners

2022: Flatey
2021: Flatey
2020: Flatey

Best Indian



Austur-Indíafjelagið

Hverfisgata 56

Runners-up

Gandhi, Bergstaðastræti 13
Hraðlestin, Multiple locations

Previous Winners

2022: Austur-Indíafjelagið
2021: Austur-Indíafjelagið
2020: Austur-Indíafjelagið

Best Thai



Ban Thai

Laugavegur 130

Runners -up

Krua Thai, Skólavörðustígur 21
Mai Thai, Laugavegur 118

Previous Winners

2022: Ban Thai
2021: Ban Thai
2020: Ban Thai

Best Chinese



Fine

Rauðarárstígur 33

Runners-up

Fönix, Bildshöfði 12
Fine Take-Away, Helluhraun 22,
Hafnarfjörður

Previous Winners

2022: Fine
2021: Fine
2020: Fine

Best Sushi



Umami Sushi + Bar

Borgartún 29

Runners-up

Sushi Social, Þingholtsstræti 5
Fiskmarkaðurinn, Aðalstræti 12

Previous Winners

2022: Fishmarket
2021: Sushi Social
2020: Sushi Social & Osushi



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Laugavegur 27, 101 Reykjavík



FOOD

Breakfast Like A Queen In Reykjavik

Move over brunch, breakfast is in town

Words: **Shruthi Basappa** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

Contrary to popular belief, breakfast is a fairly modern concept of a meal. Morning meals and their popularity has ebbed and flowed depending on political circumstance, religious beliefs of the day, or in more recent history, an artificially created panic (looking at you, Kellogg's).

Breakfast hasn't really been a grand affair in Iceland, save for the advent of boxed cereal and the subsequent pat on the back pride for consuming the most Cocoa Puffs. Per capita, of course. Articles from the 1980's reflect changing habits, with many respondents referring to porridge, as 'old-fashioned food, not in tune with the modern breakfast of coffee and toast.'

It is no surprise, then, that this breakfast modesty translates to a similar dynamic on the high street. While bakeries and some cafes cater to that coffee-bread craving, breakfast is still somewhat of a unicorn in town, albeit a cookie cutter one.

Don't be fooled by the numerous brunches on offer; breakfast and brunch are solemnly distinct.

There is a languid pleasure in a sit-down breakfast. Take the everyday mundane and plop it in the midst of a mid-week outing, and the routine is at once decadent. We put our best foot forward over several mornings to sniff out the best breakfasts Reykjavik has to offer.

Grái Kötturinn **Hverfisgata 16a** **8:00-14:00 daily**

The first place to offer breakfast in Iceland (since 1997!), The Grey Cat is a legend alright. Regulars reminisce about the best hang-over fix. Walking in feels like you are at grandma's place, the air is heady with the smell of sizzling bacon and the low murmurs of early birds. The Truck (3500 ISK) is a grand feast for one — two sunny side-up eggs, a hunk of homemade toast, an Iceland-appropriate slab of butter, mini pancakes, bundle of bacon, some pan roasted potatoes and tomatoes alongside, all meant to be drenched with the accompanying maple syrup. They make their own bagels and tuna salad, if you

are so inclined, but really you are here for one and one thing only. Children-friendly portions are offered, a thoughtful touch we appreciate. OJ is available in both its fresh squeezed and canned avatars and out of all the places I visited, they had the best tea service — loose English breakfast, sugar and milk on the side. The only thing that is better than homemade breakfast is breakfast that tastes like it, but one you didn't have to make. That sentiment is served in spades here.

Tóst by Vínstúkan **Laugavegur 27** **8:00-13:00, Mon - Fri;** **9:00-14:00 weekends**

Time share of restaurant spaces is a phenomenon to be celebrated. While bakeries turning into restaurants isn't unheard of, Vinstukan takes it one step further by being a breakfast cafe in the morning and a bustling wine bar come evening. This is one place where they take their service as seriously as their food. On one occasion, our inadvertently long wait for waffles was rewarded with a hefty discount and OJ on the house. Speaking of which, their Scandi loyal, heart shaped ones (800 ISK) are peak twee deliciousness. Even their sourdough tósts (1800 ISK) are appropriately sliced bread topped with homemade stracciatella and jam, or pan-fried portobello shrooms and nuts, or our favourite — smoked salmon with avocado. Their proportions allow for gentle breakfast vibes rather than the brutal

arm-wrestling match one has to otherwise endure (looking at you brunch staple benedicts). Tóst also sits on a little known secret, freshly brewed filter coffee (500 ISK) with 'fancy-pants beans from some fancy pants place that tastes like sour nectar' as my husband mildly put it. And the overnight oats (950 ISK)? I'd leave the no-effort trudge for IG influencers and head straight here for the nutty extravaganza.

Deig **Tryggvagata 14** **7:00-16:00 daily**

We don't place this bakery-ish joint here lightly. Between Grái Kotturinn's dedicated breakfast focus and the bakeries with their baked-from-frozen wares, breakfast has been largely overlooked in this city. That was until Deig decided to shake things up and offer made-from-scratch savoury and sweet treats that would warm the most jaded diner. Their poor man's offer may be their most well known, but we are weak for their lightly toasted bagels filled with an assortment of fillings (chances are there is something for everyone). The 7 a.m. calm is a particularly delightful seating, as the fight for the large window high seats hasn't begun yet and it is just you and your trusty bagel. Our top pick — the Madonna (1790 ISK), grilled bell peppers and a McMuffin style egg, melty cheddar cheese and swoosh of mayo, is the perfect way to fuel your day.

Sandholt **Laugavegur 36** **7:00-18:00 daily**

Call ahead and pre-book a table at Sandholt and the long line is a thing of the past. While the legendary bakery is known for its laminated, buttery delights, don't sleep on the hot, fresh breakfast served everyday. Children under 12 eat for free, kind of a well-kept secret. If you can put up with the fickle service, you are in for a sublime treat. Coffee and chocolate lovers can break their fast a la nobility from the Renaissance. The waffles (2490 ISK) stacked with fried eggs, bacon and syrup is a textural delight, but may we steer you towards the savoury waffles instead, studded with teeny jalapeno and parsley bits. Practically every dish is super-sized — the simple sourdough toast with jam and butter (1150 ISK) will easily feed two.

Tides

Austurbakki 2
7:00-11:00 daily

There is something about a hotel breakfast, especially one in the city that you live in. It awakens muscle memories of holidays abroad, of indulgence, a taste of the good life where numerous trips to the buffet counter puts a spring in one's step. Tides has a little cafe adjacent, but the breakfast is where all the action is. The buffet (5500 ISK) is a well stocked continental affair with nods to Icelandic tradition. Expect salmon smoked and graved, thin slices of hangikjöt, rye bread, pancakes, sausages and other buffet staples. The a la carte menu however really shines. They make a mean mug of matcha and the Tides Eggs Benedict (2300 ISK), served with a twist of lightly spiced tomato on brioche is a welcome respite from hunky needs-a-saw crusty bread versions. Although why an English muffin, true to the original, evades us is baffling. But these are thoughts easy to push aside as you sip on their carrot-orange-seabuckthorn juice (1900 ISK). There is no other breakfast in town that feels as exclusive as

this one, making you feel like you have one extra zero in your bank account.

Hjá Jóni
Thorvaldsensstræti 2
7:00-10:30 daily

We went to this newest addition with zero expectations and walked out with giant smiles plastered on our faces. Even if it isn't advertised as such, the everyday breakfast buffet is

business meeting, or a grown up group outing. What we especially enjoyed was their table side serving of warm dishes. Translation? Expect a cute stack of fluffy, warm pancakes made to order. Poached eggs that haven't been sitting around dully. And in case you forgot where you were, the shot glasses of lysi, lemon slice in tow, serve as a firm reminder you're still in Iceland.

when you are the lone star in a sea of sameness, it is but our responsibility to shine light on this South Indian breakfast nee brunch. The masala dosa (3290 ISK) is a golden tube of crunchy delight, surrounded by bowlfuls of sambhar, coconutty chicken curry, ginger spiked alu palya and two kinds of chutneys. Dosa is a crispy-soft, griddle cooked Kannadiga breakfast-tiffin dish made from a fermented rice-lentil batter. Technically demanding, this is a hard to execute dish, especially this North of warmth. But here, the dosas and the accompaniments have consistently gotten better. You tear off a bit of dosa, scoop up one chutney, one sambhar, one curry at a time, an explosion of varying flavours in each bite. Psst... you can tack on an extra dosa to your order. They also offer steamed idlis, with crispy medu vadas, perfect for some sambhar dunking, and big-as-my-face stretchy bhaturas with a clove scented kheema masala. Washed down with a cup of steaming hot masala chai, this slightly late breakfast slaps like no other. 🍵

The adage, 'breakfast is the most important meal of the day,' is newer still and is credited to a marketing campaign by General Foods in 1944 to, well, sell more cereal.

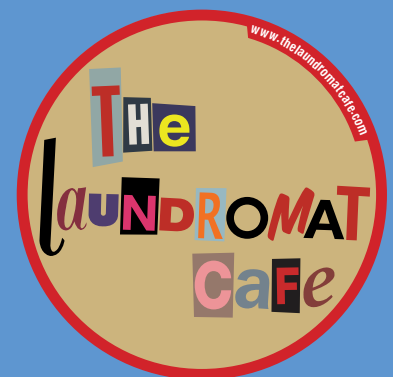
open to everyone, walk-ins and hotel guests alike. At 7900 ISK for two, this is the most bang for your buck breakfast deal by a mile. With their tall windows overlooking Austurvöllur, this is perfect for a cosy morning date,

Hraðlestin
Grandagarður 23
11:00-16:00 weekends

Hear me out on this one, sure it is being offered as a brunch, and only on the weekends, and only at their Grandi outpost. But



NOT TO BRAG BUT :)



BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Drinking

Some people drink to forget, we drink to remember. Remember what? We forget

The crème de la crème. The cherry on top. It's the best of drinking and nightlife. Carefully imbibe every word you read on these pages as the gospel itself. Bask in its glory. Please do not send unsolicited criticism to grapevine@grapevine.is. We beg you.

Having sat down with a panel of expert beer drinkers, wine connoisseurs and all-around people in the know, we've compiled the absolute greats of contemporary Reykjavík watering holes. Do the Grapevine special and try them all in one night, only to wake up with a hangover that'll last you until next season's Best Of.

Best Goddamn Bar



Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

For the third year in a row, Röntgen claims the prize of the Grapevine's Best Goddamn Bar. A unanimous choice by the panel, there's simply nothing else that competes with Röntgen's comprehensive atmosphere. Whether you're looking for a relaxing weekday drink or a full-on weekend party, Röntgen has it all. "There's some kind of a magnet that draws me to it," one panellist said. "They also attract a good mixture of locals and tourists, which makes for an interesting atmosphere," said another panellist. Röntgen's all-encompassing glory continues to dominate the Reykjavík bar scene.

Runners-Up



Lemmy
Austurstræti 20

Ian Kilmister, in memoriam. This irreverent theme bar, known for its DJ/drummer combo nights earned a special nod from the panel. "I love this bar because they are so accommodating and ambitious," said a panellist. "In the summertime, there's a backyard stage, Freddi Arcade has moved in there and they even have an aquarium. It's a no-pressure environment," said another. "They always have something going on. There's a real consistency."



12 Tónar
Skólavörðustígur 15

Record store-gone-café, 12 Tónar's owners Einar and Lárus will make you feel like a regular, even if it's only your first time. "It's absolutely my favourite place in town," chimed one panellist. With a good selection of beer on tap, they also host regular DJ nights and a summer concert series. "The outdoor patio is fantastic when the sun's up," chimed one panellist.

Previous Winners

2022: Röntgen
2021: Kaffibarinn
2020: Kaffibarinn

Best Wine Bar



Vinstúkan Tíu sopar

Laugavegur 27

Tucked away in the cellar of Laugavegur 27 is Vinstúkan 10 Sopar. Vinstúkan has a wide selection of natural wines, as well as lavish French vintages. Offering not only great wine but greater customer service, Vinstúkan 10 Sopar claims the prize again as the best wine bar. If you're not sure what you like, go ahead and ask the owner and head bartender Steinar for a recommendation. "I feel like I'm in safe hands whenever I'm there," confessed a panellist. You can even snag a great deal on a full bottle, as Vinstúkan imports their own.

Runners-up:



Aperó Vinbar
Laugavegur 20b

A Grapevine favourite, Aperó is a French-inspired wine bar, utilising the latest in wine technology to offer its patrons an exquisite experience. "It's so cool what they do there. Each wine is stored in a specific closet, with a specific temperature," one panellist reports. If you're hungry, they also offer food that pairs well with your drink of choice. If you're missing that continental European feel, go to Aperó.



Bodega
Týsgata 9

Claiming the spot as the best bar for outdoor drinking, Bodega is tucked away from the hustle and bustle of Laugavegur partying. "It's a serious wine place," a panellist said. And serious it is. Serving wine from all over the globe, Bodega is also a fantastic place for outdoor drinking, as per the panel's deliberation. Don't forget to have a little snack with your drink while you're there.

Previous Winners

2022: Vinstúkan Tíu sopar
2021: Vinstúkan Tíu sopar
2020: Port 9

Best Craft Bar



Session Craft Bar

Bankastræti 14

Catering to seasoned craft beer veterans as well as lightweights who only want a Coors Light, Session is the place to be. "Session is an accessible place to visit as a group. If I'm in the mood, I can treat myself to a nice craft beer. But they also have good lagers," said one panellist. Its colourful selection of beers offers a good overview of the breweries around Reykjavík, as well as the Danish brewery Mikkeller. "It's good for beer nerds, but also people who just want to take it easy and play board games," said another panellist.

Runners-up:



Microbar
Nýbýlavegur 8 (Kópavogur)

The panel didn't confine itself to the drinking scene in downtown Reykjavík — Microbar is also located in Kópavogur. "Microbar has very nice vibes. Comfortable lighting and a great range of beers," a panellist said. The first craft bar in Reykjavík, Microbar offers beers from all over the world, with a special focus on the owner's brewery, Gæðingur. If you want a mix of both international and local craft beers, Microbar's got you covered.



Skúli Craft Bar
Aðalstræti 9

Near Alþingi, on Fógetatorg — sheriff's square — is Skúli, with its entrance tucked quietly away in a small alley. Named after the OG Icelandic entrepreneur, Skúli fógeti, whose centre of operations was on Aðalstræti, it's a fantastic spot for craft beers. Having been one of the vanguards of the Icelandic craft beer culture, Skúli serves both local and international brews. It's certainly a spot you mustn't miss on your craft beer quest.

Previous Winners

2022: Session Craft Bar
2021: Session Craft Bar
2020: BrewDog

SANDHOLT

REYKJAVÍK



TASTE THE LEGACY

Sandholt is a homegrown family bakery built upon decades of tradition and priding four generations of innovative, artisan bakers.

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www.sandholt.is

Skál!

EAT & DRINK

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Drinking

Why have just one happy hour when you can have nine?

Best Sports Bar



Reykjavík Sportbar

Hverfisgata 40

As far as sports bars go, the panel all agreed that this bar was the perfect spot. You can watch the game with the lads, have a drink with the lads, and even brush up on your pool skills with the lads. "When I visit a sports bar, I want screens, I want a pool table. I want a sports bar to have a specific atmosphere, and this place delivers," a panellist said. With their selection of various activities — think pool, foosball, darts and the like — Reykjavík Sportbar caters to sports enthusiasts and non-fans alike.

Runners-up



Just Wingin' It Snorrabraut 56

Starting out in Garðabær, Just Wingin' It has branched out to Snorrabraut. Although technically a restaurant, the place is great for a main dish of beer with a side of wings. And sports? Well, they got that. "There are screens everywhere. At one point I was watching the NBA, NFL and the Premier League all at the same time," said one panellist. "There was a crazy amount of energy."



American Bar Austurstræti 8

The bar of the free, and the bar of the brave. Don't let the giant statue of Uncle Sam scare you away — he's just there to recruit you into day drinking. American Bar screens all manner of sports, offers a good selection of draft and bottled beer, and features Reykjavík partygoers' favourite pastime, the Wheel of Fortune. With its overall atmosphere and focus on sports, American Bar deserves a mention.

Previous Winners

2022: American Bar
2021: American Bar
2020: American Bar

Best Bar to Start the Night



12 Tónar

Skólavörðustigur 15

12 Tónar brings the concept of the duality of man to the Reykjavík nightlife scene. One part of you wants to chill out and drink beer with some good friends. The other needs a place to pregame before going all out. "You can sort of choose whether you go partying or take it easier," said one panellist. "You're sent straight to the middle of the atmosphere and get all riled up," contrasted another. As mentioned previously, this record store-cum-bar hosts all manner of music events, ramping up its claim for the best bar to start the night.

Runners-up



Bió Paradís

Hverfisgata 54

Is it strange to call a cinema a bar? It doesn't need to be, as Bió Paradís was one of the first cinemas in Iceland to start serving alcohol in its concession. You don't even need to see a movie. "Going there for drinks is a very romantic idea," said a panellist. "It's an extremely vibey place. What's better than popcorn and beer?" asked another. We can't think of anything.



Veður

Klapparstigur 33

Veður is a nice middle-ground for all sorts of people to come together at the start of the night. There always seems to be enough space, as Veður also has downstairs seating, accessible by a wheelchair lift. They offer exquisite cocktails and if you're there during happy hour (19:00-21:00), be prepared to down a few before you start your partying, or just enjoy your company, chatting the night away.

Previous Winners

2022: Jungle Cocktail Bar
2021: Kaldi
2020: Veður



Plates to share
Natural Wines
Craft Cocktails



OPEN 7 DAYS
11:30-23:00

Hlemmur Mathöll

Drinking

Pro-tip: Try the drinks!

Best Place for Cocktails



Jungle Cocktail Bar

Austurstræti 9

Although they don't have the smash hit "Welcome to the Jungle" by Guns 'n' Roses on repeat, Jungle makes up for it with their complex, innovative and all-around great-tasting cocktails — the best in town, according to the panel. "There's nothing that competes with Jungle. They're constantly innovating, and they employ award-winning bartenders. What they're doing, no one else is doing in Iceland," said one panellist. Along with the work they put into their drinks, they also put a lot of effort into their names. Menu monikers like "Michael Scotch" and "Chamomile High Club" are sure to please your taste buds as well as your humour.

Runners-up



Kokteilbarinn Klapparstigur 28

When walking into Monkeys on Klapparstigur, you are given two choices. Either continue in to the restaurant, business as usual, or turn into Kokteilbarinn and have a seat in their train — destination: cocktail town. "At Monkeys, there's a side bar. When you walk into it, suddenly you're sitting in a train, drinking tasty cocktails," reported one panellist. Serving award-winning cocktails by award-winning bartenders, Kokteilbarinn offers a serious experience for the initiated and the newbies alike.



Uppi Aðalstræti 12

This grandiose restaurant/bar on Aðalstræti has shown it's a force to be reckoned with. Focusing on wine and lavish dining within its carefully curated interior, Uppi has also demonstrated its quality cocktails. Uppi also hosts all manner of events, from wine presentations to bingo nights. When you're looking for that feeling of luxury, it's a bar you must check out.

Previous Winners

- 2022: Jungle Cocktail Bar & Veður
- 2021: Jungle Cocktail Bar
- 2020: Miami (RIP)

Best Bar for Live Music



KEX

Skúlagata 28

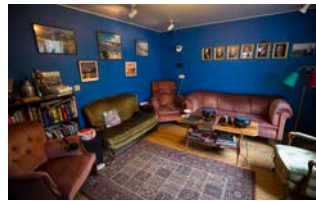
A biscuit factory-cum-hostel, KEX Hostel (colloquially known as just KEX) has been an important presence for the live music scene in Reykjavik. With the ever-changing landscape of Reykjavik venues, KEX has ventured further than other live clubs in their ambition. Regularly hosting smaller shows, KEX also put on the annual Kexport festival which sees both underground and more known acts hitting the stage. In addition to their festival, KEX is diligent in their concert scheduling. It's a place both for emerging acts can start out as well as established artists. Don't forget to order a pizza while you're there.

Runners-up



Gaukurinn Tryggvagata 22

A true legend of a place that has stood the test of time, Gaukurinn has a jam-packed schedule every month. Concerts, stand-ups, drag shows and karaoke nights all have their place at Gaukurinn. It's shown they're open to almost anything and their policy of inclusivity deserves a mention. The bar has long since implemented gender-neutral bathrooms, delivering a "No Bullshit" policy towards bigots, and is known for its willingness to accommodate everyone.



12 Tónar Skólavörðustigur 15

Having claimed their spot as the best bar to start the night, the panel couldn't get away without giving 12 Tónar a nod towards their efforts to support the live music scene. Owners Lárus and Einar have a knack for booking exciting bands and DJs at their store. Although the space isn't built for live music, the collaborations 12 Tónar undertakes with musicians makes it feel like an extraordinary venue.

Previous Winners

- 2022: Gaukurinn
- 2021: Gaukurinn
- 2020: Gaukurinn

Treasures of European Film Culture

Places of a symbolic nature for European cinema, places of historical value that need to be maintained and protected not just now but also for generations to come.



"Kaffibarinn has been "Serving thirsty people since 1993". A cozy café during the day, it turns into a cool party place with an impressive DJ line-up and the crowds spilling out into the courtyard until early morning."



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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Drinking

What's better than an honest pint with the lads?

Best Happy Hour



Prikid

Bankastræti 12

What have we done to deserve this? Prikid's too-good-to-be-true happy hour serves thirsty and thrifty patrons beer for no more than 700 ISK. "You can't fight with a 700 ISK beer. When does happy hour start? I'm thinking of going now," joked a panellist. (It's 16:00-20:00 every day — sometimes even longer.) Prikid works in mysterious ways. Who are we to speculate how they do it? We are but lowly slaves to the golden gods. Prikid's patio is a gift on nice days, for when you want the cheapest beer in town and a good selfie for the socials.

Runners-up



Veður Klapparstígur 33

When Prikid's happy hour is past and you've drunk more than enough beer, you might crave something slightly richer than fermented yeast. That's when you head over to Veður. Why, might you ask? Because Veður offers a late cocktail happy hour. That's right, from 19:00-21:00, a wide array of cocktails can be purchased for a measly 1800 ISK. "That late happy hour is the GOAT," quipped one panellist.



Loft Hostel Bankastræti 7

On the topic of day drinking on a good day, Loft's patio will make you never want to leave. Offering a picturesque view over the city centre, Loft does its absolute best to keep you inebriated. From 16:00-20:00, the beer runs for just 750 ISK, leaving the rest of your hard-earned money free for tipping the bartender. Wait, that isn't a thing here. Unless you want to, of course.

Previous Winners

2022: **Bravó**
2021: **Bravó**
2020: **Kaffibrennslan**

Best Newcomer



Bingó Drinkery

Skólavörðustígur 8

From the same folks who brought us the best cocktail bar, Jungle, is best newcomer Bingó. The bar scored a full bingo by the panel, as it demonstrates good potential for an established drinking hole. "It has great potential. They make their own drinks as well as host events. It'll be interesting to see how it develops," said a panellist. Located behind Skólavörðustígur, on Bergstaðastræti, its inconspicuous location makes it a good place for when you need to impress the most knowledgeable of pub crawlers.

Runners-up



Uppi Aðalstræti 12

Relatively new in the Reykjavík bar game, Uppi has eluded many a seasoned connoisseur. Offering a brand-new, high-end experience just above Fish Market on Aðalstræti ("uppi" translates to "upstairs"), Uppi is the place to visit when you seriously want to impress someone. It's an intriguing bar, landing itself a spot as the runner-up for best newcomer — one we'll keep our eyes peeled on in the future.



Aperó Vinbar Laugavegur 20b

This French-inspired wine bar has earned its claim to fame by bringing a mixture of new and old-world oenology — that's fancy-speak for the study of wine — to the world's northern-most capital. Located on the second floor overlooking Laugavegur and Klapparstígur, it's nary a stone's throw from the bustle of the rest of Reykjavík nightlife. Aperó prides itself in offering quality wine from smaller producers, adding more diversity to Reykjavík's wine scene.

Previous Winners

2022: **Húrra**
2021: **Skuggabaldur (RIP)**
2020: **Röntgen**

Drinking

All hail Bakkus!

Best Outdoor Drinking (Summer)



Bodega

Týsgata 9

When thinking of a good place to drink outside in Iceland, the first thing that comes to mind is the question: "Is that possible?" Move over rooftop bars and sheltered yards that keep the North-Atlantic breeze away, Bodega on Óðinstorg is the place to be. In the summer, Óðinstorg square is decked out with tables and chairs, perfect for a sunny day of al fresco drinking. "If you're going outdoor drinking, Bodega takes it," said a panellist. "The sun lasts very long at Óðinstorg and, if you want, you can move over to the steps. It's a nice spot for an international feel."

Runners-up



Petersen Svítan Ingólfsstræti 2a, 3rd floor, 101 Reykjavík

You can't go drinking outdoors in Reykjavík without mentioning Petersen Svítan. Be prepared that like-minded people will probably have the same idea as you. Fortunately, there's lots of space, as Petersen has not one, but two outdoor patios. The second one, albeit a bit smaller, is located above the main balcony. "You can even order your drinks at the table and have them served," said a panellist.



Loft Hostel Bankastræti 7, 101 Reykjavík

The second runner-up, Loft, has been a wildly popular place for good reason. Its outdoor area is one of the best in town. "They've also installed outdoor heaters," raved one panellist. "Game-changing." The view up there is also worth acknowledging, as you have a good vantage point over downtown. Use that powerful perch to spy on your neighbours, or just enjoy the beautiful cityscape while you drink a cold one.

Previous Winners

Renewed category

Best Date Place



Kaffibrennslan

Laugavegur 21, 101 Reykjavík

The panel decided that Kaffibrennslan is the best place for a date. Being both familiar to locals, and inviting enough for newcomers, Kaffibrennslan makes for a perfect neutral ground for a first date. If you're worried about running into someone you know and want to avoid potential awkwardness, the second floor is a foolproof spot. "You can start with coffee, and if you find things going well, you can move over to beer or wine and take it from there," said a panellist. "It's an accessible date place, especially if you don't want to assume your date is drinking," said another.

Runners-up



Vinstúkan Tíu sopar Laugavegur 27, 101 Reykjavík

Alternatively, as a date night with your significant other, Vinstúkan hits the sweet spot between intimate and fancy. "It's a slightly higher investment, but a great spot if you want to treat yourself and try something new," said one panellist who is clearly knowledgeable on the dating scene. "It's a solid backup if you want to someplace slightly more romantic," said another.



Skor Kolagata 1, 101 Reykjavík

For those who want to be doing something productive, instead of yammering on about the past, present and future, Skor has demonstrated its potential as a date bar. While perfecting your darts high score, you can impress your date with your tireless practice. "If you want an activity date, you can book a table at Skor. You don't have to just sit and chat," said a panellist.

Previous Winners

2022: Port 9
2021: Port 9
2020: Hlemmur Mathöll

Best Bar to End the Night



Kiki Queer Bar

Laugavegur 22

No need to debate this one. Kiki received a unanimous vote on the best bar to end the night. Being the go-to queer club in Reykjavík, everyone is welcome for a drink and a dance. The only ask is that you're respectful of the space. Kiki has multiple levels for when you need to dance the night away or sit down for a soul bearing chat with someone. "There's nothing but happiness at Kiki," a panellist chimes in, reminiscing about last Saturday night. As another panellist added: "It's hands down the best place to end the night. You dance the alcohol away!"

Runners-up



Ölstofan Vegamótastigur

Ah, Ölstofan, the introvert's drinking hole. If you're ever in town late at night and aren't in the mood for a full-on dance extravaganza, Ölstofan is the place to be. It's the perfect place if you want some time away from all the ruckus and need a nice, long chat with a good friend. "It's the only place where you can sit and talk until 5:00," said a panellist.



Paloma Naustin

Known for its rave-style night outs, Paloma has seen a resurgence of a new generation of partygoers. A popular place amongst the old-school rave heads and people in general looking for a good time — isn't that what life's really about? — Paloma is sure to show you what you're looking for. There are even strategically placed joists in the rafters to place your drink there while you dance your heart out.

Previous Winners

2022: Kaffibarinn
2021: Kiki Queer Bar
2020: Prikkið



GUIDE

A True Gastronomic Destination

Icelandic cuisine is beyond shock value sheep's head

Words: **Shruthi Basappa** Photo: **Art Bicnick**

There has been considerable buzz in local media the past few weeks since the Michelin Guide Nordic Countries revealed that Iceland was adding another name to its roster of one-starred restaurants. Moss, at the Retreat by Blue Lagoon, is the latest awardee, joining Óx and Dill on the prestigious list.

The number of Michelin-starred restaurants in a place is a new standard of measuring a tourist destination's culinary prowess. But what is a Michelin star, how are they granted, and

how does recognition by Michelin – or comparable rankings like World's 50 Best or the Nordic White Guide – impact the dining and tourism industry?

Where does Iceland stand compared to our Nordic neighbours? Do we have what it takes to be a global dining destination?

Ranking the ranking systems

Contrary to popular belief, Michelin stars are awarded to restaurants and not individual chefs.

One star is awarded to restaurants worth stopping by, two-star restaurants are worth a detour, and three-star restaurants justify a dedicated trip. Other recognitions awarded are the Green Star designating establishments with strong sustainability practices and the Bib Gourmand given to eateries offering the best value for money establishments.

While Michelin is considered the gold standard of a place's culinary prowess, the Sweden-based Nordic White Guide has long measured the pulse of the culinary scene in the Nordics, with the Michelin Guide often playing catch up to their recommendations. Heck, the White Guide pegged Óx as a master level restaurant back in 2019!

Elsewhere, global rankings carried out by World's 50 Best have been formidable competition with their "50 Best Discovery" sub-category tagging local cocktail bar Jungle on their coveted "Bar Discovery" list.

Global rankings aside, The Reykjavik Grapevine has become the most comprehensive local restaurant guide with our annual Best of Reykjavik Dining scouring the best the city and country have to offer, making it decidedly the most influential tastemaker in Iceland – and we get it right long before any other listicle.

The impact of earning a Michelin star or being placed on a global best list has an immediate impact on a restaurant's business. Speaking with Food & Wine magazine in 2017, Joel Robuchon, holder of the most Michelin star awarded restaurants in the world, broke it down like this: "With one Michelin star, you get about 20 percent more business. Two stars, you do about 40 percent more business, and with three stars, you'll do about 100

percent more business. So from a business point ... you can see the influence of the Michelin guide."

Local businesses have similarly seen a spike in reservations following Michelin announcements, so global trends prevail here, too.

Fostering a fertile environment

With the ongoing influx of tourists, the role of the food and beverage industry cannot be underestimated. A 2022 report by KPMG minces no words in stating that the restaurant industry contributes disproportionately higher wages and employs more people than other tourist-facing industries – a whopping 46.2 billion ISK in restaurant wages vs 38.3 billion in hotel wages.

In my retrospective for this publication on Icelandic dining culture in 2022, I touched upon the lost opportunity of turning Iceland into a global dining destination. This isn't wishful thinking. Research shows that 95% of global travellers today consider themselves "food travellers," with 70% of them picking a destination based on food and drink choices.

Interestingly, 59% believe food choices are more important now than they were five years ago. A 2022 report by the Nordic Ministers titled "Nordic Food in Future Tourism" highlights the intersection of restaurants, food producers, farmers and animal husbandry as essential to attaining common goals of being an attractive destination where "eating and travelling in harmony with nature and local culture is a desirable lifestyle."

For reasons unknown, however, Iceland's potential as a gastronomic leader has been systematically overlooked.

Íslandsstofa (Business Ice-

"...it is precisely its size and careful curation of cuisines on offer that underlines its cool-beyond-trends vibe."

– Reykjavik Grapevine



REYKJAVÍK  GRAPEVINE



BEST FOODHALL

HLEMMUR
FOODHALL

land) focuses on showcasing Icelandic businesses abroad, Ferðamálastofa (The Icelandic Tourism Board) focuses on marketing Iceland as a desirable destination abroad. Neither of these focus on the importance of the restaurant industry on the spending habits of tourists, or on tourists choosing Iceland as a dining destination. PR teams of journalists occasionally arrive here, often sponsored by Icelandair, and sporadic mentions of local restaurants make an appearance in international outlets. But

played host to the Michelin Guide Nordic Countries announcement on June 12, Reykjavik seems absolutely buoyant about its own potential as a culinary leader. However, it needs to be supported by a clear action plan that doesn't solely rest on an effective PR campaign with no real infrastructural overhaul.

The 2022 Nordic Ministers report outlined the challenges they found – an absence of strategic planning for the role of food in tourism and glaringly limited food tourism service when com-

(association of restaurant owners), Business Iceland, the Icelandic Tourism Board, food writers and PR agencies to the same table should be the first order of business in supporting the industry as the power player it is.

Opportunities as a dining destination

The culinary history of Iceland may be younger than other countries, but it has long since moved away from survival mode that relied on preservation and boiling as a singular technique to a country building the framework of its cuisine around the unparalleled quality of its land and seas.

Locally grown wasabi, rivaling its Japanese counterparts, is gaining global recognition, as is hand-harvested salt. Icelandic lamb is the first Icelandic product to gain Protected Designation of Origin recognition, giving it the same status as champagne or Greek yoghurt. Nurturing and recognising local talents like Norð Austur in the east, Slippurinn in the south, and Tjörúhúsið in the Westfjords as more than just local gems but as regional heroes, will

only serve to foster and inspire other talents to spring up.

We know from our Nordic neighbours and other countries abroad that sustained effort, with cross-disciplinary cooperation between ministries, sectors and political alliances, yields noticeable results. Denmark has launched a public-private partnership, the Gastro 2025 initiative, to attract gastronomic tourists and raise the country's culinary status. Russia was set to host the World's 50 Best on the heels of the first ever Moscow Michelin Guide – initiatives that, if not for the war, would have made it an attractive food travel destination.

Icelandic cuisine is more than its shock value smorgasbord of boiled and pickled sheep heads and ram testicles. We have never eaten better, grown more high quality produce or processed better fish than we do today. Our restaurants are not just local gems to be cherished – they are worthy of global scrutiny and being recognised as attractions in their own right. 🇮🇸

With the ongoing influx of tourists, the role of the food and beverage industry cannot be underestimated.

a concerted, committed effort to foster homegrown champions and focus on the creative ways chefs and purveyors are pushing boundaries is sorely amiss.

Given the enthusiastic news coverage and tweet-inducing interest when Turku, Finland,

pared to our Nordic neighbours. The report further elaborated on a possible action plan calling out the rigidity and lack of flexibility by the government, and a reluctance to adapt to changing expectations of the industry.

Bringing the likes of SVEIT



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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Activities

Stop doom-scrolling and go hill-strolling!

Get out of the city and into the sunshine! Or stay inside, we're not the boss of you. Whatever you're in the mood for, here are some of our suggested favourite places to catch the latest movies, have a soak or break an ankle hiking up a hill in a level 5 storm. It's really up to you! (But seriously, don't go hiking in a storm.)

Best Pool



Lágafellslaug

Lækjarhlíð 1a (Mosfellsbær)

The panel this year skewed towards the over-30 bracket, so the criteria for selecting the best municipal swimming pools had to take into account the needs of kids and their world-weary handlers. Lágafellslaug might not be the best spot for actual swimming but instead you get a triple-whammy water slide (one that ends in warm water, not the usual polar bear challenge) and a sauna with a glass window, which means you can watch the kids while you try to unclench that sciatica and buy yourself 10 minutes of uninterrupted adult-time.

Runners-up



Árbæjarlaug Fylkisvegur 9

Here's another one that's a fair bit outside of downtown Reykjavik but well worth a visit. Árbæjarlaug combines a lived-in 90s charm with facilities that seem better suited to Icelandic weather than most pools. First of all, you have a sauna in the changing room, which means you could forego pee-walking on frozen cement in your tankini and just hang out there. If you choose to brave the cold, then the first hot tub is strategically located right by the changing room exit. This is very much a family-friendly pool, though, so beware if you are looking for a quiet place to sweat out a hangover.



Sundhöll Reykjavíkur Barónsstígur 45a

Finally, one for the childfree people! The original hot tubs (on the 2nd floor) are a classic of the genre: large, aquamarine, hot, outside and without sharp angles. It's not one of the biggest pools, however, and the sauna is best described as 'good for two people who don't mind touching knees or for three people who don't mind human Tetris in the buff. Bonus points go to Sundhöll for regularly hosting cultural activities, like swim-in movie screenings.

Previous Winners

2022: Sky Lagoon
2021: Vesturbæjarlaug
2020: Vesturbæjarlaug

Best Spa



Hvammsvík

Kjósarhreppur (Mosfellsbær)

As many of the best spas are located outside of Reykjavik, we decided to include some that fell within a one-hour radius of Reykjavik City proper. A quick 45 minute drive delivers you to this picturesque spa in Hvalfjörður. The area served as a thoroughfare between the capital and Akureyri but after the opening of the Hvalfjörður tunnel, you can drive along this scenic route without seeing a soul (except for the occasional seal). The spa itself has an open design, which beautifully integrates into the surroundings. The hot tubs on the beach will even "disappear" to water level during high tide. It's the selection of hot tubs and saunas to fit every taste that makes Hvammsvík a great all-rounder!

Runners-up



Blue Lagoon

Norðurljósavegur 9 (Grindavík)

What can you say about the Blue Lagoon that hasn't already been said. It's blue, it's a lagoon, it's technically run-off from a geothermal power plant, and it's a pioneer in the modern Icelandic spa culture. If you don't want to rub noses (and other body parts) with the hoi polloi in the main pool, then the recently added ultra-fancy (and pricy) Retreat at Blue Lagoon offers a more exclusive lagooning experience, with tiered wellness rituals and celebrity-sightings.



Sky Lagoon

Vesturvör 44-48 (Kópavogur)

The verdict here was pretty unanimous for a panel of infrequent spa-goers: "I thought I would hate it, but was surprised at how much I loved it". A beautiful spa, nestled in an industrial part of Kópavogur, which offers killer views of the Reykjanes peninsula and any volcanoes that might be erupting there.

Previous Winners

New category

Best Gallery



Gallery Port

Laugavegur 32,

This year we considered how the art scene has sought out new ways of promoting and introducing art to potential buyers. Gone are the days of clear divides between the "sell-outs" and the heroically broke "real artists". As recently as 10 years ago, this wouldn't have been the case, but most of today's artists and gallerists are able to deftly maneuver the balance of creative focus and making a livelihood. There were many worthy contenders but the artist-run downtown gallery Gallery Port, captained by local dynamo Árni Már Erlingsson, has constantly made brave choices that represent the local scene and have helped shape the refreshingly straight-forward approach to communicating the artist's vision and finding that art a new home.

Runners-up



Listval

Austurbakki 2

Selling art in Harpan and in Grandi, as well as through their online shop, they have been, as one of our panelists phrased it "Unafraid to try new things and run a gallery more like an art shop." But it's not just their approachability that sets them apart but a keen eye for highlighting up-and-coming local artists.



Pula Gallery

Hjartatorg

Pula is a tiny gallery that has brightened the much-maligned Hjartatorg (a hotel courtyard, built on the remains of a local, grassroots art and activity space). 2022 saw them presenting a string of fascinating exhibits, including Auður Lóa, Rakel McMahon, Melanie Ubaldo and Lilja Birgisdóttir. Watch this space.

Previous Winners

2022: Gallery Port
2021: Gallery Port
2020: Kling og Bang

Best Theater



Tjarnarbíó

Tjarnargata 12

This one really is a no-brainer. It's smack in the middle of downtown Reykjavik, it has regular performances in English, and it caters to an incredibly diverse range of performers and performances. Despite the recent attempts of the grand dames of theater, Reykjavik City Theater and the National Theater, to branch out into new avenues, Tjarnarbíó manages to highlight how staid they are in comparison. Tjarnarbíó is an incredibly busy theater with seemingly 1-2 premiers a week, everything from dramas dealing with burning social issues to interactive shows for babies. All while retaining a doggedly independent spirit.

Runner-up



Gaflaraleikhúsið Vikingastræti 2 (Hafnarfjörður)

A truly local theater, tucked away in an alley by the Hafnarfjörður viking village. This 220-seater has, since 2011, managed to put on a series of successful productions, appealing to a wide age range, and providing an avenue for new talent and seasoned pros alike. While it may be more geared towards lighter fare and less concerned with nude thespians flagellating themselves through Beckett, it's a rare and refreshing treat to see a true independent flourishing outside the system.

Previous Winners

New category

Best Cinema



Bió Paradís

Hverfisgata 54

What? The street magazine chose the only cinematheque in Reykjavik? Well, that took everyone by surprise. As much as we love many of our other theaters for a no-holds-barred blockbuster experience, there is simply no contender for the top spot. This is a theater that incorporates their customers' needs through a lively dialogue with its community on what to show and what kind of events to stage. They are also the only theater consistently serving the international community in Iceland and a center for many of the film festivals, openings and awards in Iceland.

Runners-up



Laugarásbíó Laugarás

In the 80s and 90s, Laugarásbíó was a haven for cult action movies and B-horror (think Bloodsport and Critters). Today it's more respectable but it retains that renegade vibe somehow. Sure it could use some freshening up but they've kept up with the latest in sound systems and screening technology and you'll get much the same blast of Hollywood mayhem as you would with the bigger chains.



Kringlubió (Lúxus) Kringlan 4-12

The Lúxus screen in Kringlubió recently introduced their "date seats" which are two-person leather recliners, where you can snuggle up to your partner with a blanket and a bucket of popcorn. It's like 90% of the way towards replicating what it was like bingeing romcoms in Covid except outfitted with a Dolby Atmos sound system, brand-new movies and a big ol' screen.

Previous Winners

2022: Bió Paradís
2021: Bió Paradís
2020: Smárabíó

Best Art Museum



Gerðarsafn

Hamraborg 4 (Kópavogur)

Gerðarsafn is often unfairly neglected when discussing the best that the Greater Reykjavik Area has to offer, despite being only a quick 10 minute drive from downtown. The museum has shown incredible ambition in recent years, putting on a staggering number of events and exhibitions which often serves to transport the conversations taking place outside the museum walls into the exhibition space — such as immigration and gender issues.

Runners-up



The Living Art Museum Grandagarður 20

The Living Art Museum (Nýlistasafnið) is a modern art museum located at a nexus of an artist-owned gallery, non-profit artist run space and an artist's studio (oh, and there's an Italian restaurant on the first floor). Similar to Gerðarsafn, Nýló is willing to engage with social issues, while skewing slightly more avant-garde in their displays. The Marshall House building and the surrounding area is also an excellent example of the renewal that has happened in Grandi and the result makes for a charming date spot.



The Reykjavik Art Museum Tryggvagata 17

The list wouldn't be complete without a mention of the Reykjavik Art Museum. While the past year has not been a particular stand-out for the museum, its Hafnarhús location is still one of the main conduits bringing big name international, contemporary artists into the country. Besides, it's the perfect place to dip in on a windy day for a coffee and some merch to give your friend who has everything.

Previous Winners

2022: Reykjavik Art Museum
2021: Reykjavik Art Museum
2020: Kjarvalsstaðir

2023 #1

"BEST BURGER IN REYKJAVIK 2023"



Burger Beer Darts 90's Hip-hop



Laugavegur 105
www.2guys.is



WE TRIED IT

Love at First Flight

Taking Flight on Iceland's Mega Zipline

Words: **Catherine Magnúsdóttir** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Flight provided by Mega Zipline, megazipline.is

Staring down a canyon and the valley beyond, strapped into a harness and hanging by a steel cable, I can't help but wonder how I got here. The easy answer is a scheduling conflict, allowing me to graciously sub in for a colleague. But given that I have a troubling history of getting stuck on ziplines, combined with the fact that this one is waaaay higher and waaaay longer than the last one I attempted, I find myself questioning my own judgement. But let's start at the beginning.

Last month, Mega Zipline (the longest and fastest in Iceland) opened for business in Reykjadalur. Both Reykjadalur and neighbouring Hveragerði enjoy their

fair share of popularity, offering hiking trails, horse riding and geothermal cuisine. But locals and passersby alike tend to miss out on the stunning Svartagljúfur canyon and the river carving through it – even though both are right there to the side of the road as you drive the switchbacks up or down the mountainside when arriving in or leaving town.

Company founder Hallgrímur Kristinsson, or Halli, had this overlooked location in mind before building the Mega Zipline. The fact that it's not *too* far outside of Reykjavík, combined with the accessibility of other attractions in the area also help. So enamoured is he with the area,

he even has plans to eventually build a type of alpine coaster next to the canyon to further augment the area's activities.

Before I suit up for my go on the zipline, Halli tells me about some of the tech behind it, like the safe launch system used to eliminate human error. It essentially prevents the gates at the top of the tower from opening before everything is set and ready at the landing dock. Then there are the regular inspections and routine measurements of cable tension, sensors in the helmets keeping track of flyers and a camera system. I'm already starting to feel better about this whole outing.

and I are instructed on how to get into the harness for our "Free as a Bird" flights and primed on positions for speeding up, slowing down and preparing for landing – "pencil," "starfish" and "legs up and hold on," respectively. Got it.

We're then shuttled part way to the launch tower in a van before hiking the remaining five to 10 minutes to the tower. I am admittedly slightly out of breath by the time we're at the top of the canyon. The situation has become very real, very fast. But I try to enjoy the view as my harness is attached to one of two cables that run a full kilometre from the plateau back down into the valley.

This is probably the closest I'll ever get to fulfilling my childhood dream of becoming a dragon rider.

After reading and signing the waiver at the Mega Zipline reception, some other brave souls

I tell myself that, at this angle, there's no way I can get stuck again. Plus, my cousin isn't here



to laugh at me this time and this is probably the closest I'll ever get to fulfilling my childhood dream of becoming a dragon rider. And thus, the launch is ready, the metal gates slide to the side and I play the *How To Train Your Dragon* soundtrack in my mind as I head off!

I spot a few sheep on the hills below turn their heads in my direction as I holler out my excitement. The edge of terror sort of leaves my voice as the sheer amazement takes over – adrena-

line mixed with the joy of flying and taking in the rushing water and the rocks below. The wind really drives home that this is happening and makes me feel even more alive, though its intensity also has tears streaming along my temples. Before I know it, the landing dock is in sight, I starfish to slow down and then assume the landing position to be safely caught by the brakes.

"How was it?" asks Halli, who is manning the landing dock, as he helps me down.

"Awesome!"

"Want to try out Superman now?"

Superman, aka "Fast as a Falcon," is the iteration of the ride that lets you fly headfirst and belly down over the canyon. Had Halli asked me the night before, my response would have been a definitive "fuck no!" But now I can't wait to go again and get more of that incredible flying sensation!

So, I get strapped into my new harness, which is reminiscent of

a very sturdy apron, and embark on another journey up the mountainside. Then I'm off, extending one arm like the Man of Steel and enjoying the canyon views even more thanks to the big safety goggles that come with this flight option.

I land safely once more, take stock of the distance I flew and the leap (both literal and figurative) I took. What a ride. 🍌



Welcome to Junkyard – the vegan food revolution you've been waiting for!

- Our fast food diner and retail line are located in Reykjavík, serving up the biggest, juiciest, and most delicious vegan burgers you'll ever taste. And with our commitment to eco-conscious packaging, you can feel good about every bite.
- But that's just the beginning – our dynamic reward curve subscription based system offers industry-leading discounts that increase as our subscriber base grows. And with our sister operations, travel agency and tour operator called Level Up Iceland and a sustainability driven luxurious taxi service called Tesla Taxi, we're building a community of sustainable, forward-thinking individuals who believe in making a positive impact on the world.
- Come experience the future of food and travel with Junkyard – where sustainability meets deliciousness. Suitable for meat lovers and planet savers alike.

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KLEPPSVEGUR & LANGHOLTSVEGUR CORNER

BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Activities

Doing stuff is great!

Best Museum



The National Museum

Suðurgata

The National Museum (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands) picks up the first place yet again, but not simply due to its institutional status. What our panel felt made it such a successful museum in its category was how the curation offers the exact right scope to view Icelandic history — it's condensed, but not too condensed. The past year saw them explore new angles from which to view the Icelandic national identity, including an exhibit on inheritance that highlighted the stark poverty of Icelanders prior to the 20th century, as they left their children the trifles of daily life upon their passing (down to a pair of underwear with a hole in it). The National Museum has also entered into successful partnerships with contemporary artists and designers to find new ways to explore Icelandic history in the making.

Runners-up



Einar Jónsson Museum Hallgrímstorg 3

Once an imposing castle structure perched alone atop a barren hill, this building inspired by basalt hexagons is unmissable to anyone passing by Hallgrímskirkja church. A former home to one of Iceland's foremost sculptors, Einar Jónsson, it now houses his works and the charming sculpture garden, which plays home to Einar's unmissable fascination with Norse mythology.



The Settlement Exhibition Reykjavik 871±2 Aðalstræti 16

Most of the time, you won't find anything more interesting in the basement of a hotel than a laundry room or the occasional haunting. But underneath the Hotel Reykjavík Centrum you will find the 871±2 settlement exhibition. This exhibition explores the remains of a viking longhouse from the settlement age, which was excavated right on that spot in 2001 and remains one of the oldest man-made structures found in Iceland (from circa 871, hence the name). What better place to build an archeological museum but right in the spot where you found the damn thing, amirite?

Previous Winners

2022: The National Museum
2021: The National Museum
2020: The National Museum

Best Place to Take the Kids



Fjölskylduland

Dugguvogur 4, 104 Reykjavik

Described as Iceland's "first holistic Indoor Playground and Family Center in Iceland," this one is sort of like a private members club for toddlers. Fjölskylduland is somewhat like a large indoor playground, full of stimulating activities for children 0-6 years old. If the playhouse isn't enough to keep their attention, you can enroll them in gymnastics, or baby yoga. Because you're never too young to align your chakras!

Runner-up



The Salvation Army Suðurlandsbraut 72, 108 Reykjavik

This one took us by surprise, as it's not openly geared towards children, but several panelists mentioned how well this space served the family folk of the 108 area. The distinctive red building was designed by Teiknistofan Tröð and opened in 2021 as the new HQ for the Salvation Army. While the overt Christian themes may be off putting to some, there is no denying the appeal of the affordable and spacious café, generous play area and arts and crafts workshops.

Newcomer



Höfuðstöðin Rafstöðvarvegur

Set in the beautiful Elliðaárdalur public park, this permanent installation by artist Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir (aka Shoplifter) is not, strictly-speaking, geared towards children but our panelists said their kids find so much to love in the vibrant colours and soft textures. Plus, you can chalk that up to a culturally edifying activity, as it's technically an art installation.

Previous Winners

2022: Húsdýragarðurinn
2021: The Maritime Museum
2020: Húsdýragarðurinn

Best Place to Spend a Rainy Day



Spilavinir

Suðurlandsbraut 48, 108 Reykjavik

The panellists were responsive with this one, as most residents of Iceland will have a few of these havens at the ready. Board game café Spilavinir got a couple of mentions and for good reason. Along with the Nexus comic book store, it's one of the best places to get to know the latest in board gaming — everything from 10 kilo box sets of baroque Euro-style games to something you can pick up in five minutes and probably involves some variation on the Werewolf game. Be aware that Spilavinir is more accurately described as being in the Skeifan shopping area, even though its address is Suðurlandsbraut.

Runner-up



FlyOver Iceland Fiskilóð 43, 101 Reykjavik

An interactive special-effects "ride" with a 20 metre spherical screen, accented by water mist and scents to engage all the senses. A bit like the Sky Lagoon, several panellists had judged it beforehand as a bit corny, but it's surprisingly good fun. If it's too crappy outside to see Icelandic nature with your own two eyes, then this is the perfect substitute. As a bonus for Icelanders that spent all their travel savings on that all-inclusive in Tenerife, FlyOver Iceland also runs tours over Canada and the U.S. on the regular. Yeehaw, eh.

Previous Winners

New category

Activities

Doing stuff is great!

Best Day Trip



The Reykjanes Route

Reykjanes Peninsula

This sample platter of Iceland's offerings got kicked up a notch with recent volcanic activity (you may have heard about the eruptions at Geldingadalir and Meradalir in 2021 and 2022, respectively). This quick drive takes you on a route along the sweeping blue lake of Kleifarvatn. It takes you past charming ruins, geothermal hot springs, beautiful rock formations, snowy peaks and, yes, the occasional jets of spurting magma (N.B. no volcanoes are erupting at the moment).

Runners-up



Sólheimajökull

At only 100 miles (160 km) from Reykjavik, this is one of the two glaciers closest to our bustling metropolis and a favorite among the locals. An imposing sight, Sólheimajökull's popularity is helped by it being one of the most accessible glaciers, as it's both fairly easy to find and to scale the side. That being said, we recommend that you go with experienced guides to avoid being put in cold storage in a glacial crevice until Katla finally erupts through the ice cover, sending you flying back to Reykjavik.



Hellisgerði Helligata 3 (Hafnarfjörður)

This tiny enchanted rock garden 20 minutes from downtown Reykjavik is the perfect place to zen out on a sunny day. With a café, small pond and moss-covered lava rocks, they have taken care not to curtail the savage charm of Hafnarfjörður's lava fields. And it's probably for the best, since the rocks there are said to be home to the hidden people (known as elves to the normos).

Previous Winners

2022: Geldingadalir Volcano (RIP)
2021: Geldingadalir Volcano (RIP)
2020: Reykjanes

Best Summer Hike



Glymur Waterfall

Hvalfjörður

After a scenic drive to the end of Hvalfjörður, you arrive at the foot of Iceland's second-highest waterfall, with its nearly 200 meter drop. Not only is the hiking route easily accessible, but it takes you up a varied landscape, darting through shrubbery, along cliff sides, through a small cave, and you can even cross the river right above the drop on the return (if you are not afraid of meeting Óðinn a little early). Overall, it's a relatively easy hike but with a couple of spots that hoist it up to moderate difficulty.

Runners-up



Reykjadalur Hveragerði

This is the one you've no doubt caught on Instagram. People bathing in a geothermal river in the Icelandic wilderness. Of course, what's missing is all the other people snapping up pictures, but the 2-3 hour round trip and 347 metre elevation does deter some tourists, so the crowding doesn't get too bad outside of peak tourist season. Even if you forgot to pack a bathing suit (or feel some kind of way about changing behind a simple wooden divider), the views and fresh air are still well worth the hike.



Esjan Kjalarnes

This is Reykjavik's mountain, more or less. It's the one we see when we cycle to work, when we ditch school, when we drive to that out-of-town wedding, when we hit rock bottom arguing with a cormorant at the marina. It's always there in the distance like...well...a rock. It's also one of the most popular hiking routes in the country for good reason and barely needs mentioning.

Previous Winners

2022: Volcano lava field
2021: Akrafjall
2020: Esjan

BEST ICE CREAM

6 YEARS IN A ROW



LAUGARÁSVEGUR 1
104, REYKJAVÍK



SNAPS

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101 REYKJAVÍK



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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Activities

Doing stuff is great!

Best Place to Watch the Sunset



Gróttá Lighthouse

Seltjarnarnes

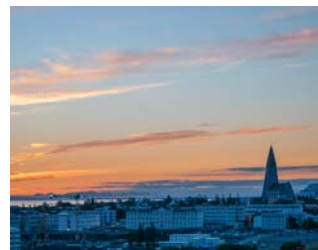
Seeking sunlight in Iceland is a bit like being married to a fisherman — you either get none at all or you get all of it at once. But we have earned it, damnit, so we're going to sit here at Gróttuviti and watch it go down. And it's going to be romantic, Pétur, and then you're heading back out because all you do is shout at the handball and eat kótleittur. When the conditions are just right, there really is no better place to catch Iceland's magical summer skies.

Runner-up



Viðey Ferry Terminal

By the big rock there's a tiny yellow beach, which (until now) has been a well-kept secret spot for sunset watching. In fact the whole Laugarnestangi area and the area around the Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum is one of the best spots you'll find in Reykjavík. And since the view is not blocked in any direction, you can walk along the path and get a full widescreen vista of the summer solstice fireworks for the whole duration.



Perlan

For those looking to see the skyline of Reykjavík as the sun sets, Perlan is the place to be. With a huge wrap-around balcony, as well as fancy scopes to zoom in, it's a fantastic locale to see the orange sun shine off the houses of Reykjavík. Here for New Years? Get a spot here to watch some mad fireworks in all their glory.

Previous Winners

Renewed category

Best Place to See Northern Lights



In your backyard

Iceland

Now this may seem like a cop-out, but bear with us. It's probably due to something terrible like the impending climate catastrophe, but the view from the average Reykjavík backyard has been ludicrously good over the past couple of years. Of course it's always better to escape the light pollution and venture beyond the city limits, but given what a crapshoot these northern lights tours can be, it's worth recommending just looking up regularly between 9 and midnight on a winter's eve — your odds aren't bad these days.

Runners-Up



Lake Hvaleyrvatn Hafnarfjörður

A few minutes outside the town of Hafnarfjörður, past the horse stables, you can make a sharp right turn that will take you to a popular hiking route for the strange clan of people called "Hafnfirðingar." If the stars align just right, you can catch a green ribbon of northern lights reflected in the frozen lake surrounded by snowy hills and a small pine forest. It's enough to knock the breath out of you in tiny puffs of water vapour.



Gróttá

At the end of the Seltjarnarnes peninsula, not far from the centre of Reykjavík, there's a lonely, windblown, red-topped lighthouse, with a walkable causeway that's only accessible at certain times, depending on the tide. There's a black beach, a miniature hot pot, and a nature reserve. Now, to find the Northern Lights, it's rather complicated. Basically, you stand on this picturesque beach, open your eyes and look up. There you go. Pure happiness.

Previous Winners

Renewed category

BEST ICE CREAM*

FIVE CONSECUTIVE YEARS



2022



2021



2020



2019



2018



LAUGARÁSVEGI 1

* Best Ice Cream according to Reykjavik Grapevine



CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN

Reaching The Sky

A how-to guide to hikes around Reykjavik

Words: **Jóhannes Bjarkason & Jón Trausti Sigurðarson**
Photo: **Joana Fontinha & Atli Arnarson**

A hike is nothing more than a walk on a mountain. Sure, you'll become out of breath and your legs will ache, but there is a certain charm standing on top of a mountain that wasn't made for wandering humans. And once back down, you can proudly point at that mountain and say "Look! I was there."

A word of warning

Don't let anybody tell you that we city folks can't hike. We sure can

and we won't let you escape a conversation without telling you we once – almost – jogged up Esja. I mean, have you seen my Strava profile? I could definitely do it.

Luckily, going on a hike near the capital area doesn't require too much forward planning as most of the mountains in our backyard are relatively safe, with well-maintained trails. You'll be able to finish these in less than six hours – that's including travel time.

While these hikes are accessible, they rely on common sense and slight preparedness. Check the forecast ahead of time and listen to your gut. Are you sure you want to hike when the Met Office has issued a weather warning? (Don't do it.) Dress in layers, bring water, food and snacks.

Factor in that the weather up on a mountain may be different than conditions on the ground. The Icelandic weather is notorious for changing from a clear, blue sky to thundering rain. Most importantly, leave no trace and pick up after yourselves.

Having said that, let's take a look at some popular hikes around the capital area.

Esja: The Queen of Reykjavik

There's not a child in Reykjavik that doesn't know where Esja is.

The mountain acts as a sort of watcher over the city, as it can be seen from almost anywhere in town. According to lore, this is the home of the mischievous yule lads and their slightly more sinister parents and cat.

Because of its short distance from the capital and its impressive height, Esjan is one of the most popular hiking trails in the area. Elevation gain from the trailhead to the most common destination, the boulder aptly named "Steinn," lends you about 600 metres in elevation. The roundtrip is approximately seven kilometres. During clear weather, it is possible to hike slightly farther, to Þverfellshorn. That extra route won't add too much to your trip – you'll clearly see the peak from Steinn, but it requires some climbing and the assistance of bolted-on chains.

As Esjan is accessible from

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Check out our English friendly events.





multiple directions, there are various trails to choose from. However, the most straightforward and popular route starts just when you drive past Mosfellsbær. About five kilometres past Mosfellsbær, you'll see an exit to the right to Esjan's trailhead. There you'll find a parking lot, usually half full.

Once you've managed to climb Queen Esja, marvel at the view it offers you. This is the best view you can get of Reykjavík. On a clear day, you can even see all the way to Keilir in Reykjanes.

Móskarðshnjúkar: Esja's evil twin

Slightly east of Esja is a series of peaks named Móskarðshnjúkar. These peaks have long tricked the citizens of Reykjavík during wet seasons into thinking that sunshine is on its way. Due to their geological formation, the rhyolite peaks seem to be constantly bathed in the sun. It's an especially warming sight on cold days.

This is a fairly challenging, but accessible hike. It totals about six kilometres round-trip, with approximately 700 metres of elevation. The most popular trailhead starts from the south. From Mosfellsbær, instead of driving north towards Esja, turn right onto Þingvallave-

gur (Route 36). Head straight for about seven kilometres and turn left onto a gravel road with a sign saying Hrafnhólar. From there, you'll drive past the farms Skeggjastaðir and Hrafnhólar, until you'll follow the road to the right, where you'll end up at a parking lot by the trailhead.

Like all hikes, Móskarðsh-

On a clear day, you can even see all the way to Keilir in Reykjanes.

njúkar becomes more treacherous during the winter. It is prone to avalanches and many hikers have become injured. In 2020, an avalanche even led to the death of a young hiker.

Úlfarsfell: Standing on the shoulders of giants

Standing tall on the border of Mosfellsbær and Reykjavík is Úlfarsfell – a 296-metre-high mountain that seems puny compared to its neighbours. There was once a farm there, which was deserted around the year 1900. You can still find the ruins if you look closely.

Úlfarsfell is a fairly easy hike and a nice outing for the family. The hike is about three kilometres round-trip. The trail-

head is very close to the main road connecting Reykjavík and Mosfellsbær. From Reykjavík, you'll enter a roundabout from where you'll take the first exit to the right. Voilá! You're at the trailhead. The Forestry Association of Mosfellsbær has grown trees there since the early 20th century, so the start of the hike

leads you into a nice collection of evergreens. Once out of the copse, you'll hike up a pretty barren environment for the rest of the trip. The round-trip takes on average about 90 minutes and grants you a spectacular view of the cityscape.

Helgafell: A lesser-known gem

If you want to skip the trip to Mosfellsbær – I won't blame you – there are more hikes available near Hafnarfjörður. Helgafell is one of the more popular mountains to hike within the capital area. But it means you'll have to go to Hafnarfjörður. Pros and cons, people.

Driving into Hafnarfjörður, head in the direction of Keflavík

until you reach a looped intersection taking you to Kaldársel. Drive until you reach the road Kaldárselsvegur which ultimately takes you out of civilisation. You'll reach the trail's parking lot.

Although the elevation isn't much to write home about – approximately 250 metres – the trail becomes steep. The more popular route leads you into a small crevice, where your hand and foot coordination is tested. No worries though, it's not a climb in any sense of the word.

Continue upwards to be rewarded with a beautiful panoramic view over Reykjanes and the capital area.

A well-deserved rest

Once you've finished these hikes – yes, all these hikes – give yourself a pat on the back. Your muscles will be sore tomorrow, which is a perfect time to hit up one of the local swimming pools. There will be an air of smugness around you and you'll want to tell everyone what hikes you got up to last weekend. Don't resist the urge. Tell them. Send them a friend request on Strava. After all, you are better than most. Congratulations. 🍷



Proud to be crowned!

We are thrilled to receive Grapevine's 2023 Best of Reykjavík Shopping awards for our discount grocery stores.

First place: Krónan, Skeifan

Second place: Krónan, Hallveigarstígur

Stop by our stores for low priced groceries! You'll find them in various locations in Reykjavík and the capital area, and also on your journey around Iceland.

Krónan offers a great selection of top-quality, fresh products, including a wide selection of vegetarian and vegan options.



26 stores across Reykjavík and Iceland with low prices!

Shopping

Money can be a burden — give it to us

Is there anything better than accumulating a whole bunch of stuff? Yes, and it's accumulating a few amazing items from the best of the best shops that Reykjavik has to offer. Whether you're on the hunt for a new book to lose yourself in, a cosy wool sweater to wrap yourself in, or some jewellery with which to adorn yourself, our shopping picks won't steer you wrong.

Best Goddamn Store



KIOSK

Grandagarður 35, 101 Reykjavík

Owned by a quintet of designers, Kiosk has been putting the work of Icelandic fashion brands front and centre for years — even before establishing their storefront in Grandi. It is the place to go, whether you're shopping for some seriously stylish everyday looks or that perfect outfit for a special event. "What's best is that it's an all female designer run space focusing on small batch, sustainably made pieces," one panellist said. "It's a store where one walks in and feels seen, realising that at long last they found their designer."

Runners-up



Fischersund
Fischersund 3, 101 Reykjavík
 What can be said about Fischer that the Grapevine hasn't already raved about. It's more of an extrasensory experience than a standard shop. Walking in to the historic house on the laneway from which the shop borrows its name requires your eyes to first adjust to the low light, then your ears will pick up the soundscape curated specifically for the space, your olfactory senses will be brought to life by the herbaceous and earthy scents wafting through the air. Luckily, Fischer is a shop, so you can select perfumes, candles, beauty products, art and even an album to try and recreate that experience in your own home.



Góði hirðirinn
Köllunarklettsvegur 1
 "Inexpensive, sustainable, humanitarian aid and a treasure hunt all in one," is how one panellist summed up beloved second-hand store Góði hirðirinn. It's a place where you can find anything you could imagine and a whole bunch of other things you didn't even know you needed. It's an adrenaline rush in a shopping trip and it's all fuelled by Sorpa. We're standing by (and saving up) while they relocate to their new and bigger location.

Previous Winners

2022: Yeoman
 2021: Kiosk
 2020: Fischer

Best Design Store



Rammagerðin

Skólavörðustígur 12, Harpa, Kringlan

Rammagerðin truly celebrates Icelandic design. Whether you're in the market for a vibrantly-coloured wool blanket, striking ceramics, one-of-a-kind candle holders or artisanal beauty products infused with plants foraged in Icelandic nature, you'll find it at Rammagerðin. What's more, Rammagerðin doesn't simply stock Icelandic design, they support and work with designers on collaborative products and special releases.

Runners-up



Epál
Laugavegur 7, Skeifan 6, Kringlan
 If you're looking to capture that Scandi aesthetic in your home, look no further than Epál. This design mecca, with locations on Laugavegur and in Skeifan and Kringlan, has all the timeless classics from Nordic masters and the hottest pieces from Icelandic designers. "The range of what Epál carries is really what sets it apart," one panellist said. "I can buy a kid's water bottle (a very nice one) and a 200.000 kr. dining chair in the same trip." As for those prices, another panellist recommends keeping an eye out for Epál's very worthwhile sales events.



Mikado
Kolagata, Hafnartorg
 Bear with us here, because Mikado isn't currently a brick and mortar shop for you to visit. They're between digs, but their webshop is wide open for local and international shoppers to benefit from Mikado's impeccable curation. Whereas the other shops on the list are Scandi, Mikado is Japandi, stocking wares of Japanese and Scandinavian aesthetics that highlight just how beautifully the two sensibilities complement each other. Plus, they have some truly whimsical items for sale. Do we need a knife shaped like a whale? No. Are we getting one? Yes.

Previous Winners

2022: Rammagerðin
 2021: Rammagerðin
 2020: Akkurat (RIP)

Best Fashion Boutique



KIOSK

Grandagarður 35, 101 Reykjavík

Our Best Goddamn Store also takes the cake as Best Fashion Boutique. We'd wear nothing but the designs they stock if we had it our way, but on our Grapevine salary we'll settle for working a few pieces into our wardrobe here and there. The Icelandic designs at KIOSK are all so unique and special, you'll be making a statement in them no matter the occasion. Plus, it's not unlikely that the person in the store looking after you is the same person who designed the silk pant set you've been ogling for months and are finally buying.

Runners-up



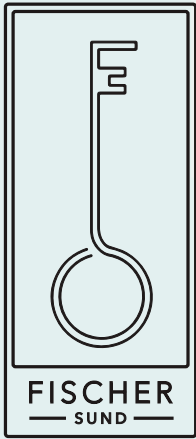
Andrá
Laugavegur 16
 Andrá was a breath of fresh air when it landed on Laugavegur a few years ago. "All the pieces are so beautifully curated, it feels like having a personal shopper," said one panellist. Whether you're shopping for an every day (though elevated) t-shirt and jeans look or something to make a splash on a night out, you'll find that special something at Andrá.



Yeoman
Laugavegur 7
 The patron saint of Icelandic fashion, Hildur Yeoman is known for her dreamy patterns, lush textures, spacey body-cons, and beautiful tailoring. Walking into her Laugavegur storefront feels like walking into an art gallery, with every suspended dress the masterpiece of a great artist. Buying a Yeoman creation is an investment in your closet's longevity — it just never goes out of style.

Previous Winners

2022: Andrá
 2021: Yeoman
 2020: Kvartýra No49 (RIP)

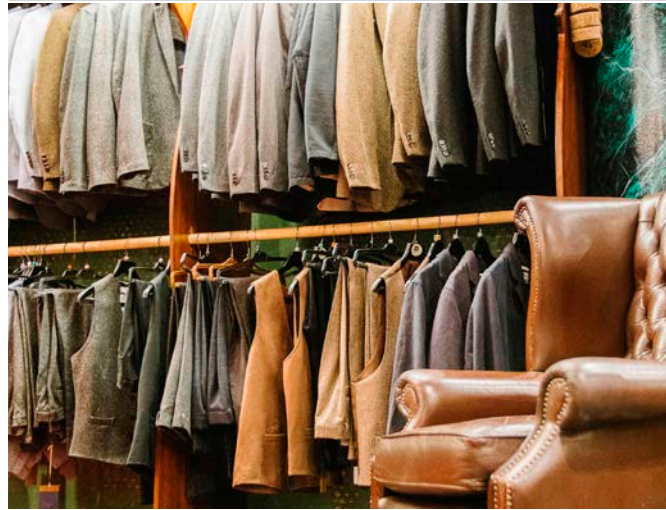


BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Shopping

Stop spending money on crypto and buy some real shit

Best Men's Clothing



Kormákur & Skjöldur

Laugavegur 59

This men's clothing mecca is the place for the discerning gentleman to outfit himself. The tailor and haberdashery in the basement below Bonus has a wide selection of button downs, blazers, suits, slacks, accessories and more — basically everything you need to be the best dressed in any room. It's all impeccably high-quality, so you'll have these pieces in your closet and in rotation for years to come.

Runners-up



ORG

Laugavegur 46
Once upon a time, Org was downtown. Then it was in the Kringlan shopping mall. But now, in addition to Kringlan, it's back downtown in a beautiful space and serving looks for men and women. "It's the go to for my husband's clothing needs," said one panellist. "When in doubt for a gift for him I always end up there, be it for pants, men's under garments, cozy socks, fragrances. All sustainably made, and a wonderful staff to boot."



Húrra Reykjavík

Hverfisgata 18a
If Reykjavík street-style is catching your eye, it's very likely pieces picked up at Húrra Reykjavík. It has all the trendy and minimalist casual and athliesure wear you need to fit right in with the cool kids, plus Crocs. Because Crocs are a thing.

Previous Winners

2022: N/A
2021: Húrra Reykjavík
2020: Geysir (RIP)

Best Second Hand Store

Joint Winners



Verzlanahöllin

Laugavegur 26, 101 Reykjavík

Verzlanahöllin is such a treat for second-hand shoppers, browsing addicts and Marie Kondo late adopters. If you're looking to sell some of your lightly-loved clothes and small items, the premise is simple: book a booth for the timespan of your choosing, set up said booth and then walk away while your items find new bodies to adorn or homes to occupy. The premise is even simpler if you're a shopper — just go and find something amazing. It's the eco-friendly way to shop.

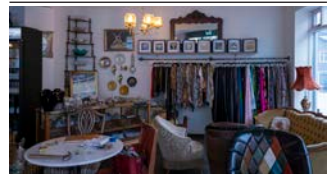


Hringekjan

Pórunnartún 2, 105 Reykjavík

Just like Verzlanahöllin, Hringekjan functions on a model of individuals booking space in the storefront (for up to four weeks at a time), and then standing back and waiting for the money to flow in. What the panel loves about Hringekjan specifically is the likeliness of finding something truly chic. Plus, their catalogue of merch online makes it easy to browse before making the trip to Pórunnartún.

Runner-up



Lóla Flórens

Garðastræti 6, 101 Reykjavík
Why make second-hand shopping a hurried, singular affair, when you can combine it with a luxe lounge moment? You don't have to choose between the two at Lóla Flórens. "After you've sipped a glass of pink champagne you can wander downstairs and find some amazingly curated nuggets," one panellist shares. "Best of all though is the selection of vintage children's clothing."

Previous Winners

2022: Hringekjan
2021: Wasteland
2020: Extraloppán

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Shopping

Fill that void in your soul and that space on your shelves

Best Record Store



Lucky Records

Rauðarárstígur 10

You don't have to have particularly good fortune to make a great find at Lucky Records. This Reykjavik staple is huge and packed with records new and old. Whether you're looking for the latest release from an Icelandic musician or international superstar, the soundtrack to Jesus Christ Superstar, or the release of some one hit wonders who you firmly believe should have been superstars, you'll find it among the crates at Lucky. Can't find what you're looking for or not entirely sure what you're looking for? Just ask the incredibly knowledgeable staff on hand. They'll steer you right.

Runners-up



Space Odyssey Skólavörðustígur 22b

We're way past 2001, but we can still experience a Space Odyssey on Skólavörðustígur. Run by the creative minds behind the long-running Extreme Chill festival, Space Odyssey is where you can expect to find some rare gems from the electronic and ambient scene. You might even catch a live performance, we they have a running lineup of soundsmiths appearing in house.



Smekkleysa Hverfisgata 32

Icelandophiles and audiophiles will both find their happy place at the Smekkleysa record store on Hjartatorg. The shop iteration of the record label and art collective founded by Icelandic icons, including Einar Örn Benediktsson, Sigtryggur Baldursson and Björk Guðmundsdóttir. It's a great place to browse a carefully-curated collection of Icelandic and international indie albums

Previous Winners

2022: Lucky Records
2021: Lucky Records
2020: Lucky Records

Best Bookstore

Joint Winners



Bóksala Stúdenta

Sæmundargata 4

After years of little movement in the bookstore category, we were surprised by the vim with which the panel backed this shop at the University of Iceland. "Bóksala Stúdenta is of course the best one," one panellist exclaimed. "It has good coffee and the best variety. Óttarr Proppé from the band HAM is in charge of the buying and he's pretty on point." Even if your student days are behind you, Bóksala Stúdenta is the best place to peruse Icelandic and international titles and buy a few more to add to that "to read" stack.



Eymundsson Austurstræti

Austurstræti 18

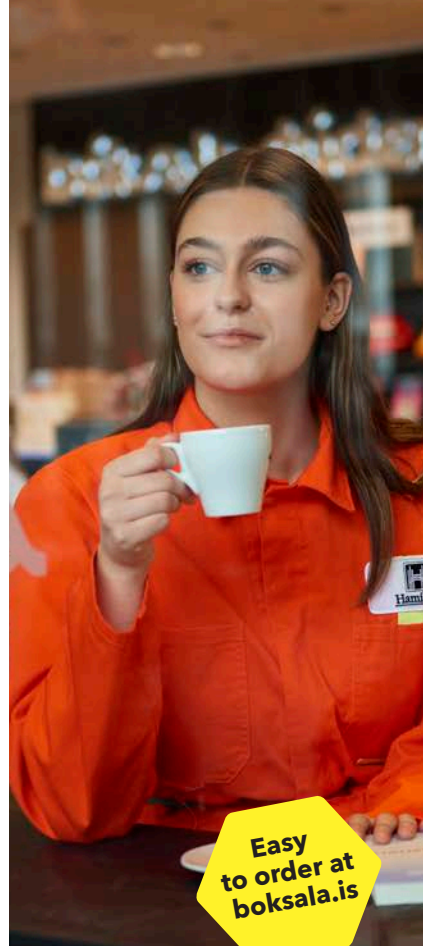
There's something special about visiting the Austurstræti location of Eymundsson. Tourists will find a wide selection of photo books and illustrated guides to the sagas, while readers of all ages and interests will find the latest Icelandic and international releases, and a wall of magazines for taking home and flipping through. One panellist drew particular attention to Eymundsson's third floor cafe. "Just get there before 16:00 on a summer day if you want to catch the sun on the terrace."



Hús máls og menningar

Laugavegur 18

The smell of this place will really win you over. That classic aroma of used bookstore that just feels cosy and inviting. Elevating Mál of Menning from run of the mill used bookstore to "best" status is its efforts to position itself at an intersection of bookstore and bar, with regular live readings and musical performances to boot. So order a Pastis, pick a book of the shelf and settle in for a magical time.



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BEST OF REYKJAVÍK 2023

Shopping

Inflation can't get you if you've spent all your dough

Best Place To Buy A Wool Sweater



Handprjóna-samband Íslands

Skólavörðustígur 19

Let's be honest, the only real competition in this category is between the runners up. There's simply no better place in Reykjavík to buy a wool sweater than Handprjónasamband Íslands, or the Handknitting Association. Walking into their store on Skólavörðustígur is like walking into a warm hug. The shelves are piled high with plush Icelandic lopapeysa in a seemingly infinite number of colour and pattern combinations, and the walls are adorned with displays of woollen mittens and hats to keep you cosy and warm. Plus, as the association's name implies, it's all knitted by hand right here in Iceland.

Runners-up



KIOSK Grandagarður 35
Among the Icelandic designers that KIOSK stocks, you just know at least one of them works in wool — it is Iceland, after all. Our go-to choices for a wool sweater that is warm, cosy and stylistically on point has to be BAHNS. By now, the coded raised pattern on BAHNS' signature knitwear — interpretations of the symbols flashed by bouys for north, east, west and south — are as iconic among Reykjavík's fashionable residents as the yoke of a lopapeysa.

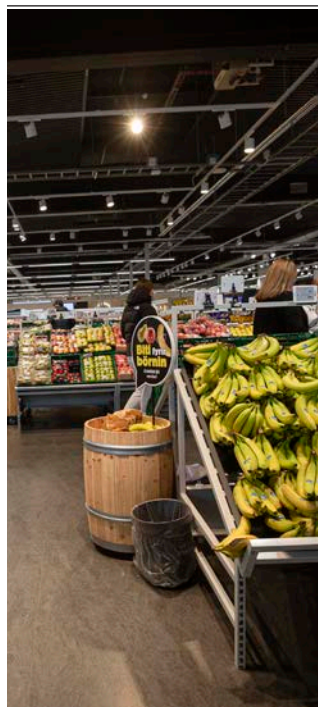


Farmer's Market Laugavegi 37 and Hólmahlóð 2
If you want the look of a lopapeysa, but with a more modern cut and less bulk, then the wool sweaters at Farmer's Market will tick all your boxes. They Farmers & Friends storefronts stock sweaters with updated interpretations of classic lopapeysa yokes, as well as chunky cable knits to keep you in style all winter (and autumn and spring ... and sometimes summer) long.

Previous Winners

2022: Handprjónasambandið
2021: Handprjónasambandið
2020: Handprjónasambandið

Best Grocery Store



Krónan

Skeifan 19, Fiskislóð 15-21 and Hallveigarstígur 1

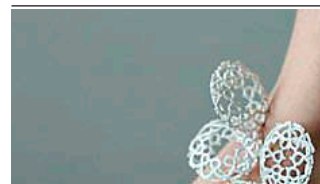
So here's the thing. The panel could not decide between three locations of the same store to crown "Best", so we're just going to go ahead and give it to the Skeifan, Grandi and downtown outposts of beloved grocery chain Krónan. That yellow winking coin makes us happy. What also makes us happy is Krónan's app that allows us to scan and bag our items as we walk around the store, pay right on our phone and then book it without waiting in line or wrestling with the self check-out machines.

Grandi's the biggest of the three and therefore has its wealth of options tipping the scales in its favour. The downtown location is, well, downtown, so it's perfect for popping in on the walk home for those last bits and pieces to make your dinner sing. As for the perks of the Skeifan location, one panellist explained: "Do your usual shopping, grab lunch at Tokyo Sushi in the back of the store and then realise that you're in Skeifan, so you can go get all the other shit done you've been meaning to do."

Previous Winners

2022: Krónan Hallveigarstígur
2021: Krónan Hallveigarstígur
2020: Krónan Grandi

Best Jewellery Store

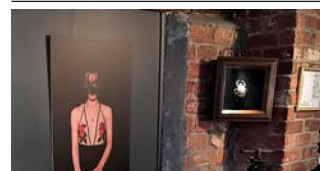


Aurum

Bankastræti 4

Aurum has consistently been crafting unique and inventive jewellery collections for decades and we are fans. Inspired by Icelandic nature, Aurum's creations have such range that you can find pieces to suit the exact mood you're trying to evoke. "The blend of subtle goth and raw nature is all one needs to get that boost of edginess for a night out," one panellist said. The breadth of each collection manages to capture the very essence of the animal or natural setting after which it's named. The cherry on top is that Aurum uses only recycled metals and ethical lab-grown diamonds, and their truly stunning packaging is crafted from sustainable mulberry paper.

Runners-up



Orrifinn Skólavörðustígur 43

Orrifinn has earned a loyal following for its raw and delicate jewellery. From their classic anchor design to their braided metal creations, Orrifinn sets its wearers apart as someone with on point accessories that transcend occasion. We also love that all Orrifinn jewellery is marketed as unisex, so everyone can mix and match and swap and look fabulous



Hildur Hafstein Klapparstígur 40

Hildur's Klapparstígur storefront is a vibe we want to envelop ourselves in. Luckily it's very much the same bohemian and eclectic feeling of her jewellery, so we can adorn ourselves with her earrings, necklaces and bracelets instead. Working with natural semi-precious stones and bronze, silver and gold, Hildur makes pieces that are eye-catching and fun. They're also great for layering to create a unique statement look.

Previous Winners

2022: Orrifinn
2021: Orrifinn
2020: Orrifinn

GUIDE

The Reykjavík Grapevine's Best Of Shopping Bag

Keep your spirits high as the darkness sets in with a little consumer therapy

Words: **Catharine Fulton** Photos: **The Internet**

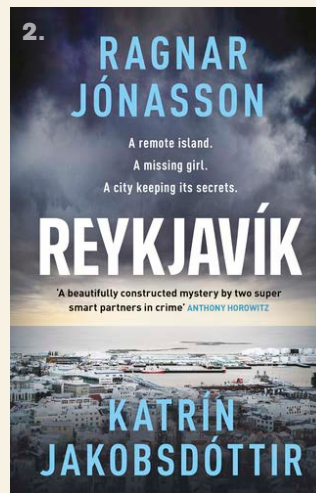
Can you believe it's autumn already? It feels like just yesterday we were filling our shopping bag with Icelandic designer goodies to augment our summer vacation. Now we're blowing our budget back-to-school shopping for the kids, looking ahead to the winter holiday gift-a-palooza and window shopping for some goodies to deliver a much needed serotonin boost as the summer days give way to long winter nights.

We've scoured the shelves of our certified Best™ places to shop in Reykjavík and put together this shopping bag that's a little for us, a little for loved ones and a lot for your own shopping inspo. Spend wisely, friends.

1.



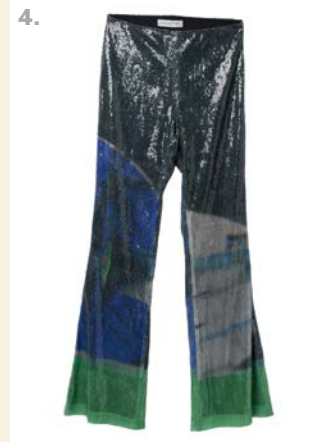
2.



3.



4.



1. Dark days mean more caffeine. Sip your morning coffee(s) in style from this **handmade mug** from Studio Alsber — 6.990 ISK — Available from Mikado, Kolagata in Hafnartorg
2. Lean into spooky season with a newly-translated **crime thriller** from Icelandic Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir (yes, really) and Ragnar Jónasson. **Reykjavík** — 3.295 ISK — Available from Bóksala Stúdentta, Sæmundargata 4
3. The winter holidays are fast approaching. Tell that special someone in your life that your love for them is eternal with an **18 carat gold Scarab necklace** from Orrifinn — 345.000 ISK — available from Orrifinn, Skólavörðustigur 43
4. A little sparkle will liven up the autumn months – and just imagine how gorgeous these sequins will look ruffling on your legs during the next orange weather warning. **Palliettu Pants** — 48.900 ISK — Available from KIOSK, Grandagarður 35



Buy bus tickets and plan your trips

Klappið is the official app for public buses in the Reykjavík capital area.

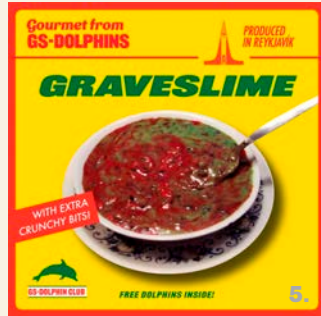
➔ Search for "Klappið" in the App Store or Google Play.



Multi-award winning **Tattoo** & Piercing Shop



5. If the autumn chill has you thinking about walks through haunted graveyards, then the tunes of **Graveslime** might just be for you. **Graveslime's Roughness and toughness LP** – 6.500 ISK – Available from Smekkleysa, Hverfisgata 32
6. Keep your main man (or yourself, gifting yourself is okay, too) toasty warm through the months ahead with this super cosy and stylish turtleneck. No Steve Jobs vibes. **Melar Turtleneck** – 21.500 ISK – Available from Farmers Market, Hólmaslóð 2 or Laugavegur 37
7. Tote tour tarts or just about anything else – at least anything smaller than a standard laptop – in a stylish canvas bag from Fischersund. We're kind setting you up with this one, because as soon as you go to Fischersund to buy this tote, you're going to smell all the beautiful things in the store and walk away with your tote full of other goodies. **Fischersund Tote Bag** – 1.500 ISK – Available at Fischersund, Fischersund 3
8. You know what makes an excellent stocking stuffer? Skivvies. These ones from ORG are tag-free, logo-free and 95% organic cotton to keep your giftee's package pampered. **Colourful Standard Classic Organic Boxer Briefs** – 2.990 ISK – Available from ORG, Laugavegur 46





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