

Ísafjörður

Ísafjörður literally means Ice Fjord, which feels quite fitting during the winter months but maybe less so during the bright summers.

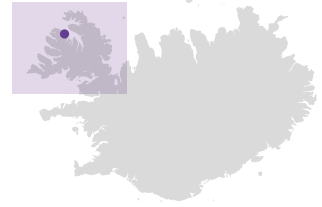


Photo: Ísafjarðarbær

Old town charm embraced by mountains

Welcome to Ísafjörður, the largest town in the Westfjords. Despite having fewer than 3.000 inhabitants the metropolitan feel is unmistakable. Some say that this is because isolation has forced the inhabitants to become culturally self-sufficient and visitors quickly notice that Ísafjörður offers a rich cultural life. The town has, for example, two music schools, an active arts society, an amateur theatre, and numerous choirs.

In the not-so-distant past, almost everybody's livelihood depended on fish and the question was not whether you worked in the fishing industry, but whether you did so on land or at sea. With advances in technology, that pattern changed and more and more of the workforce were employed in related branches, such as machinery services, development of high-tech equipment, fish farming, transport, and other logistical aspects of the industry. The service sector has also become quite big in Ísafjörður. Ísafjörður has schools at all levels from kindergarten to university, it also has a hospital and offices for various government institutions. In recent years, tourism has been the fastest growing industry in the northern part of the Westfjords. Thus, the economy of Ísafjörður offers opportunities for people with various backgrounds and education.

We hope you enjoy taking a stroll around town, maybe even a small hike in the stunning nature. Feel free to chat with locals and pop into a cafe, restaurant or bakery to try some local delicacies.

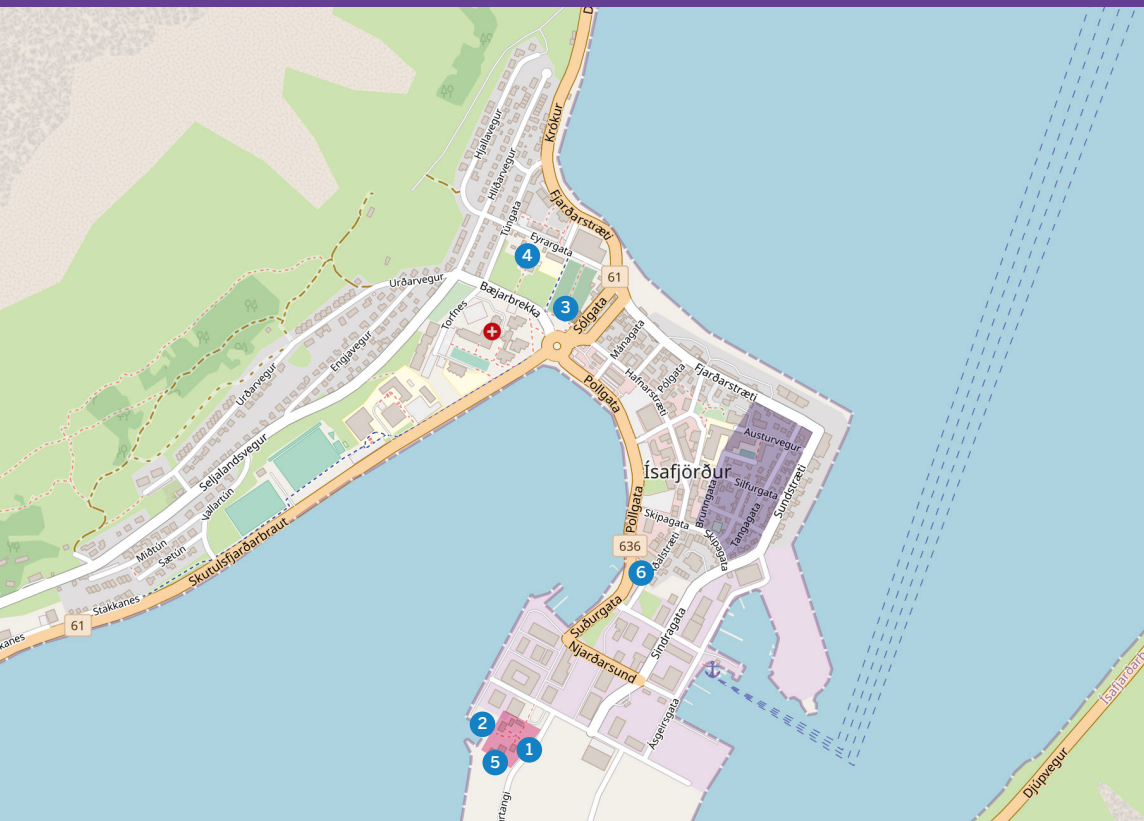
Interesting places

Visit the library and culture house (which used to be a hospital). There is usually an art exhibition on the 1st floor. On your way back down Hafnarstræti, you can go into the town church and have a look at the altar, which consists of 749 clay birds made by the people of the parish.

Neðstikaupstaður is a group of 18th century buildings down by the harbor. One of the houses is home to the Westfjords Heritage Museum where you can get a unique insight into the rich history and culture of the area.

Nature

Ísafjörður is surrounded by steep and picturesque mountains. Trails have been set up around town for hikers and bikers to get around easily and safely, both on the lowland and up in the hills. You can get a free hiking map of the fjord at the Information Office by the harbor.



PLACES TO GO

- 1 Tourist Information Office
 - 2 Westfjords Heritage Museum
 - 3 Church
 - 4 Culture House / Library
 - 5 6 Public toilets
- Old town area
- Museum area

Guidelines

- The Ísafjörður harbor is a lively place all year round. Not all streets in this part of town have sidewalks so please keep to the sides of the road and be careful not to get in the way of people working in the area.
- A stroll around the old town in Ísafjörður is highly recommended. The houses there are frequently mistaken for museum buildings so please note that they are private homes. Kindly avoid entering them (unless you are invited, of course) or taking pictures through the doors and windows.
- Many of the streets in the old town are narrow one-way streets. Although traffic is usually quite slow, please be mindful of oncoming cars and bikes and keep to the sidewalks as much as possible.
- Please remember that our nature is fragile and in the harsh arctic climate it may take decades for any damage to be repaired. We also take pride in our clean environment so kindly remember to bring all your litter back with you. When hiking in the nature, remember not to leave any lasting signs of your visit.
- Craft stores and art galleries can be found in all the towns and villages in the area. It is highly appreciated when visitors pay a visit to find unique souvenirs hand made by locals.
- The children in town frequently play outside in the playgrounds. Please do not take pictures of them without permission from an adult.



Photo: Ísafjardarbær

The church is usually open to visitors on weekdays and well worth a visit. Have a look at the altar centerpiece, which consists of 749 clay birds made by the people of the parish.



Photo: Ísafjardarbær

In the center of town, you will find a charming little area that we usually refer to as the "Old Town". Most of the houses there were built in the late 19th century, which is considered very old here in Iceland.



Photo: Ísafjardarbær

Ísafjörður is host to one of Iceland's best known music festivals, Aldrei fór ég suður, which takes place during Easter, and an international film festival, PIFF, in the autumn.