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Boat and gift of nature exhibition

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ATTRACTIONS

1 Ísafjörður N66° 4' 29.962" W23° 7' 31.437"

Ísafjörður is an attraction in itself. "A cosmopolitan oasis" according to the Lonely Planet guide book. Take their word for it. Ísafjörður is the tourist hub, the place where many a tourist stocks up and takes the last look at the map before venturing into a trek in Hornstrandir wilderness.



Gourmands have a choice of places. The hotel in town has a seasonal variety of local delicacies such as puffins and whales, while the accolade restaurant Tjörnhúsið at the maritime museum is all about fish. There is no menu; the waiter just tells guests the fish offered, depending on what the fishermen caught earlier in the day.

Also, Ísafjörður hosts an impressive array of events, many of whom are world famous. Take the Aldrei fór ég suður music festival, held at Easter, and the European Championship in Swamp Soccer, held in early August. In the latter, a few hundred mad and glad people come together for a muddy competition in dirty tricks.

2 Suðureyri N66° 7' 48.644" W23° 31' 46.889"

The Eco-Friendly Fishing Village
A large fleet of small boats sails from the harbor to rich fishing grounds nearby all year round. Fishing methods include long-lines and hand-lines and the catch is processed as soon as it is landed. Fancy a guided tour-around a hi-tech fish processing plant or go out with the fishing boats?



Suðureyri fishermen strive to practice sustainable, environmentally friendly fishing in complete harmony with nature. By doing this they ensure their own future and their children's future. The village enjoys a supply of geothermal hot water and a hydroelectric power station that provides the residents of the fjord with green electricity. This is how the residents of Suðureyri want to see their village develop. Every visitor should take the opportunity to enjoy some of the village's products in local restaurants. This traditional yet eco-conscious fishing village is a pioneering model that welcomes visitors into the daily work routines of Icelandic life. These are the kinds of authentic cross-cultural experiences you're unlikely to forget.

3 Látrabjarg cliffs N65° 30' 8.760" W24° 31' 46.749"

The cliffs of all cliffs, Látrabjarg, are home to birds in unfathomable numbers. This westernmost point of Iceland (and Europe if the Azores are not counted) is really a line of several cliffs, 14 kilometres long and up to 441 km high. And it's as steep as it gets, dizzyingly so. Safe from foxes, the birds are fearless, and provide stunning photographic opportunities from close range. Bird photography for dummies, you might say. The puffins are particularly tame and are the ones frequenting the grassy, higher part of the cliffs. But look out, the edges are fragile and loose and the fall is high.



Látrabjarg is thus deservedly the most visited tourist attraction in the Westfjords. The cliffs are easily accessible by car and when you're there, a walk along the cliffs awaits. The whirling sensation will not fade, and neither will the memories. Látrabjarg is on the National Geographic's top-10 list for the best ocean views in the world.

4 Dynjandi waterfall N65° 44' 11.214" W23° 12' 31.185"

Simply enthralling: The Westfjords' favourite front-page model for decades, and is never short of breathtaking. The biggest and widest part of the waterfall is the one that gets all the attention and the photos, even though there are impressive, albeit smaller, waterfalls further down the river. In fact, one is formed in such a way that the brave can walk behind it, relatively dry. There is a camping place at the site with basic services. There are guided tours available from Ísafjörður and Patreksfjörður for those wanting a little extra.



To enjoy, follow this simple step-by-step manual. 1. Stop your car at the parking lot. 2. Walk all the way up to the biggest part of the waterfall, it takes about 15 minutes. 3. Take a deep breath and enjoy the surroundings. 4. Whenever ready, go back down to the car. 5. Tick off this article and continue working through the check-list.

5 Dýrafjörður and surroundings

Dýrafjörður was the Westfjords' most important centre of trade for many centuries, attracting merchants and fishermen from all around Europe and the USA. In the 19th century, the French government even sought to establish its own colony there. Although Dýrafjörður has now lost its former status as a trade-centre, it still attracts visitors from all around the world, people who come there to enjoy its unique nature and tranquility. The village Þingeyri, in Dýrafjörður, is the home to some 260 people. It offers all necessary services to travelers, including a horse rental, a chance to sail onboard a Viking ship and you might also want to visit the Old Blacksmith's Workshop.



Þingeyri is nestled under the beautiful mountains often referred to as the "Westfjords' Alps". There you will find Kaldbakur, the highest mountain in the Westfjords area. On the peninsula between Dýrafjörður and Amarfjörður, the rough jeep road Svalvogar offers breathtaking views, but it is not for the faint hearted to drive, there are several companies offering jeep tours around this beautiful peninsula. Hiking, biking or horseback riding along Svalvogar is also very popular. On the northern shore of Dýrafjörður you will find Skrúður, Iceland's oldest botanical garden.

6 Amarfjörður

Amarfjörður is one of the largest and most spectacular fjords in Iceland. It is surrounded by steep mountains and valleys that create strong appearance and mystique. The fjord is famous for its beautiful landscape and has fostered renowned personalities and artists.



Everyone can find something of interest in Amarfjörður;- be it running on the yellow sand in Ketildalur, viewing the artworks of Samúel Jónsson in Selárdalur, the waterfall Dynjandi, visiting the Jón Sigurðsson Museum at Hrafnseyri or learning about monsters at the Sea Monster museum.

7 Vigur Island Pop. 2

Puffins, eiders, guillemots and arctic terns are this island's magnets, and they are all abundant. Indeed, as the puffins, which nest in burrows, have dug through much of the island's soil, travellers have to follow a certain path to avoid falling into one. This small bird, by some dubbed the penguin of the north, is a clumsy flier but impresses visitors by artfully stacking its beak full of sand eel or small fish, carrying it home to its hungry chicks. Being the opposite of the hospitable humans that live on the island, the Arctic terns fight to keep intruders away. Luckily, a



stick to the shore to head the trick. Eiders have a mutual beneficence; eiders get protection by nesting in close vicinity of the people, who collect the precious down from the eider nests. One of the every day events is when locals feed a group of orphan eider chicks. In Vigur you find the smallest post office in Iceland, as well as the only windmill and beautifully renewed houses. Since an end was put to milk production on Vigur island, the inhabitants spend much of the winter preparing the eider down, collected over the summer, for export. To get to Vigur, there is a daily boat tour from Ísafjörður.

8 Hornstrandir

This territory of the Arctic fox has been uninhabited since the 1950s. As isolated as it was then, it attracts the casual half-day visitors and serious gore-text hikers alike. Its main attractions are three. First, the bird cliffs surrounding the bay of Hornvík, are a magnet of gigantic proportions. On the eastern side of the bay the cliff reaches a height of more than 500 metres, and the birds are teeming. Second, as there are no infrastructure and the tourists few in relation to the sheer size of the area, the sense of remoteness is strong. You can hike days on end without seeing a single person. The nature is pure and the tranquility unmatched. Third, as the area is a haven for the Arctic fox (think hunting-ban and bird-packed cliffs), the chances of spotting one are high. Boat tours depart from Ísafjörður, Bolungarvík and Norðurfjörður.



9 Árnesheppur N66° 0' 40.068" W21° 30' 24.627"

Árnesheppur is one of the smallest communities in Iceland, but comprises a large area. The inhabitants earn their income by raising sheep, but in recent years, tourism has grown in importance. Stunning landscape, proximity to the natural elements and rich fauna are the area's main attractions. Additionally, the area and community are steeped in history, such as of the Icelandic sagas, witch-hunts, herring adventures and folklore. A boat connects Norðurfjörður to Hornstrandir, perfect for hikers and those who want to marvel the area from the sea. Tourism has in the last few years seen a remarkable upswing. Now, travelers can camp in several places and choose from a variety of other accommodation choices. Kaffi Norðurfjörður (you guessed it, kaffi is both café and coffee) and Hótel Djúpvík offer an array of local food. In Djúpvík, a herring factory closed down in the 50's has been honored by an exhibition about its history. At Kört, local handicrafts and history are combined. Other services are available as well, such as a grocery store, a filling station and a unique swimming pool by the seaside.



10 Reykhólar N65° 26' 44.849" W22° 12' 25.830"

The small village of Reykhólar is truly a paradise for bird-watchers. Surrounded by the sea and coast on one hand; and wetland, meadow, grassland, and cliffs on the other, Reykhólar is an ideal dwelling for numerous species of birds. It is believed that up to 60 different species can be spotted in the Reykhólar area during the summer time, including the king of birds – the white tailed eagle. Reykhólar is located on a small peninsula on the northern shore of the bay Breiðafjörður. The bay has countless small islands and skerries which are homes to a large population of sea birds. Some of the islands also have natural, geothermal hot-pots where visitors are allowed to bathe. Visitors can enjoy the rich bird life of Reykhólar simply by walking around the area. Boat tours to the islands of Breiðafjörður depart from just outside the village.



11 Hesteyri N66° 20' 7.765" W22° 53' 32.780"

A visit to Hesteyri is an unforgettable experience. There rests a deserted village, fathomed by a wood of angelicas. It is magical to stroll around the sand spit and enjoy the unexpected wonders that pass before your eyes. The last inhabitants moved from Hesteyri around 1950 but before that there was a busy lifestyle due to the whaling station which was built in 1894. At Hesteyri you can find historical ruins and unspoiled nature at its best all year round. At Hesteyri you can buy coffee, food and accommodations. Scheduled boat trips go from Ísafjörður (60 min) and Bolungarvík (50 min). The boat trip is a great journey with an unusual sightseeing of mountains and glaciers and a good chance of seeing whales rise close up to the boat.



12 Ísafjarðardjúp

When visiting the Westfjords of Iceland, chances are you will be driving through some of the 8 fjords of Ísafjarðardjúp, fjord system, so it truly puts the "fjords" in your Westfjords adventure. Amongst all the natural wonders of the area such as Hvitanes seal colony, Reykjanes geothermal area and the historical location Litliþær you will find a small community of 190 people, most based in the phoenix village of Súðavík. The village was rebuilt by its residents after a tragic avalanche in 1995. The "old" village is now used as a holiday area for families, friends and travelers between May-October. Raggagarður Family Park, the Arctic Fox Centre, numerous walking and hiking paths make Súðavík and Ísafjarðardjúp a family friendly retreat for those looking to relax and enjoy life.



13 Vatnsfjörður Nature Reserve N65° 34' 34.804" W23° 10' 6.519"

Iceland owes its name to Hrafn-Flóki or Raven-Flóki. After a long navigation from Norway, he took land in Vatnsfjörður. Seeing the surrounding Breiðafjörður Bay full of ice, he announced that this place should be called Iceland. Lakes and ponds are numerous in the Nature reserve. Lake Vatnsdalvatn is the largest, with an area of two square kilometers. Approximately 20 species of birds inhabit the nature reserve. Both mice, Arctic foxes and mink roam the area but seals are easier to spot, because they like to laze about sunbathing on the reefs by Hörgnes peninsula. There are numerous hiking trails in the area and you can take a walk along the shores and enjoy a dip in the memorable natural pool down by the sea. There is a hotel at Flókalandur with a restaurant, gas-station, swimming pool and camping ground.



14 The WaterTrail - Pure - Wild - Wellness

The WaterTrail (Vatnavinir Vestjarða) leads you along tourist destinations, with natural geothermal pools and hot springs. In these places in the Westfjords, sustainable wellness tourism is being developed. The WaterTrail is in the process of building new and preserving old natural hot springs in rural locations with emphasis on the therapeutic effects of thermal baths. The Westfjords have many hidden gems, among them plenty of natural or partially man-made hot springs in remote locations. The abundance of natural warm water and a rich history have created a unique outdoor bathing culture in direct contact with nature. The origin of the bathing pools is geothermal water that flows directly and constantly from the ground. In summer our visitors can enjoy the romantic midnight sun in the wilderness, and in winter lying in a warm pool watching the northern

lights are also an unforgettable experience. The perfect travel adventure is when thermal bathing is integrated and enriched with culture and outdoor activities in natural environment. Keep an eye on us at www.watertail.is.

15 Rauðasandur N65° 28' 27.895" W23° 57' 36.232"

Rauðasandur, (Red Sand), is precisely that: a beach with endless Rauðasandur, (Red Sand), is precisely that: a beach with endless red sand. Well, not endless, but 10 km is a lot. The magnificent hues of the sand differ with daylight and weather, and the beach is the biggest pearl in a string of coves with sand ranging in colours from white through yellow through red to black, and in coarseness from very fine to sole-hurting chips of seashells. Just pure sand enlivened by countless seabirds and seals, an oasis with unique tranquility. Forget everything, except maybe getting the perfect shot of the ever-changing hues of yellow, orange and red.



Here's just pure sand and unique tranquility. You might want to step out of the car, get the camera out and start walking on the seemingly endless beach. If not, why not enjoy a cup of coffee in the French café and look at the spectacular view were Snæfellsjökull glacier in Snæfellsnes peninsula imperiously rivets your attention in the background.

HOW TO GET TO THE WESTFJORDS

Detailed updated information is available on www.westfjords.is or via phone +354 450 8060.

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To Ísafjörður
Two flights per day all year. **Air Iceland** www.airiceland.is
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To Bíldudalur

Six flights per week from Reykjavík. Valid all year. **Eagle Air** www.eagleair.is
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By car:

Reykjavík-Hólmavík: 233 km (233 km asphalt, 0 km gravel)
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Reykjavík-Ísafjörður A: 455 km (455 km asphalt, 0 km gravel)
Reykjavík-Hvítfjörður (tunnel)-Borgarnes-Brattabrekka (road 60)-Búðardalur-Flókalandur-Kleifarheiði (road 62)-Patreksfjörður.

Reykjavík-Ísafjörður B: 455 km (337 asphalt, 118 gravel)
Reykjavík-Hvítfjörður (tunnel)-Borgarnes-Brattabrekka (road 60)-Búðardalur-Bjarkalandur-Flókalandur-Dynandi Waterfall-Þingeyri-Ísafjörður.

Road Administration Information Line, tel: (+354) 1777
www.vegagerdin.is/english

Important: This information is valid for summer only, as some roads might be closed during other seasons. If driving to the Westfjords during autumn, winter or spring, please contact the Road Administration or Westfjords Tourist Information Office for information on open roads and road conditions.

By bus:

Reykjavík-Hólmavík-Ísafjörður (connection to Akureyri). All year. See www.westfjords.is.

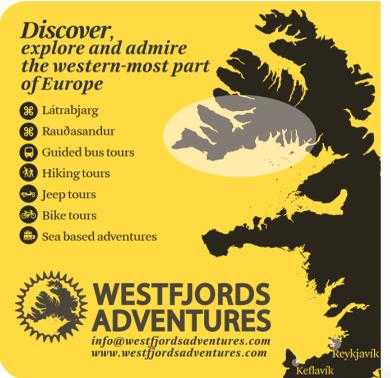
Reykjavík-Sykkishölmur-Brjánslækur-Patreksfjörður (connection to Látrabjarg during summer). All year. See www.westfjords.is.

Ísafjörður-Brjánslækur (connection to ferry Baldur and bus to Patreksfjörður/Látrabjarg). May 15 to September 15. See www.westfjords.is.

By ferry:
The car ferry Baldur operates between Sykkishölmur, Flatey and Brjánslækur. Summer two departures per day (June 5 to August 23). Winter: one departure daily, except Saturdays. See www.seators.is.

16 Swimming pools

Public swimming pools can be found in almost every town and village of the Westfjords. Opening hours are usually long, the entrance cheap and more often than not there is a hot tub or two for those who prefer relaxing to swimming. Natural pools can also be found all over in the region, most of them free of charge. A strict etiquette applies in the public pools of Iceland. Guests are required to wash thoroughly without swimsuits before and after entering the swimming pools. These rules can usually be bent when bathing in the natural pools though, as these often lack both changing rooms and showers.



17 Grimsey Island

Grimsey island is the jewel of Steingrímsfjörður, located virtually at the doorsteps of the village Drangnes. Grimsey is a bird paradise. Its signature bird is the Puffin as the island has one of the most dense Puffin colony in Iceland. There are some 31.000 nesting holes, home to about 75.000 individuals. Among other birds that thrive on Grimsey are Shag, Arctic Tern, Black Guillemot, Razorbill and Northern Fulmar which all together with the Puffin create an extraordinary symphony of birdlife. There is a daily boat tour available from Drangnes to Grimsey and it takes only 10 minutes to sail to the island.



18 The Garden Skrúður

The Garden Skrúður holds an important place in the Icelandic history of gardening. Skrúður is a vegetable garden on the shore of one of the Westfjords of Iceland, close to the Arctic Circle. Laid out on an incline facing south-west towards the Dýrafjörður inlet, it is backed by a grim chain of glacier-eroded mountains. Beside it stand a church and the guesthouse Njúpur. The garden was opened in 1909, the brain-child of the Reverend Sigtryggur Guðlaugsson (1862-1959) who, with his brother Kristinn, had started a school at Njúpur a few years earlier. In 2013 Skrúður won the International Carlo Scarpa Prize for Gardens, awarded by the Benetton Foundation since 1990, possibly the world's only prize awarded to locations.



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Layout: Pjet ehf / GIBG

Please have in mind: The majority of the road system in the Westfjords are paved roads. Nevertheless there are gravel roads to be found throughout the region. These roads are maintained all summer long by the Icelandic Road Administration and are kept in good condition. Please contact the Icelandic Road Administration (tel. 1777) to ensure the roads conditions.

Useful websites: www.road.is & www.safetour.is



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