

ATTRACTIONS

1 Ísafjörður
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, and places where many a tourist stocks up and take 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, Tjórúhuóið 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.



Road 61

2 Suðureyri
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 rituals of Icelandic life. These are the kinds of authentic cross-cultural experiences you're unlikely to forget.



Road 65

3 Látrabjarg cliffs
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.



Road 612

4 Dynjandi waterfall
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. 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. (?) 4. Whenever ready, go back down to the car. 5. Tick off this article and continue working through the check-list.



Road 60

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 and a chance to sail onboard a Viking ship. 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 Kjárnsbraut offers breathtaking views, but it is not for the faint hearted to drive. Hiking, biking or horseback riding along this road is also very popular. On the northern shore of Dýrafjörður you will find Skúrdú, Iceland's oldest botanical garden.



Road 60

6 Flatey Island
Beautifully kept old houses in cheerful colours line the dusty path through the settlement of Flatey island. Walk through it, and at the end of the settlement, the path becomes even narrower and more crooked, taking you through a dense population of birds, consisting mainly of Arctic terns. Two families stay on the island throughout the winter, but many more migrate during the summer, mainly for leisure but also to serve tourists. In a charming way, it feels very much like a movie set. And so it is. Many movies are set on the island, most notably The Honour of the House based on a short story by Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness, White Night Wedding, a movie by Baltasar Kormákur and Ninni og Manni. In fact, Baltasar's father painted the unusual altar piece in the island's church, making it worthy of a visit. In summertime, a ferry goes to Flatey twice a day from Stykkishólmur and Brjánslækur, and, albeit less frequently, a passenger boat offers connection to Reykhólar.



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 held above the head does the trick. Eiders and humans share a mutual beneficence; eiders get protection by nesting in close vicinity of the people, who collect the precious down of the eider nests. One of the every day event 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 renovated houses. Since an eel 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-tex 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 tranquillity unmatched. Third, as the area is a haven for the Arctic fox (trick hunting-ban and bird-packed cliffs), the chances of spotting one are high. Boat tours depart from Ísafjörður, Bolungarvík and Norðurfjörður.



9 Árneshreppur
Árneshreppur 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 Djúpavík offer an array of local food. In Djúpavík, 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.



Road 643

10 Reykhólar
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.



Road 607

11 Hesteyri
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 Heydalur
Heydalur is a 6 km long valley in Mjói-fjörður in Ísafjarðardjúpi. In further days the story tells that 12 farmers were living in the valley. The oldest ruins tell us that the valley has been an inhabited area since before the year 1100. Now there is only the farm hotel left in the middle of a beautiful surrounding countryside with a river, waterfall, bushy hillsides, mountains, fjords and the shore full of wildlife and flora. On the other side of the river Heydalsá there is a hot spot from ancient time. The story tells that the bishop Gudmundur the Good blessed this hot spot in the 12th century and that many sick people have been cured after a visit here. At Heydalur you will also find hot springs which are used for an indoor swimming pool and original outdoor hot spots where you may relax after the many possible outdoor activities and before a luxury dinner. Each season in Heydalur has a charm. The spring when you can follow the green colour and the birds coming, the summer with the bright nights full of life, the autumn with the beautiful colour and all the blueberries, the winter with the northern lights and snow.



Road 633

13 Flókalandur in Vatnsfjörður Nature Reserve
Iceland owes its name to Hrafná-Floki or Raven-Floki. 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 Vatnsdalsvatn 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 Hörgsnes 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.



Road 62

14 The WaterTrail - Pure - Wild - Wellness
The WaterTrail (Vatnavinir Vestfjarða) leads you along tourist destinations, with natural geothermal pools and hot springs. In these hungry chicks. Being the opposite of the hospitable humans that live

Here's just pure sand and unique tranquillity. 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.

15 Rauðasandur
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.



Road 614

NÝTT - NEW

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HOW TO GET TO THE WESTFJORDS

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

By plane
The quickest way to get to the Westfjords is by air, the flight from Reykjavik taking roughly 40-50 minutes, depending on the destination.
Air Iceland - www.flugfelag.is
Two daily flights to Ísafjörður all year round.
Fly-Bus (airport-Ísafjörður-Bolungarvík)
Valdimar Lúðvík Gíslason, tel: 892-1417
Eagle Air Iceland - www.eagleair.is
Two flights per week from Reykjavik to Gjógur and six flights per week to Bíldudalur.
Fly-Bus (airport-Bíldudalur-Tálknafjörður-Patreksfjörður)
Tóti Andrésson tel: 893-2636

By car
Reykjavik to Patreksfjörður - 400km total, 331 km of paved road: Reykjavik - Hvalfjörður (tunnel) - Brattabrekka (road 60) - Svinadalur - Barðaströnd (road 60) - Flókalandur - Kleiðheiði - Patreksfjörður.
Reykjavik to Ísafjörður - 455 km, paved road: Reykjavik - Hvalfjörður (tunnel) - Borgarnes - Brattabrekka (road 60) - Svinadalur - Arnkötuldalur (road 61) - Steingrímsfjarðarheiði - Ísafjarðardjúpi - Ísafjörður.
Reykjavik to Hólmavík - 233 km total, 233 km of paved road: Reykjavik - Hvalfjörður (tunnel) - Brattabrekka (road 60) - Svinadalur - Arnkötuldalur (road 61).

By bus
A public bus service runs between Reykjavik and Ísafjörður with connection to Akureyri.
All year:
Reykjavik-Hólmavík and vice versa.
For schedules and stops see www.straeto.is.
June, July & August:
Reykjavik-Stykkishólmur-Brjánslækur (with ferry Baldur)-Ísafjörður and vice versa. Connection to Patreksfjörður and Látrabjarg.
Reykjavik-Hólmavík-Ísafjörður and vice versa.
For schedules and stops see www.sterna.is.

By boat
The car ferry Baldur operates between Stykkishólmur, Flatey and Brjánslækur. Summer: two departures per day from June 10th to August 26th. Winter: One departure every day, except Saturdays. Visit www.seatours.is for more information.

SKYRINGAR LEGENDS

* These roads are open during the summer. For other information contact the Icelandic Road Administration tel. 1777

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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 doorstep 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 colonies 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.



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Please have in mind:
This map is designed to help finding travel services in the Westfjords.
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.roadnet.is

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