

The Westfjords



Flung out into the North Atlantic and almost set adrift from the rest of the country, the region known as the Westfjords is one of Iceland's most spectacular. Sparsely populated, fantastically rugged, and isolated by its remote location and limited roads, the Westfjords is an outdoor adventurer's dream destination. The landscape here is truly humbling, ranging from soaring mountains and unfathomably deep and silent fjords to a tortuous coastline dotted with tiny fishing villages clinging doggedly to a traditional way of life.

To the north lies the uninhabited wilderness region of Hornstrandir, home to the 176-sq-km Drangajökull (925m), the last surviving icecap in the region. Abandoned by the last villagers in the 1950s, Hornstrandir is now one of the country's premier hiking destinations. South of here lies the region's largest town, the cosmopolitan oasis of Ísafjörður. A friendly, happening mini-metropolis, it's the place to stock up and indulge before heading for the small villages that line the coast.

Unassuming, determined and often staunchly traditional, these smaller communities have suffered serious population decline in recent years. Many struggle to persuade their young people to stay and offer a warm welcome to the tourists who bring valuable income and energy to their quiet streets. Further south, nesting birds mob the cliffs at Látrabjarg, waves lash the golden sands at Breiðavík, and craggy inlets and precipitous peaks vie for your attention at every turn.

Give yourself plenty of time for a trip to the Westfjords. The roads around the coast weave in and out of fjords and over unpaved mountain passes pitted with giant potholes. The going is frustratingly slow at times, but the scenery is never short of breathtaking.

TOP FIVE

- Get to know the locals at the small fishing village of **Suðureyri** (p176)
- Soak up the wild serenity of the Strandir Coast at **Djúpavík** (p193)
- Watch the comic antics of the puffins on the cliffs at **Látrabjarg** (p172)
- Catch the first glimpse of the coast after a strenuous hike across **Hornstrandir** (p194)
- Splash out on anything that isn't a hostel- or camp site-cooked meal in cosmopolitan and isolated **Ísafjörður** (p177)



Information

Tourist offices in the region provide invaluable free *Vestfirðir* pamphlets, which list all the tourist facilities in the area. More information about the Westfjords can be found at www.westfjords.is.

Getting There & Away

There are twice-daily flights between Reykjavík and Ísafjörður (Íkr10,500) with **Air Iceland** (☎ 570 3030; www.airiceland.is), and additional summer flights to Gjógv and Bíldudalur.

Roads in the Westfjords are mostly unsurfaced and heavily rutted, and they hug the deeply indented coastline, winding in and out of fjords and around headlands, so getting about can be very slow. Public bus services are

limited and infrequent, and most only run from June to August.

Coming from Reykjavík to Ísafjörður you'll need to change in Brú (further south, in west Iceland) and Hólmavík. Buses leave Reykjavík for Brú at 8.30am and 5.30pm, but they only connect with the Brú–Hólmavík service on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday; Reykjavík–Hólmavík costs Íkr4900. The bus company **Stjörnubílar** (☎ 456 3518, 893 6356; www.stjornubilar.is) runs the Hólmavík–Ísafjörður leg (Íkr4000), at 3pm on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday.

Buses also run to the Westfjords via the ferry from Stykkishólmur. There are daily buses from Reykjavík to Stykkishólmur (see p160), but these don't link well with the ferry – you'll have a few hours to look round, or even

an overnight stop. For information on buses between Brjánslækur and Ísafjörður (via Látrabjarg), see p172.

If you want to travel between Ísafjörður and Akureyri, you'll also need to change in Hólmavík and Brú.

The car ferry **Baldur** (☎ 438 1450; www.seatours.is; per car/passenger one way Íkr2190/2190) operates between Stykkishólmur and Brjánslækur (2¼ hours). From June to August there are daily departures from Stykkishólmur at 9am and 3pm, returning from Brjánslækur at noon and 6pm. From September to May it leaves Stykkishólmur at 1.30pm Sunday to Friday and at 9am on Saturday, and from Brjánslækur it leaves at 5pm Sunday to Friday and 12.30pm on Saturday.

Boat transfers to the remote Hornstrandir region can be arranged from Ísafjörður and Drangsnæs from June to August.

SOUTH COAST

The sparsely populated south coast of the Westfjords is the least dramatic of the region, and it's nowhere near as wild and wonderful as the wilderness areas further north and west. However, the ferry connection to Stykkishólmur on the Snæfellsnes peninsula is a handy route to the area. Although there are no towns on the south coast, you'll find a cluster of farms and guesthouses around Brjánslækur, the landing point for the ferry, and the drive west and north from here is lined with white-sand beaches before rising into the mountain passes that take you to the western fjords.

REYKHÓLAR & BJARKALUNDUR

The little town of Reykhólar sits on the tip of the kidney-shaped Reykjanes peninsula, a minor geothermal area. There's little to do here other than take a dip in the **geothermal swimming pool** (☎ 434 7738; 10am–10pm Jun–Aug, reduced hr rest of year) or take to the surrounding hills on foot.

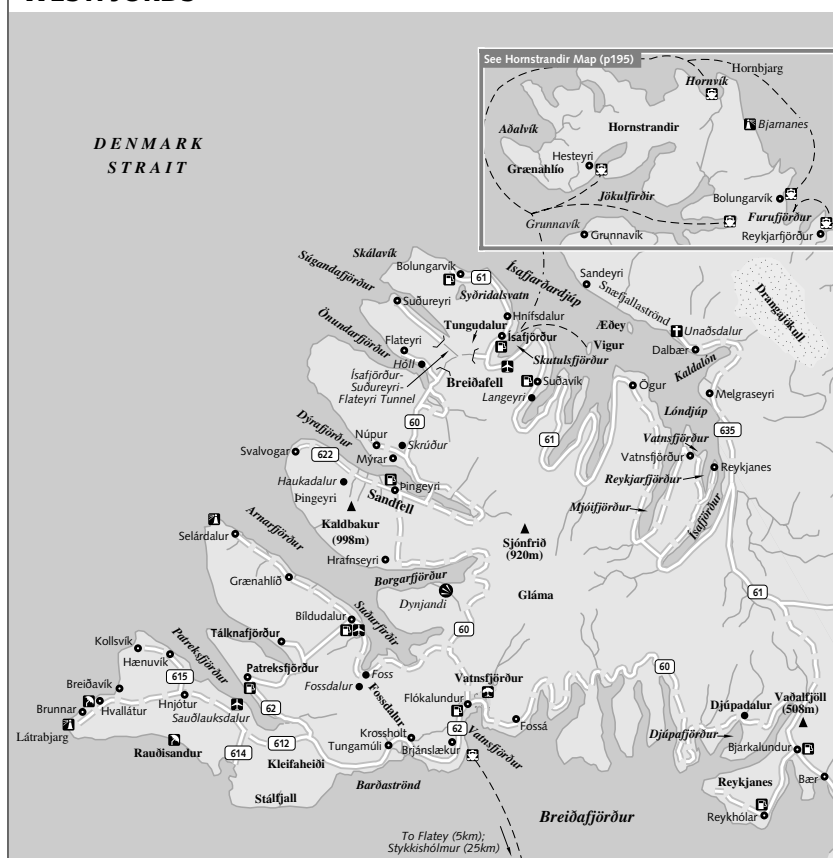
In summer a small **tourist office** is open (☎ 434 7830; 10am–noon & 2–6pm Jun–mid-Aug), and staff can help with route planning for hikes. The hiking map *Gönguleiðir Reykhólasveit* (Íkr300) is also useful. The tiny village of Bjarkalundur on Rte 60 near the beginning of the peninsula is the starting point for hikes to the peak of Vaðalfjöll (508m).

There's a basic **camp site** (☎ 434 7738; sites per person Íkr600) near the swimming pool, and more comfortable accommodation at **Gistiheimilið Álftaland** (☎ 434 7878; www.alfतालand.is; sb/s/d Íkr3000/6500/8200; ☎). The rooms here are simple but comfortable, and there's a sauna, hot pots and a good kitchen available for use by guests.

At Bjarkalundur you can stay at **Hótel Bjarkalundur** (☎ 434 7863; www.bjarkalundur.is; sb Íkr2000, s/d incl breakfast Íkr4900/7100; ☎; Easter–Sep, then weekends to New Year), a large farmhouse with a petrol station, a restaurant (mains Íkr900 to Íkr1750) and reasonably priced rooms.

The only other food option is the supermarket and snack bar **Árnhöll** (☎ 434 7890; snacks Íkr400–900) at the petrol station in Reykhólar.

WESTFJORDS



Getting There & Away

Buses run between Reykjavík and Reykhólar (Ikr4800, four hours), via Króksfjarðarnes (west Iceland) on Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. There's no bus service between Bjarkalundur and Brjánslækur.

DJÚPADALUR

Heading west, you'll come to the hot springs and steaming vents of the Djúpadalur geothermal field, 20km west of Bjarkalundur. There's an indoor **thermal swimming pool** (☎ 434 7853; adult/under 14yr Ikr250/100) here and good accommodation at the welcoming **Guesthouse Djúpadalur** (☎ 434 7853; sb/made-up bed Ikr1700/2500).

FLÓKALUNDUR

The tiny village of Flókalundur was named after the Viking explorer Hrafna-Flóki Vilgerðarson (see p25), who gave Iceland its name in AD 860. Today, the most interesting thing in the area is the **Vatnsfjörður Nature Reserve**, established to protect the area around Lake Vatnsdalsvatn, a nesting site for harlequin ducks and red-throated and great northern divers (loons). Various hiking trails run around the lake and into the hills beyond.

You can stay at **Hótel Flókalundur** (☎ 456 2011; www.flokalundur.is; sites per tent/caravan Ikr1000/1500, s/d incl breakfast Ikr8800/11,700; ☹ Jun–mid-Sep), an aging wooden bungalow-style hotel with small, wood-pannelled rooms, a decent restaurant (mains Ikr1200 to Ikr2950) and a petrol station. Down the road at Flókauga is a **thermal swimming pool** (☎ 456 2011; adult/under 12yr Ikr200/100; ☹ 7am–noon & 4–7pm), managed by the hotel.

BRJÁNSLÆKUR

There's nothing much at Brjánslækur except the terminal for the **Baldur** ferry to Stykkishólmur and Flatey and some turf-covered 9th-century ruins just to the south.

If you get stuck here overnight there's a basic **camp site** (☎ 456 2020; sites per tent Ikr700) opposite the ferry landing. About 8km west, opposite a lovely white-sand beach, you can stay at **Gisti-húsið Rauðsdal** (☎ 456 2041; raudsdal@vortex.is; sb/made-up bed Ikr2000/2600), which has decent rooms and a guest kitchen.

At Krossholt, 14km west of Brjánslækur, you'll find **Gistiheimilið Bjarkarholt** (☎ 456 2025; torfi@vestferdir.is; sb Ikr1800, made-up bed s/d Ikr2500/5000) and **Gistiheimilið Arnarholt** (☎ 456 2080; silja@snerpa.is; sb Ikr1800) next door, which runs the geothermal pool on the shore.

Getting There & Away

Bus schedules are loosely timed to connect with the **Baldur ferry** (☎ 438 1450) to Stykkishólmur; see p171.

On Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from June to August buses run from Brjánslækur to Ísafjörður (Ikr2350, two hours). In the reverse direction the bus drops off at Brjánslækur and then continues to Patreksfjörður (Ikr600, 1¼ hours) and Látrabjarg (Ikr2500, two hours), where you'll have a 90-minute stop to admire the bird life.

SOUTHWEST PENINSULA

The beautiful, sparsely populated trident-shaped peninsula in the southwest of the Westfjords is a spectacularly scenic place and the westernmost point in Europe. Sand beaches as fine as you'll find in Iceland, shimmering blue water, towering cliffs and stunning mountains weave along and between the fjords and provide fantastic territory for hiking, walking and leisurely driving. The region's most famous destination, however, is Látrabjarg, a 12km stretch of sea cliffs that is home to thousands of nesting sea birds in summer.

The roads throughout this region are rough and driving is slow. There are several small villages on the northern side of the peninsula to break your journey but only isolated guesthouses in the far south and west.

LÁTRABJARG PENINSULA

Best known for its dramatic cliffs and abundant bird life, the Látrabjarg peninsula also has wonderful deserted beaches and plenty of opportunities for long, leisurely walks.

Joining Rte 612 from Rte 62, you'll pass the rusting hulk of the fishing boat *Garðar* near the head of the fjord before passing the empty, golden beaches around the airstrip at Sauðlauksdalur. About 10km further on it's worth stopping at the entertaining **Egill Ólafsson Folk Museum** (☎ 456 1569; adult/under 14yr Ikr500/free; ☹ 9am–6pm Jun–mid-Sep) in the tiny village of Hn-jótur. The eclectic collection includes salvaged fishing boats, old aircraft and displays on the history of the region. A circle of stones behind the museum commemorates the many fishing ships lost at sea off the tip of the peninsula.

At **Breiðavík** a stunning golden-sand beach stands framed by rocky cliffs and the turquoise

waters of the bay. It's an idyllic spot, certainly one of Iceland's best beaches and usually deserted. Should you find yourself with more company than you'd hoped for, head further on to Hvallátur, where there's another gorgeous golden-sand beach and excellent opportunities for wild camping.

Soon the Bjargtanger lighthouse, Europe's westernmost point, comes into view and nearby the renowned Látrabjarg **bird cliffs**. Extending for 12km along the coast and ranging from 40m to 400m, the dramatic cliffs are mobbed by nesting sea birds in summer and it's a fascinating place even for the most reluctant of twitchers. Unbelievable numbers of puffins, gullbills, guillemots, cormorants, fulmars, razors and kittiwakes nest here from June to August. The puffins in particular are incredibly tame, and you can often get within a few feet of the birds. On calm days, seals are often seen basking on the skerries around the lighthouse.

East of the cliffs (about a 20km walk along the coast path from the lighthouse) the stunning **Rauðisandur** beach stretches out in shades of deep pink and red sands. Pounded by the surf and backed by a huge lagoon, it is an exceptionally beautiful and serene place. To get here by road you'll have to backtrack on Rte 612 towards the head of the fjord. Take a right turn onto Rte 614 soon after the airfield at Sauðlauksdalur and follow the bumpy track for about 10km.

Sleeping & Eating

Gistiheimilið Breiðavík (☎ 456 1575; www.breidavik.net; sites per tent from Ikr1000, sb/s/d without bathroom 3500/5500/8500, s/d with bathroom Ikr4000/6000; ☹ mid-May–mid-Sep) Set on a working farm by the incredible white beach at Breiðavík, this guesthouse offers homey rooms with patchwork quilts and decent furniture. Evening meals are also served (Ikr2500 to Ikr3000).

Hótel Látrabjarg (☎ 456 1500; www.latrabjarg.com; s/d without bathroom Ikr9000/10,500, with private bathroom Ikr12,000/13,500; ☹ mid-May–Aug; ☎) This former boarding school has been converted into a comfortable hotel with plain but tasteful rooms. There's a restaurant (dinner Ikr3000), free wi-fi access, and a computer for guest use. The hotel can also organise horse riding (Ikr2000 per hour) at the nearby farm Hestaleigan Vesturfari. To get to the hotel, turn right onto Rte 615 just after the museum at Hn-jótur and continue for about 3km.

DÉJÀ VU

Since Viking times Icelanders have scaled the Látrabjarg cliffs to collect eggs and bird chicks, but in the winter of 1947 their abseiling skills were needed to rescue 12 crew members of the British trawler *Dhoon*, which had foundered off the cliffs in high seas. A year later, while a film crew were in the area planning to record a re-enactment of the rescue for a documentary, another British trawler crashed into the rocks. Again locals rushed to save the seamen and the rescue was filmed live and later released as *Rescue Deed at Látrabjarg*.

Getting There & Away

Southwest of Patreksfjörður Rte 62 cuts across the ridge at Kleifaheiði to the south coast, while Rte 612 runs west to the end of the Látrabjarg peninsula.

On Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from June to August buses from Ísafjörður route through Látrabjarg on their way to/from Brjánslækur, where you can pick up the **Baldur** ferry to Stykkishólmur. The buses stop at the cliffs for 90 minutes, leaving you plenty of time to explore.

If you want to stay longer you'll have to camp overnight or hike back to the guesthouse at Breiðavík or Hótel Látrabjarg. You can also reach the cliffs by hiking 5km east from Hvallátur.

PATREKSFJÖRÐUR & AROUND

pop 770

Although it's the largest village in this part of the Westfjords, Patreksfjörður has few sights or activities for tourists. The town was named after St Patrick of Ireland, who was the spiritual guide of Örylgur Hrapsson, the first settler in the area. The town was devastated by a mud slide in 1983, and its modern buildings sling across the hill and gravel spit that extend into the fjord. There are several places to stay, a lovely **swimming pool** (☎ 456 1523; Eyragata) and a bank with an ATM.

There's a camp site behind the Esso petrol station and there are two good guesthouses on the hill rising behind the church. The friendly **Stekkaból** (☎ 864 9675; stekkabol@snerpa.is; Stekkar 19; sb/made-up beds Ikr1900/3200) has bright, simple rooms and a guest kitchen, while nearby **Gistiheimili Erlu** (☎ 456 1227; Brunnar 14; sb/

s/d lkr1800/3200/6000) also has cooking facilities and modern rooms.

The restaurant **Þorpið** (☎ 456 1295; Aðalstræti 73; mains lkr600-1800) is your best bet for food. It serves a predictable menu of grills and meat dishes, has big windows overlooking the fjord and a nice outdoor seating area for warm days. You can get snacks and light meals at **Söluturninn Albína** (☎ 456 1667; Aðalstræti 89; mains lkr400-1500), a café with an ATM. The Esso petrol station on the main road has a grill, and there are several supermarkets and a Vin Búð liquor store on Þórsgata.

Getting There & Away

On Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from June to August there are buses between Patreksfjörður and Brjánslækur (lkr1200, 1½ hours), Látrabjarg (lkr1000, two hours) and Ísafjörður (lkr3300, two hours).

Buses also run by request from Patreksfjörður to meet flights into Bildudalur. Call ☎ 855 3665 or ☎ 863 0990.

TÁLKNAFJÖRÐUR

pop 340

Set amid rolling green hills, rocky peaks and a wide fjord, Tálknafjörður is another soporific village surrounded by magnificent scenery. The only real thing to see or do here is to visit the outdoor **swimming pool** (☎ 456 2639; admission adult/6-12yr lkr300/180; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug), fed by the nearby geothermal field. In summer, a basic tourist office operates at the pool. There's also a bank, a post office and a supermarket.

If you want to break your journey there's a **camp site** (☎ 456 2639; sites per person lkr800; ☎ Jun-Aug) beside the swimming pool with laundry and cooking facilities. There are several guesthouses in the centre of the village. The pick of the crop is the flower-strewn **Gistiheimilið Hamrarborg** (☎ 456 2514; fax 456 2694; Strandgötu 6), but you'll also find decent rooms at **Skrúðhamar** (☎ 456 0200; skrudhamar@visir.is; Strandgötu 20; ☎) and **Bjarmalandi** (☎ 891 8038; bjarmaland06@sinnet.is; Bugatún 11). All offer sleeping-bag space for around lkr2000 and made-up beds for lkr3500.

The best place for food is **Posthúsið** (☎ 456 2500; Strandgata 32; mains lkr500-1750), a decent place serving the usual array of burgers, pizzas and grills. You can also get food at the pub **Hópið** (☎ 456 2631; Hrafnardalsvegur; mains lkr1000-3500), which sometimes has bands playing at weekends.

The Esso station sells limited groceries and the usual grills.

Getting There & Away

Buses run from Patreksfjörður to Bildudalur on request to meet flights. Call ☎ 855 3665 or ☎ 863 0990.

BÍLDUDALUR

pop 240

Set on a gloriously calm bay surrounded by towering peaks, the sleepy fishing village of Bildudalur has a simply gorgeous setting. Arriving by road from either direction you're treated to some spectacular outlooks. From the east a pot hole-riddled, rutted mud-and-gravel road leads over the otherworldly mountains around Suðurfirðir, and from the south the paved mountain road gives stunning views all the way.

Bildudalur was founded in the 16th century and today is a major supplier of shrimp. For tourists there's little in the way of formal attractions, but there's a choice of accommodation, a bank and a petrol station, and the small **Tónlistarsafn** (☎ 456 2186; admission free; Tjarnarbraut 5; ☎ 1-5pm Mon-Fri mid-Jun-Sep) museum dedicated to Icelandic music from the '40s to the '60s.

If you'd like to stay there's a free camp site beside the golf course on the outskirts of town. For more comfort, try **Gistiheimilið Kaupfélagið** (☎ 456 2100; www.lokinhamrar.is; Hafnarbraut 2; sb/s/d lkr1800/3200/6400), a guesthouse with plain but perfectly good rooms, and an attached restaurant (mains lkr870 to lkr1670) serving pizza, burgers and hearty sandwiches.

You can also get meals at the grill **Vegamót** (☎ 456 2232; mains lkr600-1730), by the petrol station, or groceries at the small village supermarket.

Getting There & Away

Íslandsflug (☎ 456 2151; www.airiceland.is) provides flights every day except Saturday to/from Reykjavík (45 minutes) from April to October, with a reduced schedule in winter. The cheapest online fare for a one-way ticket is lkr5950. Buses run on request to/from Patreksfjörður via Tálknafjörður to connect with flights. Call ☎ 855 3665 or ☎ 863 0990.

AROUND BÍLDUDALUR

Heading east from Bildudalur you'll come to the roaring falls and small farm at **Foss** 13km from town. This is the start of the long, dramatic 15km hike along the Fossdalur valley

to Tungamúli or Krossholt on the south coast road (Rte 62). The route follows a trail used by 19th-century postmen and crosses some spectacular scenery.

About 26km northwest of Bildudalur, at Selárdalur, is the ruined wooden **farmhouse** of eccentric Icelandic artist Samúel Jónsson (1884-1969). Standing outside are some of his weathered statues of people and horses.

CENTRAL WESTFJORDS

ÞINGEYRI

pop 340

This tiny village was the first trading station in the Westfjords, but these days the world seems to have passed Þingeyri by. Although there's little to see here, the surrounding hills offer excellent walking, including the short hike up to **Sandfell**, the 367m ridge behind the village, which begins just south of the village on Rte 60.

In summer there's a **tourist office** (☎ 456 8304; www.thingeyri.is; Hafnarstræti; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug) on the main road. The village also has a good **swimming pool** (☎ 456 8375; adult/under 16yr lkr300/180; ☎ 7.45am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jun-Aug).

If you'd like to stay there's a **camp site** (☎ 456 8285; sites per person lkr600) behind the swimming pool. Alternatively, the friendly, modern guesthouse **Við Fjörðinn** (☎ 456 8172; www.vidfjordinn.is; Aðalstræti 26; sb/s/d lkr2000/3500/6000; ☎) has bright, cheerful rooms with simple décor and plain white linens. The sparkling new bathrooms are shared, but there's a good guest kitchen and a TV lounge. The village has a small supermarket, and there's a snack bar at the Esso station.

Local **buses** (☎ 456 4258) run twice every weekday between Þingeyri and Ísafjörður (lkr600, 30 minutes). From June to August a daily bus runs to Brjánslækur, where you'll be able to catch the **Baldur** ferry (see p171) to Stykkishólmur.

AROUND ÞINGEYRI Þingeyri Peninsula

The Þingeyri peninsula's dramatic northern peaks have been dubbed the 'Northwestern Alps', and the region offers some excellent remote trekking. The mountains are partly volcanic in origin, and the peaks are made up of rock and scree – a marked contrast to the

green valleys elsewhere in the Westfjords. For detailed information on hiking in the area, visit www.thingeyri.is.

A dirt road runs northwest along the eastern edge of the peninsula to the scenic valley at **Haukadalur**. If the road isn't blocked by landslides, you can continue right around the peninsula with a 4WD, passing cliffs where birds perch and the remote lighthouse at **Svalvogar**.

If you're visiting on the first weekend in July it's worth checking out the local **folk festival** (www.westvikings.com), held at a reconstructed stone circle in Haukadalur. The festival celebrates the area's Viking heritage and the saga of local man Gisli Súrsson.

Inland, the Westfjords highest peak **Kaldbakur** (998m) is a good hiking spot. The steep trail to the summit begins from the road about 2km west of Þingeyri.

Over on the southern side of the Þingeyri peninsula, **Hrafnseyri** was the birthplace of Jón Sigurðsson, the architect of Iceland's independence, which took place on 17 June 1811. The small **Hrafnseyri museum** (☎ 456 8260; www.hrafnseyri.is; adult/under 14yr lkr300/free; ☎ 10am-8pm mid-Jun-Aug) outlines aspects of his life. There's also a wooden church here dating from 1886.

Dynjandi

Tumbling in a broad sweep over a 100m-rocky scarp at the head of Dynjandivogur bay is Dynjandi (Fjallfoss), the best known and most dramatic waterfall in the Westfjords. Coming from the car park you'll pass a series of smaller falls at the base of the main chute, but it's well worth following the path up to the base of the massive cascade that plunges over the mountain side. The thundering water and views out over the broad fjord below are spectacular.

The surrounding area is protected as a nature reserve, but there's a free (if noisy) camp site right by the falls. Dynjandi is well signposted off Rte 60. Buses between Brjánslækur and Ísafjörður take a 10-minute break here to appreciate the falls.

Beyond Dynjandi, Rte 60 cuts across the desolate moonscape of the **Gláma** moors, which are covered in coarse tundra vegetation and mirror-like pools of standing water. It's possible to hike across this bleak moorland up to the ridge at **Sjónfrið** (920m) in a long, damp day.

Mýrar & Núpur

Heading north from Þingeyri on the northern shore of Dýrafjörður are a series of gorgeous broad valleys. At the head of the valleys is a lovely weatherboard church and one of Iceland's oldest botanic gardens, **Skrúður** (admission free; ☞ daylight hours). Established as a teaching garden in 1905 by the local parish priest, Rev Sigtryggur Guðlaugsson, it became a pioneering environmental education centre. Today it is a peaceful glade of trees and ornamental shrubs reached through a whale-bone arch. Benches look out across the fjord and the surrounding wilderness, which is an important eider-duck breeding ground.

You can stay at the old school building, now converted into **Hotel Núpur** (☎ 456 8235; www.hotelnupur.is; sites lkr500, sb/s/d lkr1500/3200/5800; 🚻), a comfortable but predictable place with a decent restaurant and a large indoor swimming pool. It's the huge white building with the red roof and tall chimney just off Rte 624.

Just past the hotel, the farmhouse **Alviðra** (☎ 456 8229; alvidra@snepa.is; sb/s/d lkr2200/5000/8000; ☞ Jun-Aug) has simple accommodation in a variety of buildings.

There's no public transport to Núpur, but Ísafjörður–Þingeyri buses can drop you by the junction of Rte 624, 2km from the Hotel Núpur and 8km from Alviðra.

Flateyri

pop 300

Once a giant support base for Norwegian whalers, Flateyri is now a sleepy little place set on a gravel spit sticking out into broad Öundurarfjörður. There are few specific sights for visitors other than the chimney and boiler from the abandoned whaling station at Hóll, near the head of the fjord. Flateyri is particularly vulnerable to avalanches, and an enormous earth chute was built on the slopes above the village to defend it after a devastating avalanche in 1995.

Two- to three-hour sea-kayaking trips can be arranged through **Ferðapönustan Grænhöfði** (☎ 456 7762; jens@snepa.is). Longer tours are also possible. There are lots of good hiking opportunities in the hills and valleys around the Kirkjuból HI Hostel – ask the warden for some recommendations.

There is also an indoor and outdoor **swimming pool** (☎ 456 7738; adult/under 14yr lkr300/180; ☞ 10am-noon & 4-9pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug) with sauna and Jacuzzi.

The village has a free **camp site** (☎ 456 7738) next to the avalanche defences on its edge, and summerhouse rental is available from **Ferðapönustan Grænhöfði** (☎ 456 7762; jens@snepa.is). Chalets sleep up to six people and cost lkr8000/37000 per day/week.

The popular Kirkjuból youth hostel **Korpudalur Kirkjuból** (Öundurarfjörður Hostel; ☎ 456 7808; korpudalur@hostel.is; sb member/nonmember lkr1650/2000; ☞ Jun-Aug) is 12km south of Flateyri at the head of Öundurarfjörður. Set in a renovated farmhouse at the bottom of the broad valley, it is a great spot for wilderness hikers, bird-watchers and anglers. Pick-ups can be arranged from Ísafjörður for a small fee.

Your best bet for food in town is the **Vagninn Restaurant** (☎ 456 7751; Hafnarstræti 19; mains lkr700-1900), a quiet place serving the usual selection of snacks and meat dishes. Alternatively, there's a grill bar at the Esso station.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

On weekdays there are three daily buses between Ísafjörður and Flateyri (lkr250, 30 minutes). To be picked up in Flateyri, call ahead (☎ 456 4258) – otherwise the bus might not drive into the village.

SUÐUREYRI

pop 320

Perched on the tip of 13km-long Súcandafjörður, the fishing community of Suðureyri was isolated for years by the forbidding mountains that surround the village and the bad road that led over them. Now connected with Ísafjörður by a 5km tunnel, the village has got a new lease of life and is busy turning itself into a self-sustaining community with a unique take on tourism.

In many ways the village is staunchly traditional – all fishing is done by rod and hook, and the grand tourism plans being developed are all about preserving nature and sharing rather than changing this traditional way of life.

Activities

The **Sjávarþorpið Suðureyri** (Original Fishing Village; www.sudureyri.is) project allows visitors to join in the regular life of the village in order to learn and understand how things are today for fishing families in rural Iceland. You can go out on working fishing boats (lkr12,000 for a two-hour trip for four people or a full day trip for two people) and visit the fish factory (lkr1000). The project offers a unique insight

SUSTAINABLE SUÐUREYRI

When the tunnel through the mountains to Suðureyri was built the village acquired a reliable source of hydroelectricity. This, combined with the naturally occurring geothermal fields in the area, means that Suðureyri now gets all its energy and hot-water supplies from sustainable sources. In addition, the villagers' prime fishing grounds lie very close to shore, so little fuel is used to power boats, and traditional fishing methods mean that the natural balance of the fish stocks is not endangered.

into life in fishing communities and is the only one of its kind in the country. You can book activities online or at VEG-Gisting (see below). On the way into town you can also visit the lagoon, where wild cod can be seen. A set of information boards nearby explain what a contemporary fisherman's life is like.

If it all sounds too exciting you could just relax in the village's **geothermal swimming pool** (☎ 456 6121; Túngata 8; adult/under 14yr lkr350/200; ☞ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep), sauna and hot pots.

Sleeping & Eating

Camp site (☎ 456 6666; sites per person lkr1000) The village's brand new camp site is well equipped with hot and cold water and shower blocks.

VEG-Gisting (☎ 456 6666; www.sudureyri.is/gistiheimili; Aðalgata 14; sb lkr2000, d without/with bathroom lkr5600/8000; 🚻) Customer focused, thoroughly modern and really comfy, this friendly guest-house has bright, simple rooms with crisp white linens and pine furniture. Each room has washbasin, TV, phone and hair dryer, and there's free internet access and the use of a guest kitchen. There's also free wi-fi access in the building if you've brought your laptop.

our pick **Talisman restaurant** (mains lkr1700-2500; ☞ mid-May–mid-Sep) Attached to VEG-Gisting, this is a swish, contemporary-styled place with moleskin chairs, large windows, and place mats and menu covers made from fish skins. The menu features a wonderful array of locally sourced food, from seafood and fish to lamb. A flatscreen TV shows a video describing a fisherman's life.

For fast food there's a grill bar at the Esso petrol station.

Getting There & Away

From Monday to Friday there are three daily local buses between Ísafjörður and Suðureyri (lkr250, 20 minutes).

ÍSAFJÖRÐUR

pop 3500

Hub of activity in the Westfjords and by far the area's largest town, Ísafjörður is a pleasant and prosperous place and an excellent base for travellers. The town is set on a gravel spit that extends out into Skutulsfjörður, and is hemmed in on all sides by towering peaks and the eerily dark and still waters of the fjord.

The centre of Ísafjörður is littered with old timber and tin-clad buildings, many unchanged since the 18th century, when the harbour was full of tall ships and Norwegian whaling crews. Today it is a surprisingly cosmopolitan place, and after some time spent travelling in the Westfjords, feels like a bustling metropolis with its tempting cafés, cinema, great choice of restaurants and variety of accommodation.

There's good hiking in the hills around the town, skiing in winter and regular summer boats to ferry hikers across to the remote Hornstrandir peninsula. In fact, Ísafjörður's only downside is the long journey to get here. You'll either have to wind in and out of numerous fjords on bumpy roads or take a hair-raising flight into the tiny airstrip on the opposite side of the fjord. Then again, it's the town's remote location and surprisingly urbane attitude that really give it its wonderful character.

History

The region west of Ísafjörður is geologically the oldest in the country, dating back about 20 million years. However, it was not until Norwegian and Icelandic traders arrived in the 16th century that the gravel spit in Skutulsfjörður saw human habitation. At first the camps were temporary, but soon German and English trading firms set up shop and a permanent post was established. The first mention of trading in the area dates back to 1569, when records show a Hanseatic League trading post here, but by 1602 the Danish Trade Monopoly had taken over business and begun developing Ísafjörður as a fishing and trading centre.

In the following centuries Ísafjörður became a logistical centre for Norwegian whaling ships, although the Icelanders only took up commercial whaling in the 1950s. In later years

ÍSAFJÖRÐUR

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- 2 Borea Adventures.....2 C1
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- 5 Hospital.....4 C2
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SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- 10 Church.....10 C2
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- 16 Camp Site.....15 B2
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- 31 Ísafjarðarbíó Cinema.....27 D2
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- 34 Gullauga.....(see 1)
- 35 Hafnarbúðin.....29 C4
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the town bore witness to some of the fierce battles between whalers and environmental campaigners that eventually led to the worldwide ban on commercial whaling in 1989.

In 1991 a tunnel was constructed to link Ísafjörður and the previously isolated communities of Suðureyri and Flateyri. The three towns and nearby Þingeyri were amalgamated into a single administrative unit called Ísafjarðarbær in 1996.

Information

The friendly Vesturferðir tourist office (☎ 456 8060; www.vestfiridir.is; Aðalstræti 7; ☹ 8.15am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat & Sun Jun–Aug, 10am–5pm Mon–Fri Sep–May) is down by the harbour in the Edinborgarhúsið, built in 1781.

You'll find all the major banks along Hafnarstræti and the post office in the Neisti Centre at Hafnarstræti 9. Internet access is available at the town library (☎ 456 3296; Eyrautúni; ☹ 1–7pm Mon–Fri, 1–4pm Sat) for 1kr100 per hour. The tourist office also has a single terminal that travellers can use for free for a 10-minute session. You can also use the computers at Ísafjörður's youth centre, Gamla Apótekið (☎ 456 7000; Hafnarstræti 18; ☹ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri Jun–Aug, to midnight Mon–Fri Sep–May), for free. It also has a wi-fi hotspot.

The bookshop Bókhláðan Penninn (☎ 456 3123; Hafnarstræti 2) is well stocked and has maps and books in English. For laundry services go to Efnalaugin Albert (☎ 456 4670; Sindragata 14; per wash 1kr900; ☹ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri).

Sights & Activities

Housed in a cluster of ancient wooden buildings by the harbour, the Westfjords Folk Museum (☎ 456 3293; Neðstikaupstaður; adult/under 16yr/senior 1kr500/free/300; ☹ 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 1–5pm Sat & Sun Jun, 10am–5pm daily Jul & Aug) is an atmospheric place full of relics. The dimly lit main building, the Turnhús, dates from 1784 and was originally used as a warehouse. Inside it's like stepping back in time, with every available surface covered with fishing and nautical exhibits, tools and equipment from the whaling days, and fascinating old photos depicting life in the town over the centuries. To the right of this building is the wooden Tjörúhús (1781), which now operates as a very pleasant café and restaurant. Two other buildings on the site, the Faktorhús, built in 1765 to house the manager of the village shop, and the Krambúð (1757), originally a storehouse, are now private residences.

From mid-June to mid-August the museum hosts film screenings (1kr800) on Monday and Thursday evening, a slide show and lecture on the local environment (1kr500) on Wednesday and Sunday, and a performance based on the saga of Gíslí the outlaw on Friday (1kr1500). All evening events take place at 8.30pm.

Apart from the museum, Ísafjörður's formal attractions are pretty thin on the ground. Of minor interest is the whalebone arch made from a whale's jawbone in the park in the centre of town. Nearby are Ísafjörður's interesting seamen's monument and the modernist town church, which looks a lot like an old-fashioned press camera with a flash on top.

There are loads of walking trails around Ísafjörður, most of which are covered in the pamphlet map Gönguleiðir í Nágrenni Ísafjarðar (1kr300), available from the tourist office. One of the more unusual and shorter walks is up to the truncated valley of Naustahlíft – about 1km above the airport – which offers fantastic views over the fjord. Several other trails start near the road bridge at the head of Skutulsfjörður, where the last wizards in Iceland were burned at the stake in 1656.

In summer, sea-kayaking tours of Jökulfirðir can be arranged through Vestfirskar Ávintýraferðir (☎ 456 3574; www.vestfiridir.is/kayak).

Although plain by Icelandic standards, the town swimming pool (☎ 456 3200; Austurvegur 9; adult/under 16yr 1kr300/180; ☹ 7am–9pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–Aug) makes a good retreat on a wet day.

Tours

Housed in the same building as the tourist office, and the most popular outfit around, Vesturferðir (☎ 456 5111; www.vesturferdir.is; Aðalstræti 7) organises a mind-boggling array of tours in the area, including trips to Vigur island (1kr4300, three to four hours), the abandoned village at Hesteyri (1kr4400, four to five hours), Hornstrandir Nature Reserve (1kr9900, 12 hours) and Hornvick (1kr15,000, 12 hours; 1kr56,900 for four nights). The company also organises puffin-watching trips to Grímsey (1kr3500, three to four hours), sea angling (1kr12,500, two hours), guided bike rides around Svalvogar (1kr5300, eight hours) and kayaking trips around the bay (1kr5300, 2½ hours).

Borea Adventures (☎ 899 3817; www.boreaadventures.com; Hlíðarvegur 38) offers multiday trips aboard Aurora, a yacht built for the Clipper Round the World Race, from April to September. Tours include four-day skiing and ice-climbing trips to Jökulfirðir (€1100), six-day skiing trips (€1650), five-day wildlife and photography trips (€1650), and five-day sea-kayaking trips (€1375) – all to Jökulfirðir and Hornstrandir.

Sleeping

Camp site (☎ 444 4960; Skutulsfjarðarbraut; sites per person 1kr650; ☹ mid-Jun–mid-Aug) The centrally located town camp site is just a short walk from all you'll need in town and has good washing facilities.

Camp site (☎ 456 5081; sites per person 1kr750) Further out of town but far more scenic, this second camp site is by a pretty waterfall in Tungudalur. The last stop on the town bus will take you to within 1km of the site.

Gamla Gistihúsið (Old Guesthouse; ☎ 456 4146; www.gistihus.is; Mánagata 5; sb/s/d 1kr1800/3900/6000; ☹) Bright, cheerful and immaculately kept, this excellent guesthouse has simple but comfortable rooms with plenty of homey touches. The bathrooms are shared, but each room has telephone, washbasin and bathrobes. An annexe just down the road has a guest kitchen and more modern, functional rooms.

Guesthouse Litla (☎ 474 1455; reginas@simnet.is; Sundstraeti 43; s/d 1kr3500/7000; ☹ Jun–Aug, by reservation rest of year) Wooden floors, crisp white linen, fluffy towels and TVs are available in the high-quality rooms of Litla, another cosy guesthouse with tasteful décor. Two rooms share each bathroom, and there's a guest kitchen.

Kvennabrekka (☎ 456 5560; www.snjor.is/gisting; Skíðaskálanum Tungudal; sb/s/d 1kr2500/5000/9000) Up

WESTFJORDS IN WINTER

Visiting the remotest part of Iceland in the depths of winter might sound extreme, but the mountains around Ísafjörður are a popular destination for Icelandic skiers (see www.isafjordur.is/ski). The season runs from January to Easter, and there are daily flights from Reykjavík timed to fit in with the limited daylight hours.

For downhill skiing head to Tungudalur, where there are illuminated slopes, three ski lifts and a cosy ski chalet with a café and ski hire. Passes are available at the nearby petrol station or the chalet (Ikr1000/500 per adult/child under 16). Nearby, Seljalandsdalur has gentle slopes and some of Iceland's best cross-country skiing. There are no ski lifts, but there is a basic, heated chalet.

Snow permitting, there is a lively **ski festival** (www.skidavikan.is) here during the week after Easter. The week ends with a music festival attracting top bands. In May, cross-country skiers from around Iceland head to Ísafjörður for the 50km Fossavatn **Ski Marathon** (www.fossavatn.com), which has been running since 1935.

The mountains around Ísafjörður block a lot of light in winter and from early December to late January the sun fails to make an appearance at all. However, on 23 January the place to be is Sólgrata (Sun St), where locals wait to greet the return of the sun. Although it only makes a brief appearance (at about midday), it's a sign for celebration and locals gather together for coffee, pancakes and talk of spring.

near the Tungudal ski slopes, the new ski chalet offers basic but comfortable accommodation in two-bed rooms with modern furniture and washbasins. Bathrooms are shared, and there's a large café and restaurant downstairs.

Hotel Edda (☎ 444 4960; www.hoteledda.is; sb/s/d with shared bathroom from Ikr2000/6100/7600, d with private bathroom Ikr11,900; 🗓 mid-Jun–mid-Aug) No-frills summer accommodation is available at the town's secondary school. You can choose from basic sleeping-bag accommodation in the classrooms, private rooms with shared bathrooms and doubles with private bathrooms. All rooms are pretty functional but are bright, modern and comfortable.

Hótel Ísafjörður (☎ 456 4111; www.hotelisafjordur.is; Silfurtorg 2; s/d 13,900/16,900 Jun-Aug, Ikr10,400/12,900 Sep-May) Slap bang in the centre of the town, this business-class hotel offers spacious, international-style rooms with calm, neutral décor, good bathrooms and views over the sea or town square. All rooms have phone, TV and minibar, and the top-floor suites have a variety of added extras. Sleeping-bag accommodation (Ikr4500/6500 for singles/doubles) is available out of season.

Eating

Kaffi Langi Mangi (☎ 456 3022; Aðalstræti 22; meals Ikr400-800; 🗓 11am-11pm Mon-Wed, to 1am Thu, to 2am Fri, noon-2am Sat, 1-11pm Sun) This funky little hang-out with changing artists' exhibitions is a great spot for snacks and light meals. The menu in-

cludes everything from soups and sandwiches to pancakes and a range of coffees.

Thai Koon (☎ 456 0123; Neisti Centre, Hafnarstræti 9; mains Ikr790-990; 🗓 11.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 5-9pm Sun) After a few weeks of limited choice for meals, this small Thai canteen seems decidedly exotic. Although there's no atmosphere here whatsoever, the food is excellent and served up in giant portions, making it incredible value for money.

Fernandos (☎ 456 3367; Hafnarstræti 12; meals Ikr790-2780) The cosiest eatery in town is this Italian restaurant and bar on the main drag. Bag one of the window seats for good people-watching space, and tuck into the excellent choice of pizza, pasta, meats and luscious desserts. It also serves a range of sandwiches, panini and burgers throughout the day.

Hótel Ísafjörður (☎ 456 4111; Silfurtorg 2; mains Ikr1200-3000) More formal dining is available at the hotel, where the restaurant serves the usual selection of Icelandic lamb and fish dishes. Although the atmosphere is more international than local, the windows offer great views over the fjord. Light lunches and specials make it a better deal at midday than in the evening.

our pick Tjörúhisjó (Tar House; ☎ 456 3293; Neðstíkaupstaður; mains Ikr1500-2500; 🗓 11am-10pm Jul & Aug) The atmospheric summer restaurant at the folk museum offers some of the best fish and seafood dishes in town at very reasonable prices. Although lunch and dinner are the big

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(Continued from page 180)

events, you can also have coffee, cake and light snacks here during the day. If you're in town during one of the four summer saltfish feasts, don't miss the opportunity to sample the fish cured traditionally at the museum.

For breakfast, lunch or a midmorning sugar fix there are two extremely tempting bakeries in town. Both **Gamla Bakaríð** (☎ 456 3226; Aðalstræti; 🗓 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat) and **Bakarans** (☎ 456 4771; Hafnarstræti 14; 🗓 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4.30pm Sun) have cosy seating areas and a choice of savoury and sweet snacks to obliterate any diet.

There's a Samkaup supermarket in the Neisti Centre on Hafnarstræti and a cheaper Bónus supermarket on the main road into town. The Vín Búð alcohol shop is at Aðalstræti 20.

Entertainment

The town cinema **Ísjarðarbió** (☎ 456 3202; Austurvegur) shows films several nights a week at 8pm.

On weekend nights Kaffi Langi Mangi becomes one of the coolest spots in town, with live bands and a chilled-out crowd. For more late-night revelry, head for the only club in town, **Krúsin** (Norðurvegur 1; 🗓 9pm-3am Fri & Sat), which plays an eclectic mix of '60s to '80s music.

Shopping

If you're heading for Hornstrandir you can buy outdoor clothing and camping equipment at **Hafnarbúðin** (☎ 456 3245; Suðurgata). **Rammagerð Ísarfjarðar** (☎ 456 3041; Aðalstræti 16) sells quality glassware and other crafts, and **Gullauga** (☎ 456 3460; Hafnarstræti 4) is good for gold jewellery.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Iceland (☎ 456 3000; www.airiceland.is) is based at the airport and flies to/from Reykjavík two or three times daily from late March to late October, with a reduced service in winter. The cheapest online fare from Reykjavík is Ikr3970. Flights to Akureyri connect through Reykjavík.

A special bus service (Ikr500) runs to the airport about 45 minutes before departure. It starts in Bolungarvík and stops near the Hótel Ísafjörður.

BUS & BOAT

Buses stop at the Esso petrol station on Hafnarstræti. Local council buses (☎ 456 4258) run twice daily Monday to Friday from Ísafjörður to Flateyri and Þingeyri and three

times daily to Suðureyri and Bolungarvík. The fare to all these places is Ikr250.

From June to August there is a bus to Hólmavík (where you can change to buses for Reykjavík and Akureyri, see p192) on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday at 10.30am (Ikr4000, four hours) and there are daily buses to Brjánslækur (Ikr2300), where you can catch the *Baldur* ferry (see p171) to Stykkishólmur. Buses also connect to Reykjavík from Stykkishólmur (see p160). The timetables on these routes change each season and don't always allow for a through journey without an overnight stop in Stykkishólmur. For up-to-date information, visit www.bsi.is and www.stjornubilar.is.

In summer, ferries to Hornstrandir depart from the Sundahöfn docks on the eastern side of the isthmus – see p196 for more details.

Getting Around

City buses operate from 7.30am to 6.30pm on weekdays (until 10.30pm in winter) and connect the town centre with Hnífsdalur and Tungudalur (Ikr250, 10 minutes).

Vesturfærir rents out two types of mountain bike for Ikr1000/2000 for six hours or Ikr2500/3500 for 24 hours. For a taxi, call ☎ 456 3518.

AROUND ÍSAFJÖRÐUR Tungudalur & Seljalandsdalur

These glacial valleys about 2km west of Ísafjörður, at the head of the fjord, offer some interesting hiking routes into the surrounding mountains. Tungudalur is lined with waterfalls and scrubby birch forest, and it also has a wonderful secluded camp site and a scenic **golf course** (☎ 456 5081; green fees Ikr2000, club hire Ikr1500). One pleasant walk is the 1.2km trail beside the waterfall to the viewpoint at Siggaköfi.

There are also pleasant walks along the river valley Seljalandsdalur, which is lined with small lakes and leads up to the desolate moors around Breiðafell (724m). From here you can link up with the popular Hnífsdalur-Bolungarvík trek. In winter both valleys are good for skiing – see p180.

Hnífsdalur

Locally famous for producing *harðfiskur* (dried haddock) and *hákarl* (rotten shark), the village of Hnífsdalur makes an interesting side trip from Ísafjörður. Set in a deep fjord 4km north of town, Hnífsdalur has plenty of smelly fish-drying sheds and several interesting

walks in the surrounding hills. One of the best is the recommended 8km trek along the Hnífsdalur valley and over the ridge to Syðri-dalsvatn lake, by the Redihjallavirkjun power plant at Bolungarvík.

BOLUNGARVÍK

pop 980

Surrounded on three sides by mountains and on the fourth by the sea, the sleepy and run-down town of Bolungarvík occupies a dramatic position at the head of the fjord. Two local museums make the town worth a visit, and for hikers it's a pleasant destination at the end of the 8km trek over the ridge from Hnífsdalur (see p189).

Sights & Activities

Housed in a series of old turf-and-stone fishing shacks on the way into town, the interesting open-air **Ósvör Maritime Museum** (☎ 892 1616; adult/under 16yr 1kr400/free; ☞ 10am-5pm May-Jun, to 6pm Jul & Aug) is well worth a visit. A guide in a typical sheepskin fisherman's outfit shows you round explaining the history of the area and the traditional methods for salting fish. The cramped fishermen's hut is full of interesting relics, and there's a fish-salting shed and drying rack full of aromatic saltfish. A traditional rowing boat and tug capstan are also on display. On a ridge across the road a **view disc** describes the surrounding landscape.

In the main shopping arcade in the middle of town, the **Natural History Museum** (☎ 456 7207; www.nave.is; Vitastíg 3; adult/under 16yr 1kr400/free; ☞ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep) has a comprehensive collection of stuffed animals and birds – including a polar bear killed by fishermen just off the Hornstrandir coast.

As well as the walk to Hnífsdalur, there are interesting **hikes** to the remote coastal valley at Skálavík, 12km from Bolungarvík along a steep mountain road.

Bolungarvík also has a **swimming pool** (☎ 456 7381; ☞ 8-11am & 1-9pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 1-9pm Tue & Thu, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jun-Aug). You can hire horses from the farm **Hraun** (☎ 456 7450; per hr 1kr2500).

Sleeping & Eating

Facilities for tourists in Bolungarvík are limited and you'd be better off basing yourself in Ísafjörður instead.

Camp site (☎ 456 7381; sites per person 1kr500) The basic site is by the swimming pool.

Gistiheimili Vaxon (☎ 456 7999; haukur@vagnsson.is; Aðalstæti 9; sb/s/d 1kr2000/3500/6000; ☞) This guesthouse offers simple accommodation in modern but functional rooms in the centre of town.

Kjallarinn Krá (☎ 456 7901; Hafnargata 41) The best bet for food, this coffee shop and bar serves a selection of fairly predictable light meals.

There's also a grill bar at the Shell petrol station and a Samkaup supermarket on the main street.

Getting There & Away

A surfaced road runs around the headlands from Ísafjörður, lined with tunnels and steel nets to catch falling debris and boulders from the steep slopes above.

From June to August there are three buses (☎ 5892 1417) from Ísafjörður to Bolungarvík (1kr250) from Monday to Friday, and two in the opposite direction.

ÍSAFJARÐARDJÚP

The largest of the fjords in the region, 75km-long Ísafjarðardjúp takes a massive swath out of the Westfjords' landmass. Circuitous Rte 61 winds in and out of a series of smaller fjords on the southern side, making the drive from Ísafjörður to Hólmavík like sliding along each tooth of a fine comb.

Súðavík

pop 170

Just east of Ísafjörður, the small fishing community of Súðavík commands an imposing view across the fjord to Hornstrandir. There's little to see or do here, but it's the last stop with any facilities if you're heading east. Two kilometres south of town at Langeyri you can see the remains of a Norwegian **whaling station** that was used until the 1900s.

If you'd like to stay there's a free camp site, with toilets and showers, near the river. The only other option is **Sumarbyggð í Súðavík** (☎ 456 4986; www.sumarbyggd.is; Nesvegi 3; sb/s/d 1kr2000/3500/6000; ☞ May-Oct), which has comfy rooms in the guesthouse as well as a selection of summerhouses.

The one-stop shop **Hjá Jóni Indíafara** (☎ 456 4981; mains 1kr600-1800; Grundarstræti 3; ☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun) serves fast food and grills, and has a petrol pump and a limited selection of groceries.

Daily from Monday to Saturday there's a private bus from Ísafjörður to Súðavík

(1kr850, 20 minutes). The buses between Ísafjörður and Hólmavík also pass through town on Sunday, Tuesday and Friday.

Vigur

The tiny island of Vigur, at the mouth of Hestfjörður, is a haven for sea birds, including eider ducks, arctic terns, guillemots and puffins. A selection of objects from Westfjords Folk Museum (see p179) is on display in Viktoríuhús (built in 1860).

Vesturfirðir (☎ 456 5111; www.vesturfirdir.is) in Ísafjörður runs half-day excursions to Vigur from mid-June to August (1kr4300).

Mjóifjörður, Vatnsfjörður & Reykjarfjörður

Detouring off the main road, winding Rte 633 leads around the three slender fjords of Mjóifjörður, Vatnsfjörður and Reykjarfjörður. This little-visited area offers good bird-watching, outdoor activities and some historic remains.

At the head of Mjóifjörður, the farm **Heydalur** (☎ 456 4824; www.heydalur.is; sites 1kr3500, sb/s/d Jun-Aug 1kr3500/5500/8000, Sep-May 1kr3000/4000/6500) offers cosy accommodation in a renovated barn and cow shed. It's a peaceful and secluded spot and a great place to go horse riding (1kr2000 per hour) or kayaking (1kr2000/6000 per hour/day). In winter you can go snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and ice fishing.

Heading east you'll come to the second of the fjords, Vatnsfjörður, where you'll find the ruins of turf farmhouses and fish-drying racks dating from the 9th century.

Further on, at the end of tiny Reykjarfjörður is the friendly but well-weathered **Hótel Reykjanes** (☎ 456 4844; www.rnes.is; sites 1kr1500, sb/s/d Jun-mid-Sep 2200/3800/6500, mid-Sep-May 1kr1500/2000/4000; ☞), housed in the huge, white former district school. The rooms are compact and functional, but there's a 50m outdoor geothermal pool, a sauna, a decent restaurant (dinner buffet 1kr2800) and free wi-fi access. Campers have free access to all facilities.

Snæfjallaströnd

On the eastern shore of Ísafjarðardjúp the unsurfaced Rte 635 leads north to **Kaldalón**, a beautiful green valley running up to the receding Drangajökull icecap. It's an easy walk up to the snow line, but watch out for dangerous crevasses if you venture out onto the ice. Further north, **Snæfjallaströnd** was abandoned

in 1995, but adventurous hikers can walk from the church at Unaðsdalur along the coast to the bunkhouse at Grunnavík, from where you can catch boats to Ísafjörður and Hesteyri.

Just before the church at Unaðsdalur, **Félagsheimilið Dalbær** (☎ 456 2660; inkjar@eldhorn.is; sites per person 1kr600, sb/s/d 1800/4000/7500; ☞ mid-Jun-mid-Aug) is a good place to get a last meal and warm night's sleep before you head off into the wilderness. It also has displays on trekking in Jökulfirðir and the local fairies, trolls and ghosts, and offers boat trips to the glacier (1kr4700 including refreshments).

STRANDIR COAST

Sparsely populated, magnificently peaceful and all but deserted by other travellers, the eastern coast of the Westfjords is one of the most dramatic and mountainous parts of the region. Indented by a series of broad fjords and lined with a series of rugged mountains, the drive north of Hólmavík, the region's only sizeable settlement, is rough, wild and incredibly rewarding. South of here gently rolling hills stretch along the isolated coastline as far as Brú, where the sudden rush of traffic tells you that you've returned to Rte 1 and the travelling masses.

There are buses along the coast as far as Hólmavík and Dranganes, but you'll need your own vehicle and a sense of adventure to get further.

BRÚ TO HÓLMAVÍK

The long drive north from Brú to Hólmavík is pleasantly pastoral, with rolling hills dotted with small farmhouses and churches, but fairly pedestrian if you've just come south from the dramatic fjords further north or west. There's little to stop you along this stretch but if you want to stay overnight there's accommodation at the head of Bitrufjörður at **Snartartunga** (☎ 451 3362, 853 3062; snartartunga@bigfoot.com; sb/s/d 1kr2000/4200/7200; ☞ Jun-mid-Dec), a horse farm with pleasant guest rooms. Evening meals (1kr1500) and horse riding (1kr2000 per hour) are also available.

HÓLMAVÍK

pop 370

The fishing village and service centre of Hólmavík offers sweeping views over the still waters of Steingrímsfjörður and has a bizarre

witchcraft museum. The town is a good place to stock up on supplies, and it has a large supermarket, a bank, a post office and a petrol station.

Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 451 3111; www.holmavik.is/info; ☎ 9am-8pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug) is inside the modern community centre near the Esso petrol station. You can access the internet here (Ikr200 for 20 minutes) and pick up a copy of the hiking brochure *Gönguleiðir í Strandasýslu* (Ikr300), which has maps of local hikes.

Sights & Activities

Hólmavík's main tourist attraction is the popular **Exhibition of Witchcraft & Sorcery** (☎ 451 3525; www.vestfiridir.is/galdrasýning; admission Ikr500; ☎ 10am-6pm Jun–mid-Sep), by the harbour. The museum tells the macabre but fascinating story of 17 men and women who were burnt at the stake for witchcraft in the Westfjords during the 17th century. Most of the occult practices they were accused of were simply old Viking traditions, though the necropants (see right) and *grimoires* (magic books) on display were proof enough for the local witch-hunters. In summer there's a daily bus (Ikr900, 30 minutes) to the 'sorcerer's cottage' in Bjarnarfjörður, a turf-roofed cottage said to have been home to one of the witches. The bus departs at 1.30pm and returns at 3pm.

The hills surrounding Hólmavík are good for **hiking** and the easy short walk north along the coast to the farm at Ós is a good start. From the farm the trail cuts back to town along the Stakkar ridge further inland. Another easy walk is the 4km circuit of Þiðriksvallavatn lake from the Pverárvirkjun hydroelectric plant, 2km south of Hólmavík.

If you're heading northwest it's worth stopping off at the wooden church at **Staður**, 14km from Hólmavík, to see the 18th-century pulpit there.

Sleeping & Eating

Camp site (☎ 451 3111; sites per person Ikr600) The municipal camp site, beside the community centre, has toilets, showers and a laundry.

Gistiheimilið Borgarbraut (☎ 451 3136; fax 451 3413; Borgarbraut 4; sb/made-up bed Ikr2000/2800) Set on the hill near the church, this welcoming guest-house has old-style but well-kept rooms with great views. There's also a guest kitchen and a TV lounge.

THE WRONG TROUSERS?

One particularly gruesome display at the Hólmavík witchcraft museum is a copy of the legendary necropants – trousers made from the skin of the legs and groin of a dead man. It was believed that the necropants would spontaneously produce money when worn, as long as the donor corpse had been stolen from a graveyard at the dead of night and a magic rune and a coin stolen from a poor widow were placed in the dead man's scrotum!

Ferðapjónstan Kópnesbraut (☎ 451 3117; solgull@islandia.is; Kópnesbraut 17; sb/s/d Ikr2200/3500/6500) Another pleasant place with just three rooms, this is a slight step up, with in-room TVs and shared kitchen and bathroom.

Kirkjuból (☎ 451 3474; www.strandir.is/kirkjubol; sb/s/d Ikr2200/3500/6000) About 8km south of Hólmavík, right by the seashore, is this big and comfortable farmhouse with cosy rooms and a warm welcome. The owners can help arrange local activities.

Our pick Café Riis (☎ 451 3567; www.caferiis.is; Hafnarbraut 39; mains Ikr950-2200; ☎ 11.30am-11pm, to 3am Fri & Sat) The town pub and restaurant is an atmospheric place with stripped floors and carved magic symbols on the walls. Set in a historic wooden building that dates from 1897, this is a fine place to chill out with a beer. The menu ranges from burgers and pizzas to steak and gourmet fish dishes.

As always, cheap fast food is available at the petrol station.

Getting There & Away

From June to August buses run between Brú and Hólmavík (Ikr2600, two hours) on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday only. The same service continues from Hólmavík on to Drangsnæs (Ikr800, 30 minutes) on Friday. Buses from Hólmavík to Ísafjörður (Ikr4000, four hours) are timed to connect with the service from Brú. You can connect to services to Reykjavík and Akureyri from Brú. During winter there is one bus a week (on Friday) from Reykjavík to Hólmavík via Brú (Ikr5600).

DRANGSNÆS

Across the fjord from Hólmavík, Drangsnæs is a remote little village with views across to north Iceland and the small uninhabited

island of **Grimsey**, which is a fine place for bird-watching. The emerald-green island of Drangsnæs is home to a large puffin colony, and the rocky stack **Kerling**, by the shore, is supposedly the remains of a petrified troll (see the boxed text, below). From Drangsnæs several walking trails lead up to scenic lakes on the Bjarnarfjarðarháls ridge.

Drangsnæs has a free **camp site** (☎ 451 3238), with a toilet block and showers, on the shore. You'll find more formal accommodation at the pleasant **Gistiþjónusta Sunnu** (☎ 451 3230; holttag10@snepa.is; Holttagötu 10; d Ikr8000), which has a well-equipped studio apartment.

Getting There & Away

The Friday bus from Brú to Hólmavík continues on to Drangsnæs (Ikr800, 30 minutes) at 1.15pm, returning at 4.15pm. No buses run north of Drangsnæs, so you'll need a vehicle to reach Laugarhóll or anywhere further north.

Local fisherman **Ásbjörn Magnússon** (☎ 451 3238; sundhani@simnet.is; Kvíðala 1) runs boat trips to Grimsey at 2pm on Tuesday and Sunday and offers boat transfers up to the eastern coast of Hornstrandir – call for the current rates.

DRANGSNÆS TO REYKJARFJÖRÐUR

North of Drangsnæs, a rough road winds around a series of gorgeous crumbling escarpments and dramatic fjords. There's no public transport and there are few services on this route, but if you've got your own vehicle the utter tranquillity, incredible views and sheer sense of isolation are truly remarkable.

The first indent along the coast is **Bjarnarfjörður**, where you'll find the **Hótel Laugarhóll** (☎ 451 3380; www.strandir.is/laugarholl; sb/s/d without bathroom Ikr2500/5300/7000, with bathroom Ikr3000/7500/10,000; ☎), a large, modern building with spacious rooms and a lovely geothermal pool and hot tub. There's a restaurant (mains Ikr1500 to

Ikr2500) serving Icelandic staples, a small shop, and good hiking, fishing and sea angling in the surrounding area.

Near the hotel is an ancient artificial pool that was consecrated in the 16th century and is now a national monument, together with the Sorcerer's Cottage, which is part of the sorcery and witchcraft exhibition in Hólmavík. In summer there's a daily bus (Ikr900, 30 minutes) from the museum to the cottage; see opposite. Behind the hotel a marked trail leads up to the 451m peak Hólsfjall, from where you'll get good views of the surrounding area.

North of Bjarnarfjörður the scenery becomes more rugged and there are fine views across to the Skagi peninsula in north Iceland. This road often closes with the first snows in autumn and may not reopen until spring. If you're travelling late in the season ask locally for up-to-date information on conditions.

At **Kaldbaksvík** the steep sides of a broad fjord sweep down to a small fishing lake that serenely reflects the surrounding mountains. Just beyond the lake, a 4km trail runs up to the summit of craggy Lambatindur (854m). You'll notice copious amounts of driftwood piled up along the shore on this coast – most of it has arrived across the Arctic Ocean from Siberia.

REYKJARFJÖRÐUR

Tucked in beneath a looming rock wall at Reykjarfjörður, is the strangely endearing village of **Djúpavík**. Once a thriving centre for herring processing, the village was all but abandoned when the plant closed in 1950. Today it is half ghost town, half pioneering outpost. The looming bulk of the deserted factory dominates the village, but for those travellers who make it here it's one of the most memorable locations of their trip.

To the east towering cliffs plunge into the sea and behind the small cluster of houses a

THE GRÍMSEY TROLLS

According to legend the island of Grimsey was created by evil trolls, now petrified into the stone stacks at Drangsnæs. Intent on severing the Westfjords from the mainland, the trolls decided to dig a trench right across the peninsula one night. Unfortunately, they were so wrapped up in the job that they failed to notice the sun rising. As the first rays broke over the horizon, the two trolls working at the western end of the trench were transformed into standing stones at Kollafjörður. The female troll at the eastern end nearly escaped, but as she was turning to flee she realised that she had marooned her cow on the newly created island of Grimsey. She was turned to stone forever gazing towards her lost cow. A rock in the shape of a cow can still be seen down by the water line at Grimsey's northern end.

spectacular glittering **waterfall** tumbles over the sheer rock face. You can walk to the foot of the falls in about 30 minutes for stunning views of the fjord. The trail begins by the stream, behind the ruins of the old fishing station. Longer walks are possible at the head of the fjord, along the Reykjarfjörðardalur valley.

Our pick **Hótel Djúpavík** (☎ 451 4037; www.djupavik.com; sb/s/d 1kr2000/5300/6700) This charming bolt hole set in the former factory accommodation block is the only place to stay. The small, simple rooms have brightly coloured blankets and rugs and a nostalgic air of times past. Bathrooms are shared, but there's a good restaurant (mains 1kr2000 to 1kr3500) serving tasty home-cooked food, and it's possible to go kayaking and sea angling, rent boats or take guided tours of the former factory. In winter the hotel makes an ideal base for cross-country skiers looking for a unique destination.

NORÐURFJÖRÐUR & AROUND

Heading north from Djúpavík, a scenic hiking trail runs up over the Reykjanes peninsula from Naustavík, on the northern side of Reykjarfjörður, to Árnes, where lush farmland is set against a backdrop of craggy peaks. There are two interesting wood churches at Árnes and the small museum, **Kört** (☎ 451 4025; arnes@bakkar.is; admission 1kr300; ☎ 11am-6pm), which has displays on fishing and farming, local sculpture, and a collection of traditional dolls. Just east of here, at the tip of the peninsula just beyond the airstrip at Gjögur, a 2km trail leads from a small radar station to the towering sea cliffs at **Reykjaneshyrna**.

Clinging onto life at the end of the long bumpy road up the Strandir coast is the little fishing village of Norðurfjörður. Norðurfjörður has a shop, a petrol station and a few guesthouses, and it's the last place to stock up and indulge in some home comforts before heading off to Hornstrandir. About 2km beyond Norðurfjörður, at Krossnes, there's an open-air **geothermal swimming pool** (☎ 451 4048; adult/under 14 1kr250/100) on a wild black-pebble beach with some dramatic sea stacks.

Sleeping & Eating

Veigirsstadir (☎ 568 2533; www.fi.is; sites per person 1kr800, sb members/nonmembers 1kr1400/2000; ☎ May-Sep) Set in a large green building at N 66°03.080', W 21°33.970', this Ferðafélag Íslands hut has accommodation for 20 in rooms sleeping up to

four people. There's a fully equipped kitchen, a hot shower and a cosy atmosphere.

Gistiheimili Bergistanga (☎ 451 4003; gunnsteinn@simnet.is; sb 1kr2000) On the hill overlooking the harbour, this friendly guesthouse has good sleeping-bag accommodation in comfortable rooms, and a guest kitchen.

Ófeigsfjörður (☎ 554 4341) Heading north along the coastal walking trail towards Hornstrandir, this free basic camp site has toilets but no kitchen facilities or showers.

Getting There & Away

No buses run to Norðurfjörður, but **Íslandsflug** (☎ 570 8090) flies twice a week between Reykjavík and the airstrip at Gjögur, 16km south-east of Norðurfjörður. Fares start at 1kr5950 one way and the trip takes 50 minutes.

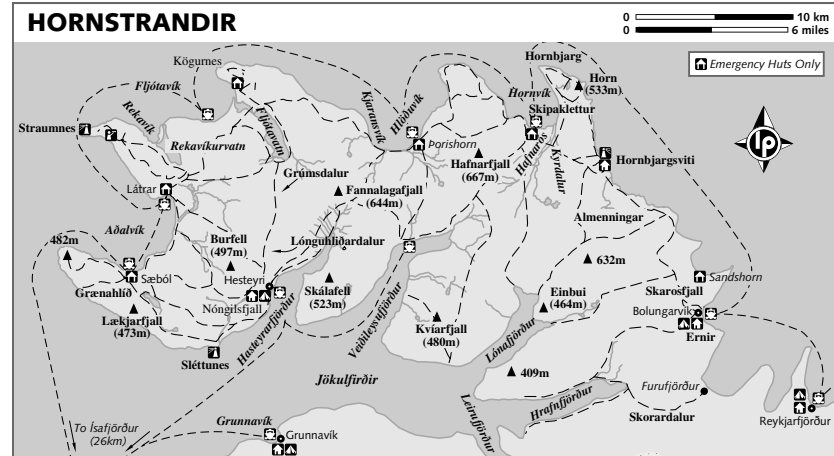
Sædis (☎ 852 9367; www.freydis.is) runs scheduled trips from Norðurfjörður to Hornvík (1kr6500) on Monday and Friday, and between Norðurfjörður and Reykjarfjörður (1kr5000) on Wednesday between July and mid-August. Trips to other points in Hornstrandir can be arranged on request.

HORNSTRANDIR

Craggy mountains, precarious sea cliffs and plunging waterfalls ring the wonderful uninhabited Hornstrandir peninsula at the northern end of the Westfjords. This is one of Europe's last true wilderness areas and covers some of the most extreme and inhospitable parts of the country. It's a fantastic destination for wilderness hiking, with challenging terrain and excellent opportunities for spotting arctic foxes, seals, whales and teeming bird life.

A handful of hardy farmers lived in Hornstrandir until the 1950s, but since 1975 the 580 sq km of tundra, fjord, glacier and alpine upland have been protected as a national monument and nature reserve. The area has some of the strictest preservation rules in Iceland, thanks to its incredibly rich, but fragile, vegetation.

There are no services available in Hornstrandir and hikers must be fully prepared to tackle all eventualities. The passes here are steep and you'll need to carry all your gear, so hiking can be slower than you might expect. In addition, most trails are unmarked, so it's essential to carry a good map and compass and have previous navigation experience. Rivers



have to be forded on some trails, and others are passable at low tide only, so it's a good idea to plan ahead and seek local advice before setting out.

The best time to visit is between late June and mid-August, with the bulk of visitors arriving during the last two weeks of July. Outside these times there are few people around and the weather is very unpredictable. If travelling in the off season it is essential to plan ahead and get local advice, as vast snow drifts with near-vertical faces can develop on the mountain passes. There are emergency huts with radios and heaters at various points in the park for use in case of sudden blizzards or storms.

TREKKING AT HORNSTRANDIR

The most popular starting points for hikes are Hesteyri and Hornvík. Many of the peninsula's easiest walks are around Hesteyri, where marked trails make the going quicker and safer. From the abandoned whaling station at Hesteyri you can hike north over the ridge to the coastal village of Sæból in Aðalvík in about six hours. From here it's an easy three hours or so to the cliff-top lighthouse at Straumnes. Heading east along the lagoon at Rekavík, you can follow the headland north to the pretty lake Fljótavatn (three to four hours), from where the Lönguhliðardalur and Grúmsdalur valleys head south back to Hesteyri (seven hours). A complete circuit starting either from Hesteyri or Sæból should take about three days.

For something less challenging, hike from Hesteyri to Látrar in about four hours, or loop back on a different trail in six to seven hours. A good option for experienced hikers is the two-day hike from Hesteyri to Hornvík. From Hornvík you can take a day hike to the towering bird cliffs at Hornbjarg. Most hikers stay in the Hornvík area for two to three days exploring trails around the headland.

Over on the eastern coast, boats can drop you near the mountain huts at Reykjarfjörður or Bolungarvík, or the hot spring and abandoned church at Furufjörður, the start of the trail to Hrafnafjörður. You can make the crossing in a day and be picked up by the Ísafjörður boat on the far side.

Outside the reserve but similarly remote is the mountainous spur at Grunnavík, bounded by the fjords Ísafjarðardjúp and Jökulfirðir. Boats run from Ísafjörður to the mountain hut here, and you can hike to dramatic sea cliffs along Snæfjallaströnd or walk up to the glacier Drangajökull along the Kaladalur valley. The best time to cross Drangajökull is in April, but hikers should be aware that it is a moving glacier with lots of craters. These can be particularly dangerous later in the summer. It is safest to join the glacier from a mountain and leave from a mountain, not from the valleys.

Hikers should bring a copy of the Landmælingar Íslands topographic sheet *Hornstrandir* 1:100,000 and tide tables for the area. Both are available at the tourist office in Ísafjörður. The tourist office in Ísafjörður can also recommend local guides.

RESPONSIBLE TREKKING IN HORNSTRANDIR

The rules for responsible travel apply anywhere you're hiking in Iceland, but because of Hornstrandir's particularly sensitive ecosystem and lack of infrastructure you need to be especially careful here. Follow these simple rules to keep you safe and the park protected.

- Leave everything as you find it. Take all rubbish out with you. Do not bury it, burn it or throw it in the toilets.
- Only camp in designated camp sites if at all possible.
- If you need to defecate outside the camp sites, carry a shovel, bury your waste and take toilet paper out with you.
- Do not light fires. Fires on grass can leave a mark for up to 10 years. A fire on a beach is an international emergency signal and may prompt an unnecessary and costly search and rescue mission. Bring a stove.
- Don't hike alone. This is one of the most difficult hiking areas in Iceland.
- Check the weather forecast before setting out. Do not travel if north or northeast winds are forecast. These almost guarantee heavy rain, snow and fog. Visibility can be reduced very quickly and it's easy to get stuck.

TOURS

It's easy enough to organise your own transport and accommodation at Hornstrandir and then hike independently, but you need to be well prepared as the terrain is rough and the going difficult. For inexperienced hikers a tour can be a much better and safer bet.

Vesturferðir (☎ 456 5111; www.vesturferdir.is) runs a variety of organised trips from Ísafjörður, including day trips (see p179), three-day hiking and boating trips along the old postal route from Sandeyri to Grunnavík and then Hesteyri, and five-day hiking trips to Reykjarfjörður and Bolungarvík.

The Icelandic trekking organisation **Ferðafélag Íslands** (☎ 568 2533; www.fi.is; Mörkín 6, IS-108 Reykjavík) also offers a variety of guided Hornstrandir hikes several times each summer.

SLEEPING

There are various accommodation options along the coast, accessible on foot or by boat from Ísafjörður or Drangnes. Camping in the park camp sites is free, but camping at private camp sites costs between 1kr800 and 1kr1200. Expect to pay 1kr1500 to 1kr3000 for sleeping-bag space. All the following open in summer only and have guest kitchens.

On the east coast, camping and sleeping-bag accommodation is available at **Reykjarfjörður** (☎ 456 7215, 853 1615; reykjarfjordur@simnet.is) and **Bolungarvík** (☎ 456 7192, 852 8267). You can also stay at the lighthouse at **Hornbjargsviti** (☎ 566 6762; www.ovissuferdir.net; sites 1kr800, sb 1kr2200).

On the west coast, camping and sleeping-bag accommodation is provided at **Hesteyri** (☎ 456 7183, 853 6953; sb 1kr1500) and **Grunnavík** (☎ 852 4819; www.grunnavik.is; sites 1kr1200, sb 1kr3000; ☽ mid-Jun–mid-Aug).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Getting to Hornstrandir requires a boat trip from Ísafjörður, from where there are regular services, or from Drangnes or Norðurfjörður, from where boats run on request.

If you'd rather make the journey on foot, you can fly from Reykjavík to Gjógur (see p194) and walk in from there. Another possible access route for trekkers is to take the Ísafjörður bus as far as the junction of Rtes 61 and 635 and then walk north along Rte 635 to the guesthouse at Dalbær (41km). From here, you can head up the Snæfjallaströnd coast to Grunnavík.

Scheduled boat services run from Ísafjörður from June to August providing there is a minimum of four passengers. Tickets can be booked directly with the boat companies or through the tour company **Vesturferðir** (☎ 456 5111; www.vesturferdir.is).

Sjóferðir (☎ 456 3879; www.sjoferdir.is) sails from Ísafjörður to Hesteyri (1kr3800) five times a week, with two of these services continuing to Veiðileysufjörður. There are two sailings weekly to Grunnavík (1kr3000), which continue on to Hrafnfjörður, and two trips weekly to Hornvík (1kr6500) and on to Sæból (1kr4500).

Ferðapjónustan Grunnavík (☎ 456 4664; www.grunnavik.is) runs scheduled boat trips from Bolungarvík (near Ísafjörður) to Grunnavík (1kr3000), Hesteyri (1kr3500) and Hrafnfjörður (1kr4200) on Friday and Sunday from mid-June to mid-August.

On the east coast you can charter a boat from Drangnes or Norðurfjörður for trips to Reykjarfjörður, Hornvík, Bolungarvík and a number of uninhabited coves. For details, contact **Ásbjörn Magnússon** (☎ 451 3238) in Drangnes or **Sædís** (☎ 852 9367; www.freydis.is) in Norðurfjörður.

WARNING

Before disembarking on Hornstrandir, let the boat operator know where and when you want to be picked up. If your schedule changes while you are walking, pass a message back to the mainland through one of the guesthouses or through another hiker to let them know that you won't be there to meet the boat; otherwise, a costly and unnecessary search-and-rescue operation might be launched.

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