



IR PROMOTION

Charming Town with a Big Heart

AKUREYRI, for a town of 18.000 has surprisingly many museums, galleries, shops, restaurants, cafés, clubs and concert venues.

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Do you know the feeling of being in a hurry and then the traffic light turns red just as you thought you might cross the road, delaying you by a precious minute? If you're in Akureyri for the first time, though, your irritation might turn into a pleasant surprise. What does a minute matter anyway when the red light blinking at you is heart-shaped?

After the crash and burn of the banking collapse in 2008, the people of Akureyri spread the love by gluing hearts all over town. The initiative has been much appreciated and visitors comment on its friendly atmosphere, coupled with free buses and the good weather locals like to boast about. They also take pride in the many tall trees around town, the beautiful Botanical Garden—its green heart—and forested areas on its outskirts, Kjarnaskógur being a local favorite for outdoor recreation. The Akureyri golf course is located nearby, and golfers should not let the annual Arctic Open pass them by, when golf is played under the midnight sun at the brightest time of year.

PRISTINE WINTERTIME

In winter, Akureyri looks more pristine still, with a carpet of powder snow covering the landscape. It only takes about ten minutes to get to the ski lifts in Mt. Hlíðarfjall, one of the biggest ski resorts in the country, an advantage tourists appreciate as much as locals. On clear winter days after darkness falls, the northern lights often come out, dancing across the sky in striking green, purple and even red, a major attraction among visitors to North Iceland. Being the obvious pastime on a hot summer's day, don't forget to take a dip in the Akureyri geothermal swimming pool in winter either. There is no better way to end an active day in the snow than to relax in a hot tub, feel how the water envelopes the body and massages every muscle, while breathing in the crisp frosty air and watching the steam rise towards the millions of stars in the winter sky.

Summer or winter, visitors can choose from a variety of tours by bus, jeep, boat, airplane, horse and on foot which can be booked from Akureyri. A stroll through Innbærinn, the oldest part of town, where colorful timber houses line the strip of land between the pond Leirutjörn and a steep hill with a seaside view, is well worth it.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Nature needs no promotion, but there are many more reasons for visiting Akureyri. For a town of 18,000 inhabitants, it has surprisingly many museums, galleries, shops, restaurants, cafés, clubs and concert venues; the local art and music scene is bustling and the town is home to the country's only professional theater outside the capital region. The distinct culture center Hof, which opened at the harbor in 2010, has a varied program where everyone should find something to their liking. There is more to Akureyri than meets the eye. Two inhabited islands—Hrísey (almost 40 kilometers away by air) and Grímsey (at a distance of more than 100 kilometers)—are part of the municipality, with which they merged in 2004 and 2009, respectively.

ISLANDS WITHIN REACH

It only takes the ferry 15 minutes to sail to Hrísey from Árskógssandur, a half-an-hour's drive from Akureyri. This 'Pearl of Eyjafjörður,' which has been a nature reserve since 1977, is famous for its varied birdlife and vegetation, and in recent years, the delicious blue mussels that grow in the crystal clear waters off its shores. The island oozes a special kind of energy and visitors seek peace by its source on the eastern part. Visitors can take a ride on a hay wagon pulled by a tractor—the main means of transport on Hrísey—through the idyllic little village.

Grímsey, Iceland's northernmost inhabited island which lies on the Arctic Circle, can be reached by ferry from Dalvík (a bit further than Árskógssandur), or by air from Akureyri. Also a paradise for bird lovers, its sea cliffs are filled with nesting puffins, guillemots and other seabirds in the summer. Locals undertake a hazardous practice to collect their eggs: lower themselves in a rope over the edge of the vertical cliffs. A must while visiting Grímsey is walking across the Arctic Circle—those who do can get a certificate to prove it. The summer solstice, when the sun doesn't set at all, is regularly celebrated on the island in late June.

Although these North Icelandic communities are on the opposite side of the country from the capital, they are easily accessible. The drive between Reykjavík and Akureyri is approximately four and a half hours on the Ring Road and the flight only takes 45 minutes. There are scheduled flights to Akureyri several times a day year round, and in the summer, also direct international flights, or with a stopover at Keflavík International Airport.✈



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2 WINTERTIME It only takes about ten minutes to get to the ski lifts in Mt. Hlíðarfjall, one of the biggest ski resorts in the country

3 CULTURE Restaurants, cafés, clubs and concert venues; the local art and music scene is bustling.

You have every reason to visit Akureyri; go to visitakureyri.is and be tempted.