



NORTH ICELAND  
**AKUREYRI**  
D E S T I N A T I O N  
G U I D E





# CONTENT

- 
- > About Akureyri
  - > 10 reasons to visit
  - > How to get there
  - > History
  - > TOP 5 Attractions
  - > TOP 5 Nature
  - > TOP 5 Culture
  - > Day tours
  - > Annual Events
  - > Dining
  - > Rest easy, sleep tight
  - > VisitAkureyri



# WELCOME TO

# AKUREYRI

Akureyri is a charming town in northern Iceland, beautifully nestled between high mountains along the Eyjafjörður fjord. Known as the "Capital of the North," Akureyri offers a delightful mix of natural sights, cultural experiences, and vibrant local life.

With a population of only around 20,000, the town is packed with services and attractions for both leisure and business travelers. From whale watching and geothermal baths to unique museums, local restaurants, and charming shops, there's something for everyone.

The town's history stretches back to Iceland's early settlement. By the 20th century, it had developed into a key hub for agriculture, fish processing, education, and various businesses, solidifying its role as the main center for all of North Iceland.

Today, Akureyri is celebrated for its vibrant cultural scene, diverse range of services, and status as a popular destination for both locals and tourists.

Akureyri also serves as an ideal base for exploring northern Iceland's breathtaking natural wonders. From the midnight sun in summer to skiing in winter, this northern gem provides unforgettable experiences year-round. Discover why Akureyri should be at the top of your travel list. Let's go!





# 10 REASONS TO VISIT

- **Fjord Views:** Nestled by Eyjafjörður, Iceland's longest fjord, with breathtaking scenery.
- **Northern Lights:** A prime spot for viewing the aurora borealis from late August to mid-April.
- **Whale Watching:** One of Iceland's best spots to see whales and dolphins, all within the protection of a stunning fjord.
- **Vibrant Cultural Scene:** Art galleries, museums, and lively music venues.
- **Skiing and Snowboarding:** Excellent winter sports at Mt. Hlíðarfjall, just an 8-minute drive from town (Season: December-April)
- **Geothermal Pools:** Enjoy pools, spas, and lagoons year-round — including Forest Lagoon, Earth lagoon, Geosea, Beer Spa and public pools.
- **Midnight Sun:** Nearly 24 hours of daylight in summer, from May to August.
- **Charming Downtown:** Explore quaint shops, cozy cafés, and excellent restaurants.
- **Hiking and the Outdoors:** Explore one of the many recreational areas in and around Akureyri. The Botanical Gardens, Glerá Valley, Mt. Súlur, and the Krossanesborgir Nature Reserve are just a few of the options awaiting.
- **Gateway to Northern Adventures:** Close to attractions like Goðafoss waterfall, Siglufjörður, and Lake Mývatn. The Arctic Coast Way runs through Akureyri.



# HOW TO GET THERE

Akureyri is highly accessible, with an international airport offering direct flights from the Netherlands (Amsterdam), the UK (Manchester and Gatwick), and Switzerland (Zürich), summer and winter.

Travelers arriving at Iceland's main international airport in Keflavík (southwest) can reach Akureyri by connecting through Reykjavík's domestic airport, with multiple daily flights (40-minute flight time). Alternatively, the scenic drive north along Iceland's Ring Road (Route 1) spans around 400 km, taking approximately 5 hours by car. Scheduled buses also operate up to twice daily, with a journey time of about 6 hours.



Akureyri International Airport is conveniently located just 3 km (a 5-minute drive) from the town center. Domestic flights operated by Icelandair and Norlandair connect Akureyri with several locations, including Reykjavík, Grímsey, Vopnafjörður, and Þórshöfn.

International connections are available through EasyJet (UK), Edelweiss Air and Kontiki (Switzerland), Voigt Travel (Netherlands), and various other charter operators, making it easy to reach Akureyri from a range of destinations. For more info about the airport: [www.innanlandsflugvelli.is/en/akureyri-airport/](http://www.innanlandsflugvelli.is/en/akureyri-airport/)



For ground transport, several car rentals are available on-site e.g.: Avis, Hertz, Europcar and Budget.

Taxis are stationed outside the terminal. A pre-bookable airport bus service links the airport with the town center and all major hotels in connection with easyJets flights. [www.sysli.is/en/akureyri-airport-bus/airport](http://www.sysli.is/en/akureyri-airport-bus/airport)

Scheduled public buses run between Reykjavík and Akureyri, as well as between Akureyri and towns in northern and eastern Iceland. For schedules and more information, visit; [straeto.is/en](http://straeto.is/en)



**AKUREYRI**

# HISTORY

Akureyri, often called the "Capital of North Iceland," was officially founded in the 18th century. Its strategic location along the Eyjafjörður fjord made it a prime spot for fishing and trade. By the late 1700s, Akureyri had begun to thrive as a commercial center. In the 20th century, Akureyri grew as an essential hub for agriculture, fish processing, education, and business, drawing an increasing number of residents. Today, with a population of around 20,000.



The first settlers in Akureyri are believed to have arrived around the 9th century. According to Icelandic sagas, Helgi magri and his wife Þórun hynna were among the earliest inhabitants of the Eyjafjörður area. Their legacy is commemorated by a statue located on one of the town's hills.

During the Middle Ages, Gásir, situated 11 km north of Akureyri, was the main trading hub in northern Iceland. Today, visitors can still view the grass-covered ruins of this historic site. Each July, Gásir comes alive for a few days as craftsmen dressed in medieval attire recreate life from that era, demonstrating traditional skills and selling handcrafted goods.

After Akureyri became the main trading hub, it was granted municipal rights in 1862, which spurred its development. The town's oldest house, Laxdalshús, dates back to 1795. Notable areas to explore include the historic neighborhoods of Innbærinn and Oddeyrin, both rich in history and featuring notable buildings and museums.

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**BEST IN  
EUROPE**

**#1** AKUREYRI, ICELAND

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**BEST IN  
EUROPE**

2019

**The Arctic Coast Way**

Top 10 destination



**Akureyri #1**

**Top European destination for 2015 &  
Arctic Coast Way Top 10 in 2019**



# TOP 5

# ATTRACTIONS

Did you know that Akureyri offers a wealth of sights with unique perspectives that change with the seasons? Whether bathed in the glow of the midnight sun or dusted with winter snow. Here are five sights that visitors are sure to love:



## > BOTANICAL GARDENS

Stroll through one of the world's northernmost botanical gardens, showcasing a diverse collection of Icelandic and international plants. Open year-round, it's especially captivating in summer when the flowers are in full bloom.



## > OLD TOWN

Wander through the charming streets of Akureyri's historic district, lined with colorful wooden houses and intriguing museums. At its heart is Laxdalshús, the town's oldest house, dating back to 1795, adding to the area's quaint atmosphere.



## > HEARTS IN TRAFFIC LIGHTS

The heart-shaped traffic lights in Akureyri are a unique and beloved feature of the town. Introduced in 2008 as a way to lift community spirits. Today, they've become an iconic part of the town's identity, adding a cheerful touch to the visit.



## > CENTER OF TOWN

Hafnarstræti, the town center's main street, is lined with charming cafés, restaurants, and shops. Notable photo spots include e.g. an adjustable heart-shaped frame, a troll and views of the iconic Akureyri Church with its famous steps.



## > GEOTHERMAL POOLS

Relax in one of the local pools, such as the Akureyri Swimming Pool, which features hot tubs, waterslides, and spacious pools. Open year-round, it's the perfect place to unwind after a day of exploring and offers an even more thrilling experience in winter.

For more ideas of places to visit look here  
[www.visitakureyri.is/en/see-and-do/attractions](http://www.visitakureyri.is/en/see-and-do/attractions)

# TOP 5

# ACTIVE BY NATURE

Did you know that Akureyri offers a wealth of outdoor activities throughout the year? With its stunning landscape and diverse options for adventure, Akureyri is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. Here are five top activities that visitors are sure to love:



## > HIKING

Explore the nearby outdoor areas and mountains for breathtaking views over Eyjafjörður fjord. See hiking options in Akureyri: [www.visitakureyri.is/en/see-and-do/hiking](http://www.visitakureyri.is/en/see-and-do/hiking)



## > WHALE WATCHING

Embark on a tour to encounter humpback whales, dolphins, and seals up close in the fjord. Two operators located in Akureyri and others close by.



## > WINTER SPORTS

Enjoy skiing at Mt. Hlíðarfjall, one of Iceland's premier ski resorts or try mountain and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, husky sledges and / or snow scootering in nearby areas.



## > CYCLING

Explore a range of cycling paths, from mountain bike tracks to gravel and asphalt routes, winding through the stunning landscapes of valleys, mountains, nature reserves, and forests. Discover cycling options in Akureyri: [www.visitakureyri.is/en/moya/extras/cycle-routes](http://www.visitakureyri.is/en/moya/extras/cycle-routes)



## > BIRD WATCHING

The area around Akureyri is a birdwatcher's paradise, featuring nature reserves and forests that attract a wide variety of species. Grímsey Island is home to large colonies of seabirds, including puffins. For duck enthusiasts, Lake Mývatn is a must-visit, while Hrísey Island and the Svarvaðardalur reserve offer diverse birdwatching opportunities.

For a deeper dive into these activities and more, such as ziplining, fishing, skating, diving, sledding, horse riding, and much more, visit our webpage at [www.visitakureyri.is/en/see-and-do/you-can-do-anything](http://www.visitakureyri.is/en/see-and-do/you-can-do-anything). Craft a memorable itinerary filled with excitement and adventure!



# TOP 5

## HISTORY AND CULTURE

From Viking settlers to thriving modern-day culture, Akureyri boasts a rich tapestry of history in Iceland's northern capital. Here, your clients can explore ancient tales while enjoying the vibrant life of a contemporary town. Akureyri is not just a gateway to breathtaking landscapes; it also offers a glimpse into Iceland's past, making it an ideal destination for history and culture enthusiasts.



### > AKUREYRI CHURCH

Akureyri Church, an iconic symbol of the town, is a Lutheran church consecrated in 1940. Positioned above the town center, it is accessible via a 102-step staircase that offers panoramic views of the area.



### > MUSEUMS

Akureyri offers over 10 different museums and exhibitions. At the Akureyri Museum, delve into the town's history, or visit the Akureyri Art Museum, a vibrant cultural institution and leading venue for contemporary art, also supporting the local art scene.



### > THE OLD TOWN

Stroll through this charming area with beautifully preserved wooden houses, showcasing Akureyri's oldest neighborhood and rich architectural heritage. The area also hosts most of the town's museums.



### > LAUFÁS

A Historic Turf Farm, just a short drive from Akureyri, Laufás features beautifully preserved turf houses and a quaint church, offering a glimpse into life and building traditions of the past.



### > OUTDOOR ART

Take a walk through Akureyri's different neighborhoods to discover a variety of outdoor art. Some highlights include the Iceland Bell by the university, Auðhumla and the milkmaid by the dairy, The Outlaws along Eyrarlandsvegur road, and Thor near the comprehensive college.

For a deeper dive into these and more places and Akureyri's rich past, visit [visitakureyri.is](http://visitakureyri.is) to craft a memorable itinerary filled with history and culture.

# DAY TOURS

# FROM AKUREYRI

Akureyri is an perfect base to explore the North of Iceland. Its central location makes it easy to access a wide variety of nature and cultural sites, of which most are in less than 150 km distance from Akureyri making them an excellent day tour options.



## > LAKE MÝVATN

The Mývatn area is renowned for its unique volcanic landscape and rich birdlife. Highlights include Dimmuborgir lava fields, Hverfjall crater, Grjótagjá cave, Námaskarð mud pools, and the Mývatn Nature Baths and just a bit more to the east you find Dettifoss and Ásbyrgi.



## > GOÐAFOSS

Goðafoss, known as "the waterfall of the gods," is one of Iceland's most stunning waterfalls. It earned its name when chieftain Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði threw his statues of heathen gods into the falls after Iceland's conversion to Christianity around 1000 AD.



## > GRÍMSEY

The island is home to around 60 residents and over a million seabirds, is Iceland's northernmost point, lying on the Arctic Circle. The island boasts dramatic cliffs, 24-hour sunlight in summer, and one of the country's largest puffin colonies. Accessible year-round by flight and ferry.



## > HRÍSEY

Iceland's second-largest island, features a picturesque fishing village with colorful houses and is a paradise for bird watchers. Visitors can explore three scenic walking routes, a local museum, and a geothermal pool. Hrísey is just a 15-minute ferry ride from Ásskógssandur.



## > SIGLUFJÖRÐUR

Nestled by a stunning fjord and surrounded by the towering mountains of the Troll Peninsula, Siglufjörður is a historic fishing hub renowned for its picturesque old houses and the award-winning Herring Museum.

For more ideas of places to visit look here  
<https://www.visitakureyri.is/en/see-and-do/attractions#utan-akureyrar>



# DAY TOURS

# FROM AKUREYRI



## > ARCTIC COAST WAY

The Arctic Coast Way is Iceland's first official touring route. It is 900 km long and takes in 21 villages and 18 municipalities – stretching along the coast and around the peninsulas of North Iceland. The route was formally opened in June 2019. Akureyri is approximately at the center of the route.



## > DETTIFOSS

This waterfall is considered to be not only Iceland's but also Europe's most powerful, with 500 cubic meters of water plunging over its edge every second. Standing 45 meters high and 100 meters wide, it is fed by a glacier river that originates from Vatnajökull, Europe's largest glacier.



## > AKUREYRI COUNTRYSIDE

Features highlights such as the Forest Lagoon, six charming churches—including the old turf church "Saurbæjarkirkja" and the cow sculpture, Edda. The Christmas Garden, where the holiday spirit is celebrated year-round, as well as the Sundry Collection and the White Plague Centre.



## > HJALTEYRI

One of many small fishing villages along the fjord. Here, one can stroll along the beach, hike around the Hjalteyri pond, admire the old, colorful houses, or visit an art exhibition. For those seeking adventure, go for a dive to Strýturnar, a remarkable underwater geothermal cone that is unique to Iceland and known for its warm waters and rich marine life.



## > ÁSBYRGI

A part of Vatnajökull National Park and is known for its unique natural beauty. The cliffs that form this stunning geological phenomenon are approximately 100 meters (330 feet) high, creating a protective, 1-kilometer (0.6-mile) wide horseshoe-shaped canyon.

For more ideas of places to visit look here  
<https://www.visitakureyri.is/en/see-and-do/attractions#utan-akureyrar>



# ANNUAL EVENTS

Akureyri and the neighbouring municipalities offer over 20 annual events ranging from sport events to town festivals and cultural events.

## Dates 2026

- 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> April: Easter in Akureyri
- 11<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> April: Children’s Culture Festival
- 22<sup>nd</sup>–25<sup>th</sup> April: Donald Duck Ski Competition
- 23<sup>rd</sup> April: Museum Day
- 7<sup>th</sup> June: Fishermen’s Day
- 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June: Akureyri Motor Events
- 17<sup>th</sup> June: The National Day
- 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June: The Arctic Open – golf tournament
- 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June: Hrísey Pride
- 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June: Motorbike Days
- 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June: Summer Solstice Festival in Grímsey
- 20<sup>th</sup> June: Airshow Day
- 22<sup>nd</sup>– 26<sup>th</sup> June: Hiking week
- 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> July: NI & Pollamót football tournaments
- 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> July: Folk Music Festival Siglufjörður
- 4<sup>th</sup> July: Terrain Run in Þorvaldsdalur
- 5<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> July: Summer Concerts Akureyri Church (Sun)
- 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> July: Hrísey Festival
- 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July: Music Festival “Mannfólk breytist í slím”
- 25<sup>th</sup> July: Family festival Siglufjörður “Trilludagar”
- 31<sup>st</sup> July – 2<sup>nd</sup> August: Súlu Vertical-Mountain trail run
- 31<sup>st</sup> July – 3<sup>rd</sup> August: Family festival “Ein með öllu”
- 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> August: Dance Festival Hrísey
- 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> August: Akureyri Town festival
- 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> October: Cosy Days
- 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> October: A! Performance Festival
- 29<sup>th</sup> November – 23<sup>rd</sup> December: Advent Festival



# DINING

## AKUREYRI AND LOCAL CUISINE

Akureyri is renowned not only for its stunning landscapes but also for its thriving food scene. The region is rich in fresh, locally sourced ingredients, including seafood from Eyjafjörður, vegetables from geothermal greenhouses, and high-quality dairy and meat products from local farms. Visitors can enjoy a mix of traditional Icelandic dishes and creative cuisine in the town's cozy cafes, bistros, and restaurants, all celebrating the natural bounty of North Iceland. The town and neighbouring area offers about 40 restaurants plus cafés ect. See more here [www.visitakureyri.is/en/moya/page/tourism-marketing-culture](http://www.visitakureyri.is/en/moya/page/tourism-marketing-culture)



### > RESTAURANTS, CAFÉS AND BARS

Local eateries offer everything from pizza and traditional Icelandic dishes to international cuisine. Akureyri boast around 3,500 seats across 50 establishments, plus additional seating in nearby areas.

As a fishing town at heart, the restaurants serve excellent seafood and tasty lamb meat perfectly from the nearby farms as well as vegetables. All paired with a glass of wine or a local craft beer.



### > LOCAL FOOD

The area is home to numerous local food producers, including farms for meat, dairy, eggs, and vegetables, as well as rich fishing grounds nearby –ensuring short transport distances and fresh products. It also boasts some of Iceland's top beverage producers, such as Viking Brugg and Kaldi, both renowned, award-winning breweries.



### > LOCAL SPECIALITIES

For local specialties, try the classic Icelandic meat soup or popular foods like a hot dog with fries or a hamburger served with fries in between. Around Christmas, don't miss the smoked lamb, traditionally enjoyed with 'Laufabrauð,' a delicately decorated flatbread from North Iceland.

# REST EASY, SLEEP TIGHT

Akureyri offers a wide range of accommodation to suit every traveler. From cozy guesthouses and charming hotels to modern apartments and countryside cabins, there's something for everyone. Whether you're looking for a peaceful retreat surrounded by nature or a comfortable stay in the heart of town, Akureyri provides the perfect base to unwind after a day of exploring the town and North of Iceland.

Rest easy, knowing you'll find just the right place to recharge.



## > HOTELS

Akureyri currently offers nine hotels open year-round and one operating exclusively in summer – a total of ten hotels with approximately 800 rooms and 1,640 beds.

In addition, a new property is under construction: Hótel Skáld, Curio Collection by Hilton, featuring 85 rooms and scheduled to open in 2025.



## > ACCOMMODATION IN GENERAL

Akureyri offers a wide range of accommodations, with approximately 1,000 rooms and 2,300 beds, complemented by a year-round campsite. Within a 30-minute drive from the town, visitors can also find six charming country hotels, along with guesthouses and private accommodations located in small villages and scenic countryside settings.



## > MORE INFORMATION

To get information about the options in the area please visit our homepage:

<https://www.visitakureyri.is/en/plan-your-visit/accommodation>



**VISIT AKUREYRI**

**AT YOUR SERVICE**

If you need further assistance, please contact us. We are happy to help promote our region!

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# THANK YOU



Akureyri is the heart of northern Iceland, where the adventure truly begins.



*Welcome*