



The Westfjords

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Why Go?

The Westfjords is where Iceland's dramatic landscapes come to a riveting climax and where mass tourism disappears – only about 10% of Iceland's visitors ever see the region. Jagged bird cliffs and broad multihued dream beaches flank the south. Rutted dirt roads snake north along jaw-dropping coastal fjords and over immense central mountains, revealing tiny fishing villages embracing traditional ways of life. In the far north, the Hornstrandir hiking reserve crowns the quiet region, and is home to cairn-marked walking paths revealing bird life, Arctic foxes and ocean vistas. The Strandir coast is less visited still, with an end-of-the-line, mystical feel, geothermal springs and minuscule oceanside hamlets.

Leave plenty of time: unpaved roads weave around fjords and over pothole-pitted mountain passes, but the scenery is never short of breathtaking. Once you get used to it, you may not want to leave.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Tjörúhúsið (p210)
- ➔ Litlibær (p212)
- ➔ Heimsendi Bistro (p202)
- ➔ Simbahöllin (p205)
- ➔ Stúkuhúsið (p202)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Guesthouse Kirkjuból í Bjarnardal (p206)
- ➔ Hótel Laugarhóll (p219)
- ➔ Urðartindur (p220)
- ➔ Camping in Hornstrandir Nature Reserve (p214)

Road Distances (km)

Þingeyri	129				
Ísafjörður	175	47			
Hólmavík	234	265	221		
Norðurfjörður	333	348	303	105	
Reykjavík	397	405	450	230	334
Patreksfjörður					
Þingeyri					
Ísafjörður					
Hólmavík					
Norðurfjörður					

SOUTH COAST

The sparsely populated south coast of the Westfjords is a tiny version of what's to come on the wild and wonderful peninsulas further north. Remote fjords twist into the coastline, and though there's been a new road built to cut across their desolate isolation, it's still a bare and dramatic place. It's the primary breeding area for the endangered white-tailed eagle.

Reykhólar

Tiny Reykhólar sits on the southern edge of the Reykjanes Peninsula, a minor geothermal area and gateway to the southernmost Westfjords. Gilsfjörður is an eagle breeding ground, and west along the coast, the key inlets for eagle spotting are Þorskafljörður, Djúpiðfjörður and Vatnsfjörður.

Sights & Activities

Reykhólar Tourist Office Museum MUSEUM
(☎ 894 1011; www.visitreykholahreppur.is; kr750; ☉ 11am–5pm Jun–Aug) The well-managed tourist office has a little museum with antique boats, stuffed birds and a movie of local life in the 1950s and '60s. There's a small on-site cafe (snacks kr500 to kr1200), plus lots of Westfjords information.

White-Tailed Eagle Centre MUSEUM
(☎ 894 1011; www.visitreykholahreppur.is; Króksfjarðarnes; adult/child kr500/free; ☉ 11am–6pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug) The White-Tailed Eagle Centre highlights the attempts to increase the population of the struggling species, which peaked in 2011 at 66 nests. It also has a handicraft market. The centre is just north of the causeway on Rte 60 that crosses Gilsfjörður.

Norður Salt LANDMARK
(www.nordursalt.com) Norður Salt, on the point in Reykhólar, processes sea salt from the local salt bays. You can peek in its windows.

Reykhólar Sea Baths HOT-POT
(Sjávarsmíðjan; ☎ 577 4800; www.sjavarsmidjan.is; adult/child kr3900/free; ☉ 1–7pm Jun–Aug) In windswept Reykhólar, the seaweed baths give you soft skin and a view of the coastal plain, rimmed by salt bays.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a couple of simple places to stay in Reykhólar plus a campground, and there

is camping in Miðjanes (about 4km to the west of Reykhólar), where a guesthouse is also being added.

There are no restaurants or grocery stores in Reykhólar, just a minuscule minimart and cafe at the tourist office. Bring in your own supplies.

Reykhólar HI Hostel GUESTHOUSE ☼
(Álftaland; ☎ 892 7558, bookings 575 6700; www.hostel.is; dm kr4750) This hostel under new ownership has two simple eight-bed dorm rooms, two soothing hot-pots out back and a guest kitchen. There's a discount for HI members of kr750.

Hótel Bjarkalundur HOTEL ☼☼
(☎ 434 7863; www.bjarkalundur.is; d with/without bathroom incl breakfast kr26,900/19,900, cottages kr24,500; ☉ May–Oct) On Rte 60, just north of the turn-off to Reykhólar, Hótel Bjarkalundur is a summer hotel with an impersonal motel feel. The cottages are quieter. There's a petrol station and a restaurant serving lacklustre grub (mains kr1700 to kr4500). Wi-fi is spotty.

Getting There & Away

Strætó (www.bus.is):

• Bus 59 Hólmavík–Búðardalur–Borgarnes stops at Króksfjarðarnes' White-Tailed Eagle Centre.

Flókalundur

Flókalundur, the junction between the road up to Arnarfjörður and Ísafjörður, and Rte 62 to the southwestern peninsulas, sits at the head of Vatnsfjörður. The two-house encampment at Flókalundur was named after the Viking explorer Hrafna-Flóki Vilgerðarson, who gave Iceland its name in AD 860.

Today, the most interesting thing in the area is **Hellulaug** (Rte 62; by donation) a natural hot-pot in among the rocks near the seashore. At high tide, do as the locals do and jump in the frigid sea, then run back to the pool to warm up (38°C). The **Vatnsfjörður Nature Reserve** was established to protect the area around Lake Vatnsdalsvatn, a nesting site for harlequin ducks and great northern divers (loons). Various hiking trails run around the lake and into the hills beyond. **Hótel Flókalundur** (☎ 456 2011; www.flokalundur.is; sites per person kr1400, d incl breakfast kr24,200; ☉ mid-May–mid-Sep) is a recently updated bungalow-style hotel with small, tidy wood-panelled rooms with renovated