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Iceland Today

Iceland's tourism has boomed in recent years. Thirty per cent growth each year since 2010 has helped the country stabilise its economy following the 2008 banking crash. Tourism has also brought a host of changes, and infrastructure and logistical planning are rushing to keep up. Meanwhile, the country is easing the capital controls put in place during the crash, and the populace is pressuring the government to respond to high-profile scandals.

Best on Film

Heima (2007) Follow band Sigur Rós as they perform throughout Iceland.

Rams (*Hrútar*; 2015) Engrossing tale of two brothers and their sheep.

The Homecoming (*Blóðberg*; 2015) Sly modern comedy-drama where a 'perfect' family's life goes topsy-turvy.

Of Horses and Men (2013) A surreal portrait of the intertwining lives of men and horses.

101 Reykjavík (2000) Dark comedy exploring sex, drugs and the life of a loafer in downtown Reykjavík.

Jar City (2006) Carefully crafted detective thriller based on the novel by Arnaldur Indriðason.

Best in Print

The Draining Lake (Arnaldur Indriðason; 2004) One of many engrossing tales from a master of Nordic Noir.

Independent People (Halldór Laxness; 1934–35) Bleak tragi-comedy from the Nobel Laureate.

The Sagas of Icelanders (Jane Smiley et al; 2001) Excellent, readable translations of Iceland's epic, often brutal, tales.

Devil's Island (Einar Kárason; 1983) American culture clashes with rural tradition in postwar Reykjavík.

The Blue Fox (Sjón; 2003) Poetic 19th-century fantasy-adventure tale.

Tourism Boom

Curious travellers started to arrive following the 2010 Eyjafjallajökull eruption and a smart publicity campaign led by the Iceland tourism board, which helped spread word of Iceland's charms. The tourism boom saw a 264% increase from 2010 to 2015, with about 1.3 million visitors arriving in 2015. Businesses catering to tourists also boomed, and tourism now accounts for 31% of Iceland's export of goods and services (up from 18.8% in 2010) and 4.6% of the GDP, and employs 14.1% of the country's workforce. There are no signs of a slowdown. The country continues to provide spectacles that capture attention: from rumbling volcanoes like Katla to the victories of Iceland's football (soccer) team in the 2016 European League championship, and as a top filming destination for the likes of *Game of Thrones* and sci-fi blockbusters.

Tourism Repercussions

The strengthening of the economy as a result of tourism income is indisputable, and many locals appreciate the new activities and services, and the increase in international profile that the industry brings. When polled, 56% of Icelanders acknowledge the job opportunities created by tourism, and 62% say that it has increased their interest in Iceland's natural landscapes.

But there's a flipside. Short-term apartment rentals such as Airbnb in the centre of Reykjavík are pushing locals out of the rental market. News reports consistently feature the destruction of the environment, or rescues of stranded tourists from glaciers, mountainsides and wave-swept beaches by Iceland's search and rescue team, a volunteer- and donation-based operation. In 2016 more than 75% of Icelanders considered the pressure from tourism on the environment to be too high.

Responses include limits on Airbnb-type rentals, additional cautionary signs and barriers at some sights,