**The Westfjords**

Why Go?

Like giant lobster claws snipping away at the Arctic Circle, the Westfjords is where Iceland’s dramatic landscapes come to a riveting climax. Jagged cliffs and broad sweeping beaches flank the south, while dirt roads snake along the tortuous coastline dotted with tiny fishing villages clinging doggedly to a traditional way of life. Further on, stone towers rise from the deep, hoisting tundra-ridden buffs up towards the northern elements. The Hornstrandir hiking reserve crowns the quiet region; it is, undoubtedly, the island’s most scenic terrain, with countless fjords and cairn-marked walking paths.

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.

---

**Best Places to Eat**

» Heydalur (p172)
» Simbahöllin (p164)
» Þjóruhúsið (p169)
» Bræðraborg (p169)

**Best Places to Stay**

» Hôtel Dýupavík (p177)
» Hôtel Laugarhóll (p177)
» Einarshúsið (p170)
» Camping in Hornstrandir (p173)

---

**Road Distances (km)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Patreksfjörður</th>
<th>Þingeyri</th>
<th>Ísafjörður</th>
<th>Hólmavík</th>
<th>Nordurfjörður</th>
<th>Reykjavík</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patreksfjörður</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Þingeyri</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ísafjörður</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hólmavík</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>221</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordurfjörður</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

©Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd
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 peninsulas further north. However, the ferry connection to Stykkishólmur on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula is a handy route to the area.

Travellers who don’t take the Baldur ferry will enter the Westfjords from the historic Dalir region in west Iceland. If you have your sights set on the Strandir coast, follow the bitumen road to Hólmavík.

Reykhólar

Reykhólar sits on the tip of the kidney-shaped Reykjanes Peninsula, a minor geothermal area. The little town is poised to become a stop for tourists, and in the last couple of years a few tour operators and attractions have sprouted up, including Eyjasigling (☎849 6748; www.eyjasigling.is), which specialises in tours around the islets of Breiðafjörður. Skip the geothermal pool and try a soak in the local seaweed baths (☎577 4800; www.sjavarsmidjan.is) instead.

Ask at the tourist information centre (www.visitreyholarreppur.is; ☏11am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug) about the new eagle museum that was being constructed during the research of this guide. The info centre also has a little museum (admission lkr500) with antique boats and stuffed birds.

Gistiheimilið Álftaland (Reykhólar HI Hostel; ☎434 7878; www.alftaland.is; s lkr5200; ☏) meets all accommodation needs, with no-frills rooms prepped for sleeping bags, two soothing hot-pots out back, and a kitchen available for guests’ use.

BJARKALUNDUR

On Rte 60, just beyond the turn-off to Reykhólar, Hótel Bjarkalundur (☎434 7762/7863; www.bjarkalundur.is; s/d incl breakfast lkr8500/13,500; ☏May-Oct) is a large farm-house with a petrol station and a restaurant serving Icelandic grub (mains lkr1550 to lkr4000). It’s the oldest summer hotel in Iceland and the unofficial gateway to Vatnsfjörður, the largest elf palace in the Westfjords (or so says the hotel owner).

Buses run between Reykjavík and Bjarkalundur (3½ hours), via Króksfjarðarnes in Dalir, every day except Wednesday and Saturday. There’s no bus service between Bjarkalundur and Flókalundur or Brjánslækur.

Djúpaladalur

Heading west, you’ll come across the steaming waterfalls in the Djúpaladalur geothermal field, 20km west of Bjarkalundur. There’s an indoor geothermal swimming pool (☎434 7853; adult/child lkr350/100; ☏8am-11pm) here and good accommodation at the welcoming nine-bed Guesthouse Djúpaladalur (☎434 7853), where sleeping-bug-ers can stay for lkr4000.

Flókalundur

After driving over 100km along a series of stunningly desolate fjords, you’ll reach Flókalundur, the junction point between the road up to Ísafjörður and the bumpy route to the southwestern peninsulas. The two-house ‘town’ of 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 the Vatnsfjörður Nature Reserve, 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.

Pick up a Vatnsfjörður hiking brochure at Hótel Flókalundur (☎456 2011; www.flokalundur.is; sites per person lkr1100, s/d incl breakfast lkr15,200/19,500; ☏mid-May–mid-Sep), an ageing bungalow-style hotel with small wood-panelled rooms and a decent restaurant serving all three meals of the day. You’ll have the choice of a manmade swimming pool owned by the hotel, or a natural hot-pot called Hellulaug, nearby. At high tide, do as the locals do and jump in the frigid sea, then run back to the pool to warm up.

Brjánslækur to Patreksfjörður

Brjánslækur is nothing more than the terminus for the Baldur ferry from Stykkishólmur. Bus schedules are loosely timed to connect with the ferry. After the ferry terminal, Rte 62 follows the sandy coast until it reaches the top of scenic Patreksfjörður, marking the beginning of the southwestern peninsulas.