

# RANGÁ REVIEW

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## STARGAZING SEASON

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## SNOW SAFARI

Sign up to an adrenaline fuelled winter adventure and discover Iceland's hidden highlands





## STARGAZING SEASON

Stargazing, sungazing, and the never-ending search for the elusive Aurora Borealis have become a global phenomenon in recent times. There are even speciality travel agents who design packages and expeditions purely for travellers who want to catch a glimmer of the magical Northern Lights.

Of course, Iceland features highly on the list of Stargazing destinations with its pure, unspoilt night sky offering visitors a good chance of experiencing a display of the lights for approximately 8 months of the year. The exceptional clarity of the night sky in Iceland makes it the perfect location for stargazing and the lure of the Northern Lights attracts thousands of visitors from all over the globe, each hoping for that 'bucket list' experience.

Hotel Rangá is, without a doubt, one of the best places in the world to pursue your stargazing quest and even boasts its own pur-



Northern lights flashing over Hotel Rangá

pose-built observatory. Voted one of the top destinations in the world by the Telegraph and the Times newspapers, Hotel Rangá offers its guests a Northern Lights wake up service where guests are helped into arctic snowsuits and handed hot toddies on their way to see the lights in their unimaginable beauty. View the vast night skies from your balcony or lie back on one of the stargazing recliners located at Hotel Rangá's entrance. Better still, enjoy a late-night dip in one of the outdoor hot-tubs and celebrate the magic of the Milky Way with a glass of schnapps in hand – a real once in a lifetime experience.

Observing Aurora Borealis at Hotel Rangás observatory



Auriga Gísli M

If you take your stargazing a little more seriously then make your way to the state of the art observatory located just a 5-minute walk from the hotel. On most clear nights Sævar Helgi Bragason, one of Iceland's leading night-sky experts is on hand to guide you through the constellations using high-spec telescopes that open-up endless new worlds floating in the dark skies above Iceland's volcanic land. The observatory allows guests to take the stargazing experience to a whole new level and often visitors want to continue learning about the night skies after they return home. The tranquillity, complexity and beauty of Iceland's sky at night draws visitors to return time and time again. If you have been bitten by the stargazing bug here are a few simple ideas for continuing your interest.

1. Familiarise yourself with the more obvious, visible markers and constellations as these will help you become comfortable and confident and act as a simple map of the sky. Pick out patterns such as The Plough and Orion and then add more points of reference as you become more familiar.
2. Buy a good pair of binoculars as these act as low-grade telescopes that allow you to see further into the sky. View the Milky Way and groups of stars such as the Seven Sisters and clouds of gas including Orion Nebula.
3. Find a location that has as little light pollution as possible as street lights create a glare. Find a tranquil spot away from the interference of city lights. Allow your eyes to re-adjust from electric lights and gently focus on the darkness.
4. Ensure you are warm and comfortable, you need patience and planning to really enjoy the stargazing experience to its fullest. It is a good idea to take a sun-lounger or deck-chair with you to avoid neck-ache.
5. Share your passion with others, join a club or society who have a telescope, support your local observatory and involve children, as nothing is more magical than seeing the young learning about the great sky at night



## MYTHS, MAGIC & LEGENDS

The population of Iceland is currently 334,252 according to government figures. However, if folklore is to be believed, then the actual number of Icelandic beings living on this volcanic land may be significantly higher if you count trolls, elves and hidden people. Of course, the chance of catching sight of one of these magical creatures is pretty low, this doesn't mean they do not exist, just that they are rather hard to track down.



The *huldufólk* – hidden people or elves are believed to live in the wild terrain of this ancient land and have been known to make a nuisance if they are disgruntled in any way. Elves, trolls and little people have been blamed for many strange happenings over the years and folklore dictates that they can be quite troublesome if annoyed.

As you travel around the countryside keep your eyes peeled for *Álfhól*, these are the tiny, colourful wooden houses which locals have built respectfully for the elves and hidden people, if you look carefully you may also spot the occasional elf church.

During the winter season, when the nights close in, the activities of the *huldufólk* seem to increase and sightings are more likely around Christmas and New Year. It is said that tiny bonfires have been spotted around the time of seasonal celebrations. Icelanders always show great respect for the hidden people and leave a gift of food for them at Christmas time.

If you venture to the beautiful black beaches of the South Coast then a stop-off in the historic town of Vik is essential. Vik's ancient myths elude that the magnificent rock forma-

tions located just off the coast known as *ReynisdRangár* are actually the silhouettes of ancient trolls once caught unaware by an early sunrise as they tried to haul ships ashore.

Iceland's enchanting folklore tales don't stop at elves and trolls. Generations of fishermen and their families have maintained a healthy respect for the unknown under-life of the great Atlantic Ocean. Sea monsters and terrifying creatures sometimes known as *Skrimisli* have been detailed in legends for hundreds of years and many visitors to Iceland leave having experienced a sighting of some unidentifiable sea creature.

Of course, the secret to spotting elves, trolls and monsters in Iceland lies in respecting mother nature. Take time to enjoy the tranquility of the countryside, soak up the atmosphere of this unspoilt natural environment and allow the sights and sounds of Iceland's wild terrain to quieten your mind. The ancient lava meadows, powerful waterfalls, craggy mountains, and volcanic beaches are all alive with their unique inherent natural wonders, some clearly visible to the naked eye and others the stuff of legend and local folklore.



*Álfhól*, tiny, colourful wooden houses which locals have built respectfully for the elves and hidden people

# SNOW SAFARI

Looking for a once in a lifetime **adventure this winter**? Why not shake off that tired 9-5 feeling with an adrenalin fuelled, activity packed, winter adventure in the heart of the Icelandic wilderness.

Discover the breath-taking landscape of Iceland's hidden Highland. Explore the dramatic volcanic terrain in a souped-up super jeep, relax with a dip in the natural hot springs, experience a snow shoe trek, take a stab at ice-climbing, hike across a glacier and witness the power of the Atlantic Ocean as it crashes along southern Iceland's mesmerising black beaches.





## #KNOWICELAND

When planning your trip or when travelling around Iceland, one of the best ways to share knowledge with fellow travellers globally is by using #KnowIceland which allows you to share your own unique Icelandic experiences. Check out #KnowIceland and discover info and images of Iceland's events, destinations, environment, people, history and culture. Share your own memories, suggestions, recommendations, photographs and videos of your Icelandic adventure at #KnowIceland for other travellers to see. Spread the word and let the world **#Know Iceland**:

- Arctic foxes, the only land mammal native to Iceland, usually mate for life, and both mother and father help raise the pups **#knowIceland**
- Wild reindeer live only in East Iceland, mostly at higher elevations in summer but seek lower grassland, closer to the coast in winter. Have you ever seen one? **#knowIceland**
- In the winter time, the sun never rises high in #Iceland. It hovers above the horizon, creating beautiful soft golden lighting perfect for photography **#knowIceland**
- There are only 6 turf churches remaining in Iceland. Hofskirkja is the last ever to be built in the 1880s **#knowIceland**
- The Highlands cover over 75% of Iceland and are mostly an uninhabitable volcanic desert **#knowIceland**
- There are around 10,000 plus waterfalls in Iceland **#knowIceland**
- The name of Kerlingarfjöll, 'Old Woman's Mountain', is inspired by ancient folk tales. It is said that an old troll lady was caught out by the sunrise and therefore turned to stone **#knowIceland**



Super Jeeps tackle even the roughest terrain

Abandon the daily grind and head to the hills for an exclusive 8-day snow safari courtesy of Midgard Adventure one of Iceland's premier outdoor activity specialists. This new and exciting winter safari ticks all the boxes when it comes to action and adventure.

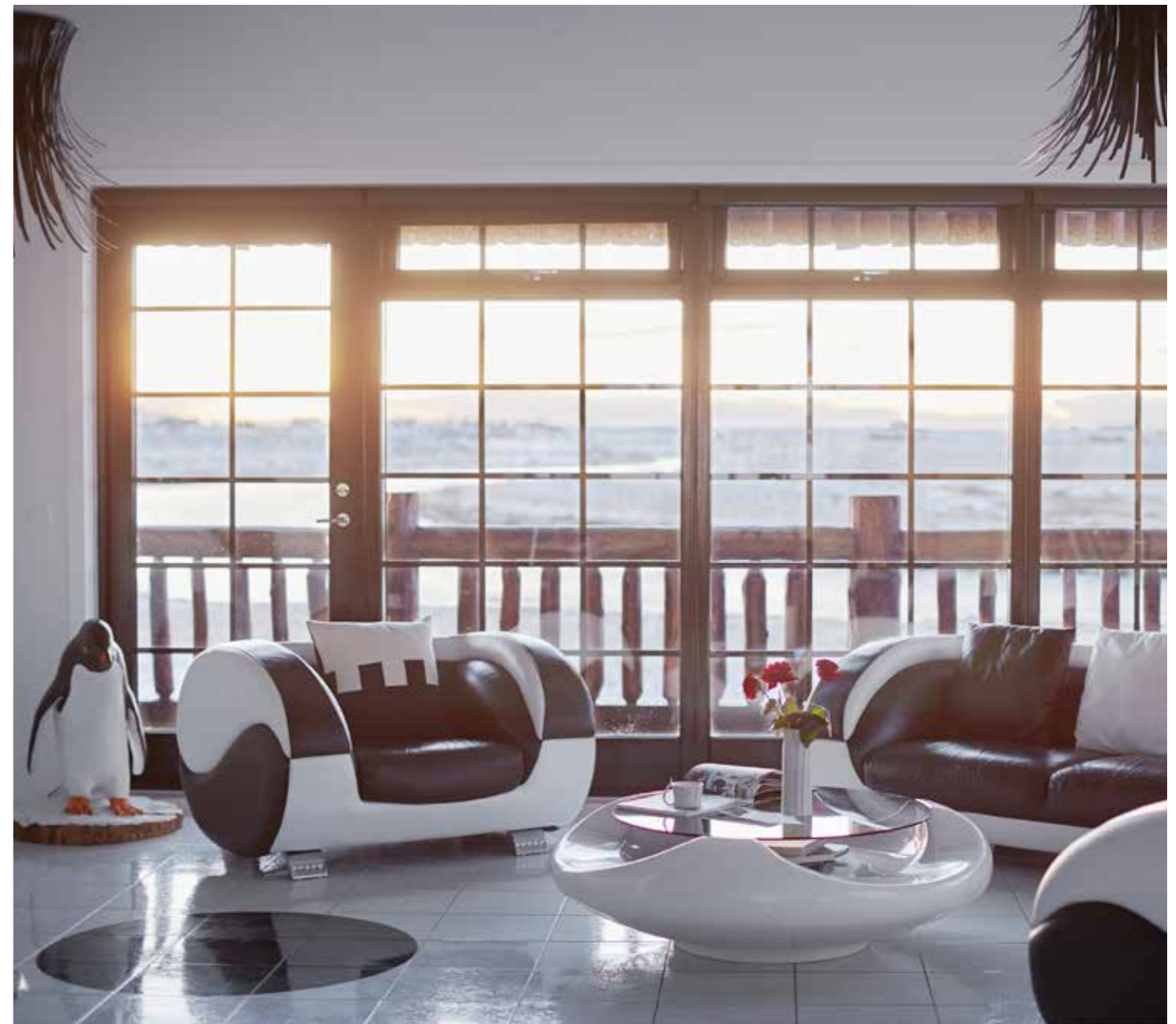
Making the most of Iceland's extreme winter weather, the safari takes in many impressive natural wonders such as the magical mountainous Landmannalaugar, tranquil beauty of Thorsmork National Park, stunning glaciers of Sólheimajökull, frozen waterfalls at Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss and the volcanic beaches of the south coast. The highland adventure captures the soul of Iceland's culture, with heart-pumping ad-

venture, adrenaline fuelled activities, fantastic seasonal food, dramatic scenery and fun-packed evenings filled with stories, songs and of course the odd slug of Brennivín. After long snow-filled days conquering the great Icelandic outdoors, relax in comfort at The Highland Center and other Highland camping lodges along the way. Immersed in the wilderness with magical views in all directions on a clear night, you might be just lucky enough to witness the elusive Aurora Borealis.

For winter escapees everywhere, Midgard's winter safari refreshes the mind, revitalises the body and restores the soul, in true Icelandic style – we say skál to that.



Passing the magical Landmannalaugar



## INSIDE THE ANTARCTICA SUITE

Take a sneak peek behind the scenes of Hotel Rangá's Antarctica Signature Suite

Hotel Rangá's unique interiors have featured in magazines worldwide and the characteristic themed signature suites are particularly popular with guests looking for a VIP experience with a difference. The Antarctica Suite is like no other, with its open plan, mono-chrome design, this vast Master Suite features a modern, elegant interior with a humorous twist or two. Among these are the gigantic bed and freestanding James Bond style mirrored bathtub, large penguin sculptures, leather sofas and a spacious private terrace. A retro, aes-



Mount Hekla

thetic flows throughout the lavish interior where guests can relax in sophisticated surroundings featuring original artwork, artisan sculptures, glass and mirrored furnishings and a sleek white tiled floor. Abundant natural light fills this suite and its panoramic views provide an ever-changing landscape. The first-floor suite overlooks the sweeping outline of the Rangá River's wild shores and enjoys far-reaching views of Southern Iceland's volcanic landscape including Mount Hekla.

For a sneak peek of the Antarctica suite ask one of Hotel Rangá's reception staff.



# A FESTIVE FEAST

Savour the fabulous flavours of Iceland's traditional Christmas buffet

One of the most memorable experiences for travellers visiting Iceland in mid-winter must be the glorious and somewhat gluttonous celebration buffet. The shorter days mean that more activities and festivities take place indoors and these indulgent Winter buffets certainly feed the body and soul. The culinary celebrations can be experienced throughout Iceland in winter, as fabulous festive feasts appear on menus from mid-November through to January.

At Hotel Rangá, the Christmas buffet is a sight to behold with a

bountiful selection of traditional Icelandic fayre. Start off with a fish or mushroom soup then move onto the heartier delicacies such as platters of smoked and cured meats and fish. Venison, duck, goose, lamb, reindeer, salmon, trout and herring are all classic ingredients. Sample pickled red cabbage, caramel glazed potatoes, (BRÚNADAR KARTÓFLUR), delicious pates and rich sauces. If you have conquered the numerous Icelandic savoury specialties then finish off with sweet homemade cakes, desserts, cheeses and fruits.

Hotel Rangá's Christmas buffets are held in the restaurant overlooking the snow-covered banks of the River Rangá. Winter buffet nights are accompanied by live music and take place the first three weekends in December.







Vegetarian recipe by  
Hotel Rangá's Head Chef  
Karl Jóhann Unnarsson

## HEARTY & HEALTHY ICELANDIC CUISINE

During the colder, winter months in Iceland you will find all manner of traditional meat and flavoursome fish dishes on restaurant menus. However, Hotel Rangá's team of talented chefs also offer guests some exceptional vegetarian, vegan and gluten free specialities. Using only the finest and freshest ingredients, head Chef Karl Jóhann Unnarsson takes inspiration from classic Icelandic dishes and treats these with innovative contemporary techniques to create exceptional modern Nordic cuisine.

### CAULIFLOWER WITH RED ONION, GRANOLA AND BUTTERNUT SQUASH PUREE

#### CAULIFLOWER:

##### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large cauliflower
- 50ml garlic oil
- 1tbsp salt
- Sprig of thyme
- 50g butter
- 50ml apple cider vinegar

##### METHOD:

1. Remove leaves and cut the cauliflower into four equal parts
2. Wash the cauliflower in cold water
3. Put all the cauliflower parts into a vacuum bag (if using a sous vide machine) along with the salt, vinegar, butter, thyme and garlic oil and close the vacuum bag
4. \* Set the sous vide machine to 85 degrees
5. Cook the cauliflower for 30 minutes
6. Set aside

\*if not using a sous vide machine the cauliflower can also be steamed until soft with the butter etc in a pan with a tight-fitting lid until tender.

#### LIGHTLY PICKLED RED ONION:

##### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 red onion
- 250ml apple cider vinegar
- 500ml water
- 150g sugar
- Salt

##### METHOD:

1. Cut the red onion into very thin slices
2. Pour the vinegar and water into a saucepan
3. Add the sugar to the water and bring to the boil
4. When the liquid is hot and the sugar has dissolved take it off the heat and add the red onion and cover the pot
5. Leave the onion in the liquid until it cools

#### BUTTERNUT SQUASH PUREE:

##### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 medium butternut squash
- 150g butter
- Salt

##### METHOD:

1. Clean and peel the butternut squash
2. Cut it into small or medium size cubes
3. Gently heat the pan and add the butter, be careful not to let the butter catch
4. Add the butternut squash cubes and cook slowly in the butter until tender
5. Take the cooked butternut squash and blend for 5-10 minutes until it has a silky smooth consistency (puree)
6. Add salt to taste
7. Set aside

#### GRANOLA:

##### INGREDIENTS:

- 25g pumpkin seeds
- 25g sesame seeds
- 25g salted nuts
- 25g poppy seeds
- 25g honey
- 3 tbs apple cider vinegar

##### METHOD:

1. Heat the honey and vinegar in a small pan
2. Pre-heat the oven to 165 degrees
3. Add the nuts and seeds with the honey and vinegar and combine together
4. Take the mix and spread evenly on a baking tray and bake for 10-15 minutes
5. Remove from the oven and leave to cool until room temperature

#### « PRESENTATION:

To plate up this delicious vegetarian dish, serve the cauliflower on top of the puree with the onions and granola. This dish looks even more beautiful served on a dark ceramic plate.



## GOOD HEALTH AND SKÁL

Iceland's extreme weather conditions and dark winter months often call for a little 'reviver'. After many chilly hours working outdoors or having travelled long distances across the challenging terrain, Icelanders like nothing better than a warming pick-me-up. There are many intriguing and some more unnerving drinks to choose from, with most drawing their character and flavour from natural plants and traditional ingredients. Some of these intriguing tipples pack a mighty Viking strength punch, so take it easy, or at least make sure you have a soft moss covered landing nearby.



Here are some of the most popular drinks of choice:

- **Brennivín:** Brennivín - An unsweetened Schnapps seasoned with caraway, cumin, and wild angelica. Brennivín has a very distinct taste and is normally a staggering 80 proof.
- **Birkir:** Birch schnapps, 35% ABV, it has an earthy aroma with a slightly bitter and herbal taste
- **Björk:** Birch liqueur, is a sweet, warming liquor with a hint of birch in the after taste
- **Brenyolver:** A high quality Icelandic gin with a unique taste of Arctic thyme, angelica seeds and the more traditional juniper berries
- **Topas:** A liquor made with a mixture of herbs and liquorice. A very sweet, fortified drink that also has a cough linctus flavour
- **Reyka Vodka:** The water used to make Reyka comes from a 4,000-year-old lava field. The taste is smooth and warm with just a touch of vanilla.
- **Visi Gísli:** A smooth aquavit made from pure Icelandic spring water, dill, caraway, coriander, lime peel and timian.
- **Lava Smoked Imperial Stout:** A full bodied, pitch black beer with a sweet chocolate and roasted malt flavour. A strong, sturdy beer from Ölvisholt microbrewery.

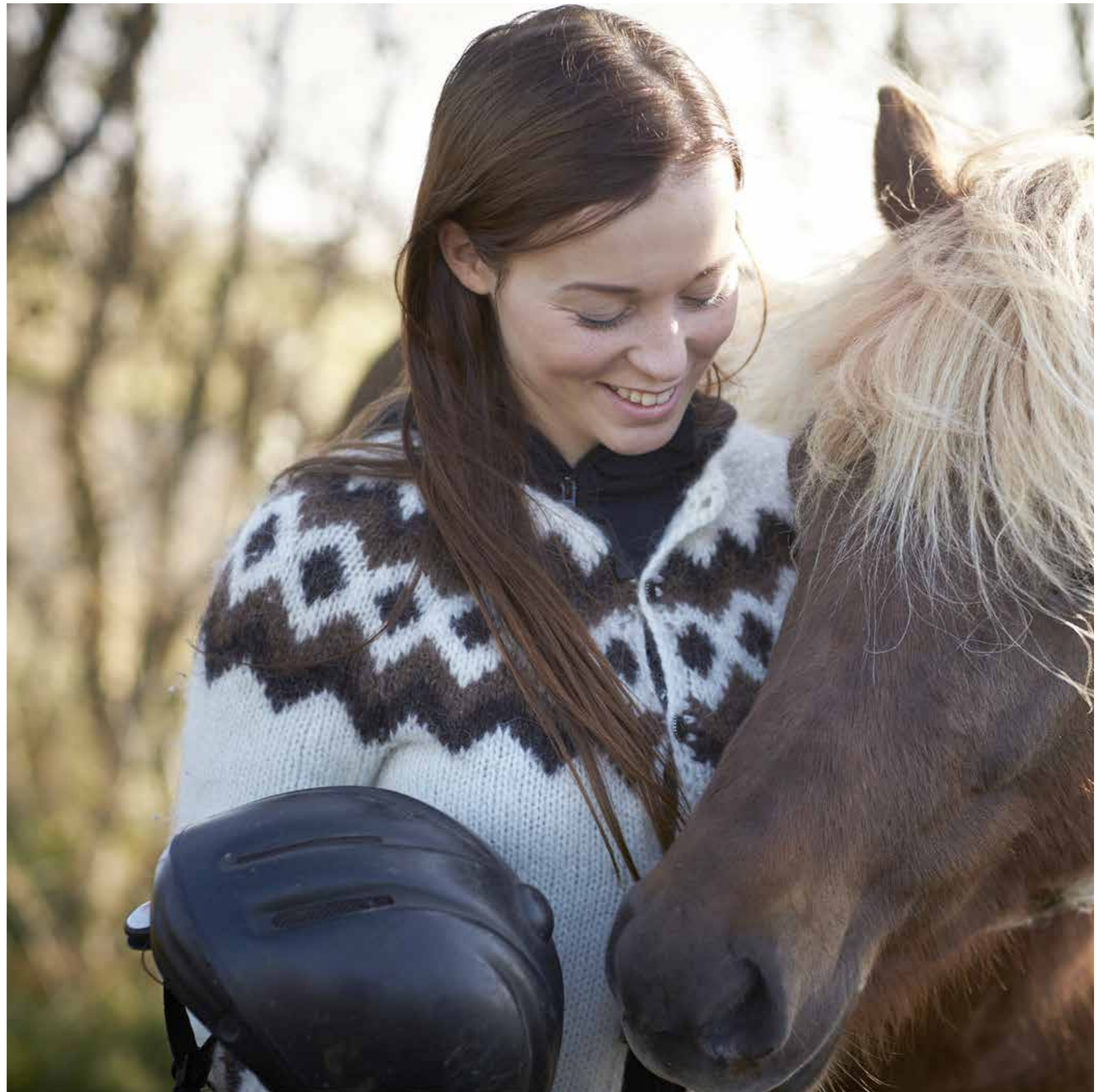


# COMFORT AND JOY

The Icelandic lopapeysa sweater has grown in popularity over the last decade and is one of the most sought after souvenirs for travellers visiting Iceland. As you journey through the island you will find variations of the Lopapeysa worn by babies, children, hipster teenagers and grandparents who all favour this warm and comforting design icon.

The lopapeysa is both attractive and practical, thanks to the unique wool used to make it, also it boasts valuable insulation properties and repels moisture. It is a hardworking piece of kit and can be seen on farmers, fishermen, outdoor guides and riders. The folk-inspired yoke pattern is what makes a true Icelandic sweater and sometimes this traditional design can also be found around the cuffs. Whilst traditional in appearance the lopapeysa has not been around as long as some might believe. It would seem the first designs were only created in the early to mid 20th century. Icelandic knitting groups started looking for different ways to use the abundance of wool and came up with more elaborate patterns and beautiful designs.

Whilst nowadays the sweaters often feature natural, muted and earthy shades of wool, back in the 50's, in post war Iceland, more vibrant, bold colours were used as were popular around the world. A natural rebellion against the grey and gloomy period of rationing and shortages. Today, you will find a wonderful array of designs and colours available and many are still knitted at home by Grandmothers for the children of the family. Whilst a relatively recent Icelandic emblem, the lopapeysa embodies the spirit of the Icelandic people. A hardworking and long-lasting piece of clothing that combines aesthetics with practicality. It offers warmth, comfort and protection from the ever changing and challenging Icelandic elements.



If you are looking for a special gift to take with you then the lopapeysa is perfect. It is worth the investment and will last a lifetime. Why not buy some local Lopi wool and a traditional Icelandic knitting pattern, the perfect present for crafters worldwide.



## SUPER JEEP ADVENTURE

Take to the road and see the best Southern Iceland has to offer with a powerful "Super-Jeep Safari". Your personal guide will take you on an unforgettable adventure both on and off-road in an oversized Sport Utility Vehicles which has been specially modified to deal with the rugged terrain of Iceland's volcanic landscape. These solid vehicles are capable of reaching hard to access locations such as volcanic hills and frozen rivers, all year round. Powerful and comfortable, Super-Jeeps combine practicality with fun. These impressive, mean machines are handled by expert all-terrain guides who transport you to the most hidden landmarks and secret destinations in Southern Iceland. You can choose the length of your super jeep safari and your guides will determine your route, dependent on weather conditions, wind factor and snow levels. One of the most popular routes takes in Thingvellir National Park, Geysir geothermal area and Gullfoss waterfall. Or why not book a tour of the lesser travelled countryside and experience unspoilt farmland, lava meadows, sleeping volcanoes, waterfalls and glaciers.



If you prefer a more adrenaline fuelled Super Jeep experience, then why not combine this with a Snowmobile excursion or a trip to the Geo Thermal hot springs. For nature lovers, a route can be designed to take in the South Coast with its exceptional basalt rock formations. Whatever your preference, a Super Jeep tour offers the most exhilarating way to explore the natural Icelandic environment.

# GREAT DATES

Throughout the winter we have some great discount rates for travellers. So if you are looking for a good deal for a 1 night stopover or short stay, then check out our excellent one-off offers at: [www.hotelranga.is/offers/great-rate-dates](http://www.hotelranga.is/offers/great-rate-dates).

**Receive a 25% discount off our regular room rate on selected dates.**

**This rate includes:**

- Accommodation
- Breakfast buffet
- Welcome drink upon arrival
- Access to stargazing observatory
- Access to outdoor hot tubs
- Taxes
- Wi-Fi
- Free parking

**Sales conditions:**

Free cancellation up to four days before arrival.

Payment directly at the hotel.

Only bookable by email.

Remember to sign up for our Northern Lights wake up call from September till April.

The observatory is open every clear night.

Guests get a guided tour of the night sky by local astronomers.

