

RANGÁ REVIEW

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ICE ADVENTURE

Witness the mesmerising beauty of Mother Nature's ice sculptures. Enter deep beneath a glacier in an epic ice cave adventure

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BEAUTY & THE BEAST

Take to the road this winter in a high powered all terrain vehicle and explore the highs and lows of Iceland's rugged landscape

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THE SKY AT NIGHT

Discover the secrets to successful stargazing and get some expert advice on how to track the elusive Aurora Borealis





ICE CAVE ADVENTURES

The magic of the glaciers can never really be explained in words and images alone. To really understand the magnitude and marvel of a glacier and its ever-changing dynamics you really need to get up close and personal.

Whether you decide to explore the empty magma chamber of a dormant volcano or discover the beauty of a crystal ice cave, guided tours of lava and ice caves allow you to see for yourself why Iceland is often referred to as the Land of Fire and Ice.

During the winter months the ice caves take on an entirely different character as in the summer the sunlight makes the colours appear a whiter shade. During the darker, winter season these rare phenomena appear bluer, making the atmosphere within both magical and mesmerising.

Every autumn the melted spring water starts to freeze and creates new structures and formations, including secret ice caves and secluded tunnels. When the winter season begins in earnest, Iceland's experienced adventure guides seek out new caves to explore.

If you are fortunate enough to visit Iceland in the winter months, not only will you have the chance to possibly witness the Northern Lights, but you can also experience one of nature's alchemic achievements in the form of caverns of pure ice.

Hotel Rangá's team recommends the following experiences:

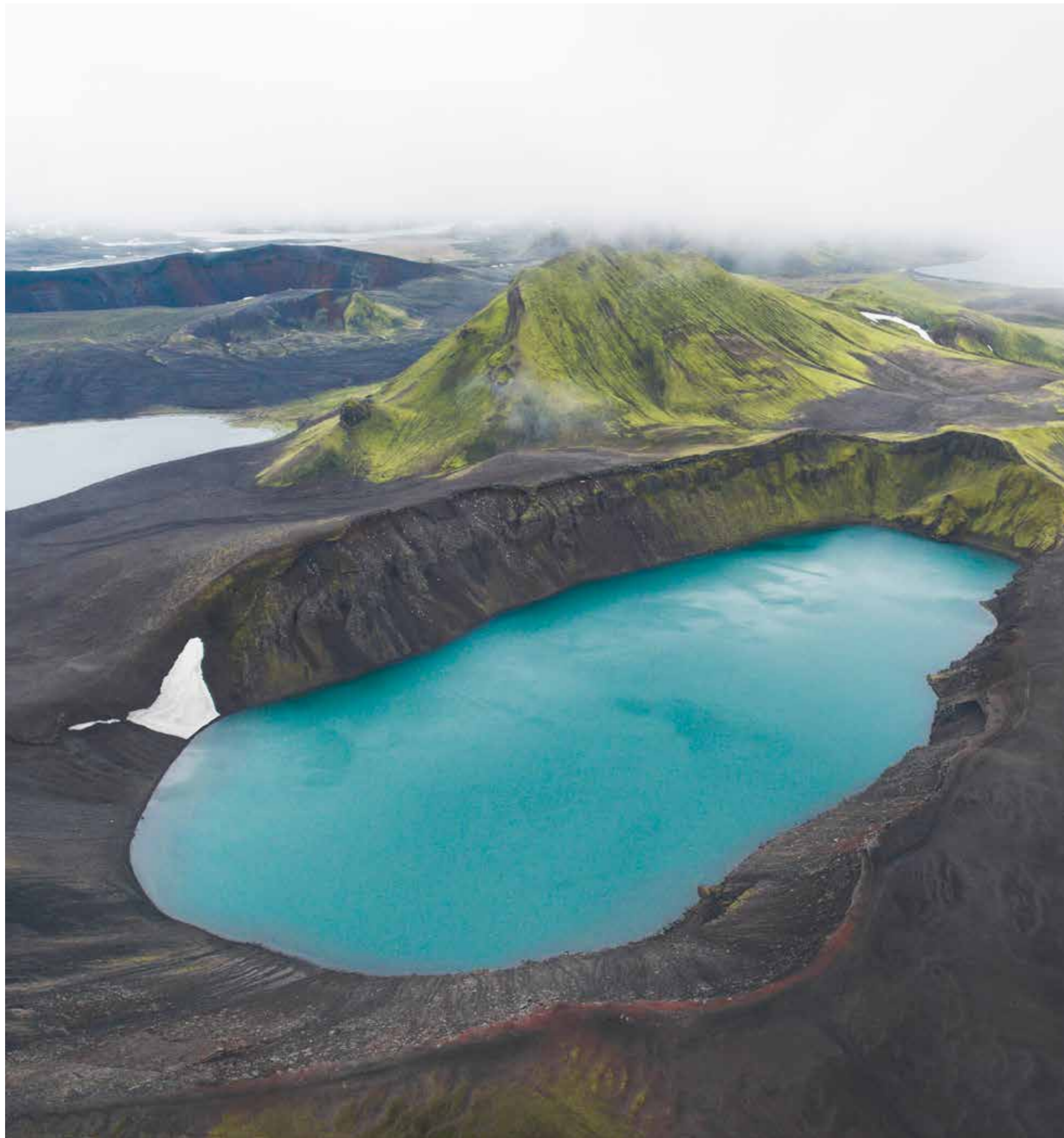
LAVA CAVE RAUFARHÓLSHELLIR

Explore the magnificent lava tunnel Raufarhólshellir, one of the longest and best-known lava tubes in Iceland. A journey into Raufarhólshellir is a unique experience and a great opportunity to witness the inner workings of a volcanic eruption. Walk along the path of lava that flowed during the Leitahraun eruption about 5200 years ago and marvel at the magnificent lava formations. In the winter, stunning ice sculptures are formed inside the cave entrance, making the experience even more astounding.

ICE CAVE ADVENTURE

Trekkers and photographers alike will enjoy this expedition to see amazing mountains and mysterious ice caves. First, visit the Mýrdalsjökull glacier and an amazing ice cave that is made of 800-year-old black, white and blue ice. These ice caves are formed naturally and change constantly, which only add to their appeal. After your journey through the cave, you will arrive at one of Iceland's amazing black sand beaches. Here you can enjoy views of the rugged coast and explore the surrounding area.

Photo credits: Bragi Thor of www.bragi.is and Katla Track of www.katlatrack.is



ICELAND'S EPIC INTERIOR

Southern Iceland has a wealth of destinations and experiences for visitors, with a myriad of opportunities for getting back to nature. The interior of Iceland takes on an entirely new character, where the landscape changes rapidly from one moment to the next. The interior highlands provide a rare glimpse of nature's raw beauty, magically displaying how diverse it can be. From lava fields to volcanic craters, rocky outcrops to wild rivers, colourful mountains to hot water pools, the interior of Iceland enthralls all who visit.

For those travellers looking to experience a more challenging and extreme Icelandic adventure you must head to the Interior highland, nature's gateway to a dramatic land of contrasts and contradictions. With such an expanse of landscape to discover, why not plan an overnight trip and book into the Highland Center, the perfect base-camp for exploring the region.

Just under two hours from Hotel Rangá is the Highland Center Hrauneyjar, situated at the edge of the country's most impressive and active volcanic area.

This is the key location from which to base yourself as the Highland Center Hrauneyjar team can organise all of your activities and also specialist excursions can be organised from here. The Highland Center Hrauneyjar is close to many of the most beautiful and popular attractions such as Landmannalaugar, Þjórsárdalur, Mount Hekla, Sprengisandur, Veidivötn and Fjallabak.

Photo credits Benjamin Hardman, Midgard Adventure and Eirikur Hafdal



SPRENGISANDUR

The gravel road of route F26 passes the wildest, most uninhabited terrain in Iceland. Sprengisandur is the bold and bleak highland desert located on the east side between Hofsjökull – the rounded icecap marking Iceland’s geographical centre and Vatnajökull Iceland’s north western front. This area has its own unique charm. In times gone by this deserted region was thought to be frequented by phantoms, giants, elves and bandits. Today, Sprengisandur attracts hikers, bikers and visitors looking to get away from the complexities of the busy outside world. The Sprengisandur route remains a challenging one; unbridged rivers and dramatic scenery provide insight into Iceland’s ancient living conditions.

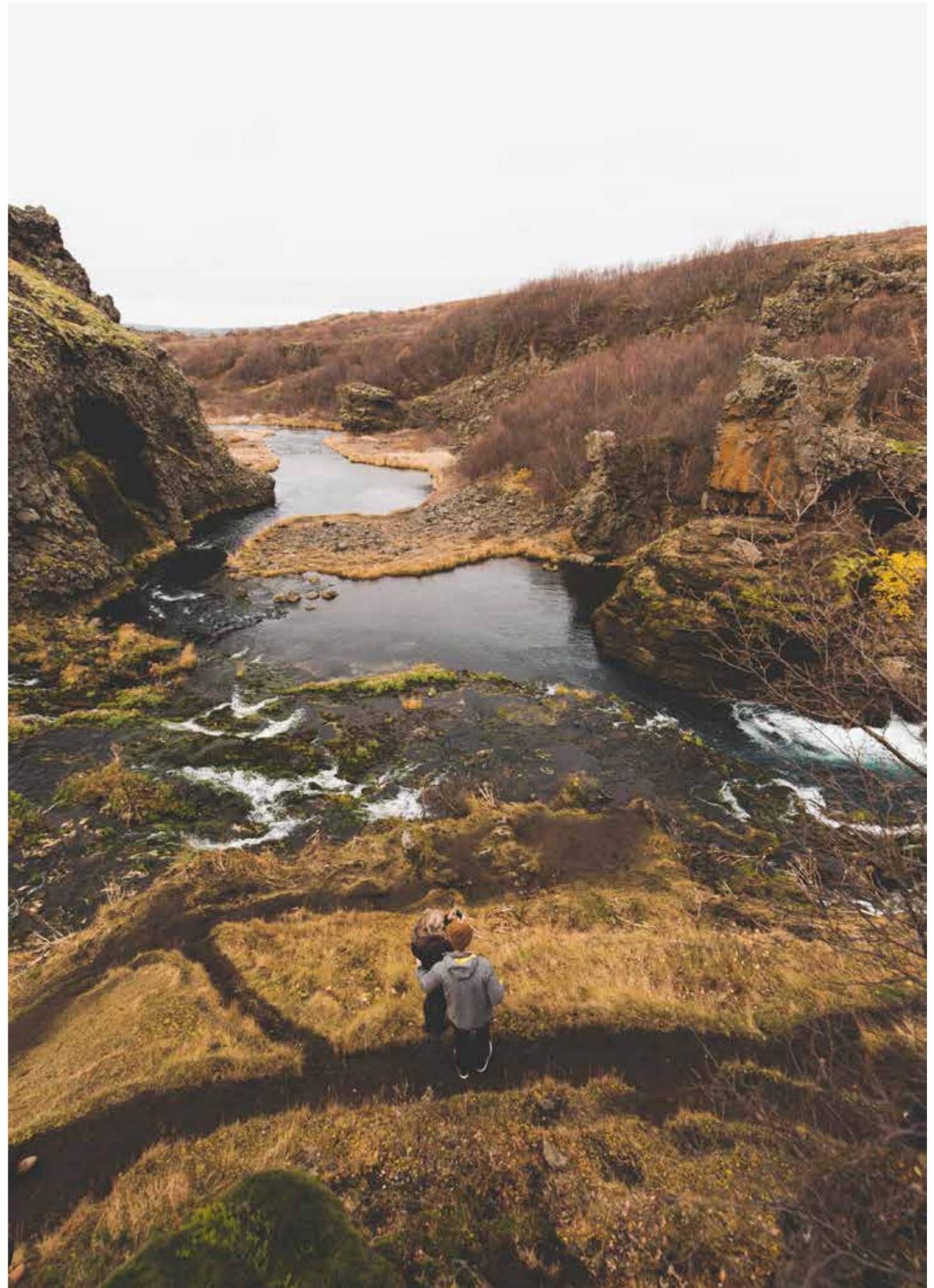
VEIDIVÖTN LAKES

The Veidivötn Lakes offer an oasis of calm set within desert-like surroundings only 30 km from The Highland Center Hrauneyjar. The crater formations are dramatic and give a distinct contrast between the rich black sand and the crystal clear water which give the scene an ethereal feel. The lakes are rich in trout that are believed to be from one of the oldest stocks in Europe. Veidivötn is the perfect destination for keen fishing enthusiasts.

LANDMANNALAUGAR

An enchanting valley located in the depths of the highland interior, Landmannalaugar rests between beautiful jewel-coloured mountains and the blackness of the rhyolite lava field Laugahraun. The surroundings of Landmannalaugar are soul-restoring with the boldly pigmented mountains offering a stunning backdrop to the hot and cold thermal meadows and springs where you can bathe year-round. This healthy and fertile valley overflows with wild flowers in the spring and summer making Landmannalaugar a landscape of extreme contrasts. Here, hot and cold meet in harmony to produce a canvass of colour set amidst ancient rock formations and volcanic hillsides.

Book a room at The Highland Center and enjoy excellent home cooked food and comfortable accommodation in the heart of Iceland’s incredible interior. The Highland Center is perfect for families and groups wanting to explore the area. From here many activities can be arranged including: super jeep tours, fat biking, fishing and hiking.





ALL TERRAIN ADVENTURE

Hotel Rangá is the perfect base for exploring Southern Iceland's breathtaking countryside. One of the most exhilarating ways of getting out and about on the rugged volcanic terrain is on an all-terrain vehicle (ATV). A must-try bucket list adventure where you can soak up the scenery and enjoy an action-packed sight-seeing experience.



From Hotel Rangá why not explore the region around Mount Hekla or take a ride along the atmospheric black sand beaches of the south coast. Enjoy the freedom of traversing rivers, skirting around waterfalls and crossing ancient, volcanic lava fields. A team of highly-skilled guides will design a route dependent on the weather conditions and your desired time-frame. On an ATV you can take routes that are specifically devised to show guests the beauty and unique character of Iceland's unspoiled wilderness.

All you need to do is simply set aside a day during your trip for an adrenaline fuelled ATV excursion

and Hotel Rangá will liaise with a recommended activity company who will manage your whole adventure. Your designated guides will meet you at the hotel and take you by Super Jeep to the zone where your ATV action will take place. Here you will be kitted out with all the necessary gear and given a briefing on how to drive your all-terrain vehicle.

Two of the most popular ATV trips are half day excursions, these are ideal for wintertime when daylight hours are somewhat restricted and allow you to enjoy a long lazy breakfast ahead of your action-packed excursion.

Photo credits Bragi Thor of www.bragi.is and Óbyggðafærðir

Hotel Rangá's team recommend the following half day excursions:

VATNSDALUR, WATERFALLS AND MOUNTAINS

Jump on an ATV and follow an experienced guide between two of Iceland's most famous and notorious volcanoes, Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull. Crossing small rivers and visiting waterfalls along the way, you will drive alongside riverbeds and less travelled tracks through the highlands and mountains. During the tour, you will also see beautiful views of the river Fiská and the mountain Þríhyrningur.

BLACK SAND BEACH

Start your ATV adventure by driving across beautiful black lava sands created from previous glacial outbursts of the dormant volcano Katla. Having crossed several small rivers en-route, you will arrive at the black sand beach where you can enjoy amazing views of Mýrdalsjökull glacier to the north and Dyrhólaey to the east. You will next drive across the coast to the famous aircraft wreck and then continue to the river Jökulsá and up to the foot of the mountain.





A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

One of the most exciting ways to discover the diverse landscapes of Iceland's unique terrain must be from the skies. With so much to see and such an expansive area to cover, viewing Iceland from above allows the privilege of soaking up the rugged beauty of Iceland with little effort.

Helicopter tours cover large swathes of Iceland's active volcanic land. Fly over mysterious black sand beaches, hover above a glacier or take a geothermal tour which allows you to witness Iceland's raw energy in action. Traverse the skies over the most active volcanic area in Iceland - the Hellisheiði plateau and enjoy seeing moss covered lava fields stretching out to the horizon. Experience the magic of the colorful basalt mountains and steaming hot springs. Your pilot will take you to remote locations unreachable by car - a real bucket list experience.

Alternatively opt for a south coast tour by helicopter where you will trace the unique shore which is home to some of the most beautiful natural landmarks in Iceland - From glaciers and volcanoes to



Photo credits Benjamin Hardman, Norðurflug and Oliver Degener

black sand beaches, ice caps and riverbeds. On this tour you will fly over some of the most popular destinations including the waterfalls Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss, Dyrhólaey, Reynisdrangar and Vík.

For a special day or celebration book a full day helicopter tour of Iceland, and visit the majority of Iceland's "picture postcard" sites in just one day. These include the largest rivers, the most active volcanoes, the highest mountain, the biggest glacier, often the brightest skies and the darkest sands.

Taking to the skies from Hotel Rangá is easy, simply book your tour ahead of time and your helicopter experience will be tailored to suit your timeframe.

Tours from Rangá can include the South Coast, Eyjafjallajökull, Fimmvörðuháls, Þórsmörk, Hrafninnusker, Landmannalaugar, Hekla, Gullfoss, Geysir, Þingvellir, Katla, Dyrhólaey, Kirkjubæjarklaustur, Lómagnúpur, Skaftafell, Hvannadalshnjúkur, Jökulsárlón, Höfn, Vatnajökull, Grímsvötn and Laki



SMOOTH SNOWMOBILING

When in Iceland, the key thing is to try out as many adventures and experiences as you can possibly squeeze in. If you are staying in the land of fire and ice then make the most of the activities available to you during your stay. One tick-box excursion must be the full-blown thrill of snowmobiling

The concept of snowmobiling may seem a little adventurous at first, but snowmobiles are the very best vehicles for gliding across glaciers, lagoons, rivers and ice-caps. Suitable for beginners and more experienced riders, destinations often include Fjallabak, Eyjafjallajökull, Landmannalaugar, Sprengisandur and Hekla.

One recommended experience is to combine a high-powered super-jeep tour with a snowmobile excursion. On this full day tour, you can experience the best of both worlds. Enjoy some adrenaline fuelled action mixed with a little sightseeing from the comfortable interior of an off-road vehicle driven by a knowledgeable local guide.

Another option is to sign up to one of the most impressive snowmobiling experiences on top of the Eyjafjallajökull glacier which is an extraordinary experience. This tour is perfect for 'first-time riders' and individuals looking for a scenic, fun-ride, exploring the glacier and its breathtaking views over southern Iceland. In perfect conditions the jaw-dropping view includes the Westman Islands, the whole of the south coast, all the way to Ingólfssjall

and even a large part of the highlands.

You can choose how long and how far you want to travel and your experienced guides will then determine the best route dependent on weather, numbers and requirements. Each snowmobiling experience is entirely different, but every trip is a memorable one. Maybe you simply want to have a short introductory session for a couple of hours or if you have time to spare, immerse yourself in the whole ice-cool, full day adventure experience. Whatever your preference, snowmobiling is a wonderful activity for everyone.

HOTEL RANGÁ'S SNOWMOBILE ADVENTURE

Experience the wilderness and the breathtaking views over southern Iceland on a snowmobile. This glacier adventure tour will give you an opportunity to photograph and film the dramatic scenery and natural environment at its best. Head to the top of either the Mýrdalsjökull or Eyjafjallajökull glacier and hop on a snowmobile for a guided tour that is perfect for travellers looking for a unique adventure.



Photo credits: South Coast Adventure



Photo credits: Tom Archer

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Hotel Rangá specialises in once in a lifetime, authentic experiences and provides the perfect luxury base for exploring the dramatic landscape of southern Iceland's volcanic terrain.

By far, the best way to explore the area is with a "Super-Jeep Safari". Your personal guide will take you on an unforgettable adventure both on and off-road in an oversized Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) which has been specially modified to deal with the rugged terrain of Iceland's volcanic landscape.

These solid vehicles can access hard to reach 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 wind factor and snow levels.

The golden circle SUV experience includes the Thingvellir National Park, Geysir geothermal area and Gullfoss waterfall. Or alternatively book a tour of the wide-open countryside and immerse yourself in the beauty of the Farmland, Lava Meadows, Volcanoes, Waterfalls and Glaciers.

If you prefer a more active Super Jeep excursion, 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 where you can take the chance to enjoy the varied birdlife and exceptional basalt rock formations near the town of Vik. Whatever your preference, a Super Jeep tour offers the most exhilarating and enjoyable way to explore the natural Icelandic environment.





CAPTURING ICELAND

The Icelandic winter is a spectacular time for photography when the epic landscapes are bathed in a perpetual golden hue throughout the day. Of course, this is since daylight hours are very short, so time is of the essence. Here, Icelandic photographer Lárus Sigurðarson gives some expert advice on capturing the wild Icelandic winter in a short space of time.



As a photographer, you may want to climb a few icy hills for that perfect shot and often basic hiking boots aren't going to cut it. Lárus recommends buying or renting attachable crampons to ensure there are no slip-ups during your stay.

Photo credits: Lárus Sigurðarson

GET WITH THE TIMES:

"The biggest challenge of daylight photography in the Icelandic winter is making sure you don't run out of time. The days are very short so photographers should stay on top of when the sun rises and sets." Lárus has a smartwatch for that, but also recommends checking www.sunrisesunset.com. The site has accessible information about sunrise and sunset for any place in the world, any day of the year and is perfect for when you want to plan ahead.

TRAVEL IN THE DARK:

Lárus encourages photographers to use the mornings for travel, so they can catch the sunrise naturally. During winter solstice for example, the sun may be rising around 11 which means there is ample time to get up, enjoy breakfast at the hotel and drive somewhere scenic.

"Then you can enjoy the sunrise, hit a couple of different spots and be somewhere completely different for sunset, all in the span of a few hours," he says.

PLAN FROM EAST TO WEST:

The most popular sights on the south coast are to the east of Hotel Rangá. Some, like Seljalandsfoss waterfall, are only twenty minutes away while others can take a couple of hours to get to. Lárus recommends taking a longer drive east in the morning to meet the sun, and then planning a few stops for the way back.

"Seljalandsfoss faces west and if you manage to get behind it you see the sunset through the water. You could also be in front of it and see it bathe in the glow," he says.

"Skógafoss waterfall is better before noon since there's a mountain blocking it to the west. It's also gorgeous to see Reynisfjara beach or the Dyrhólaey arch at sunrise and sunset."

GEAR UP:

It's essential to bring a tripod for winter photography in Iceland. This is mostly due to the ever-mov-

ing northern lights, but it can also come in handy during the day. A wide-angle lens will also be an asset for landscape photography but some of the most important gear goes on your feet.

BRING THE HEAT:

Some batteries have a hard time with the cold and fade fast. This is especially true for phone batteries but also for the replaceable ones in your camera. You should always carry extra batteries to be sure you can capture the moment and Lárus recommends keeping the ones you aren't using close to the warmth of your body. In emergencies, you can even stick your phone or battery under your clothes, in your armpit for example, to warm it up a little. That may squeeze out a few more minutes of power.

PLAY IT SAFE:

You might be driving, and see something exceptional out the window. You should definitely park the car and take a picture but whatever you do, Lárus says, don't just pull over to the side of the road. It can endanger you, your passengers and other travelers. The car can also easily get stuck, meaning it has to be towed which can be pricey.

"There's usually a rest stop or place to park somewhere close by and if you are appropriately dressed you can walk from the car and back," Lárus says.

TURN AROUND BRIGHT EYES:

Since the days are short, it's hard to find a time when the most popular sights aren't crowded with people. Lárus sometimes shoots such places with an ND filter for long exposure, which blurs people out of the photographs like ghosts. Mostly, he encourages guests to seek out different views. "There's beauty everywhere in Iceland and the area from Seljalandsfoss to Reynisfjara is incredibly photogenic," he says. "If you don't like what's in front of you, you usually just have to turn around to find a beautiful photograph."

THE SKY AT NIGHT

The relentless search for the elusive Aurora Borealis has become a global phenomenon in recent times. There are even designated travel planners who organise expeditions purely for travellers who want to witness the enchantment of Northern Lights.

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, each hoping for that 'ethereal moment'.

Voted one of the top global destinations for viewing the Northern Lights by both the Telegraph and the Times newspapers, Hotel Rangá offers a Northern Lights wake-up call service where guests are politely woken and encouraged to head to reception. Here, they are issued cozy arctic snowsuits and invited to use the outdoor loungers where they can lie back and enjoy the lights in all their beguiling beauty. Warming coffee and hot chocolate are available in the lobby for guests to enjoy when they return inside.

Iceland features highly on the list of stargazing hot spots with its clear, unspoiled night skies of-

fering visitors a good chance of witnessing a display of the lights for approximately 8 months of the year. Hotel Rangá is, without a doubt, one of the best places to pursue your stargazing mission and even boasts its own purpose-built observatory.

If you take your night skies a little more seriously then head to the state-of-the-art observatory located just a 5-minute walk from Hotel Rangá's reception. On most clear nights' expert stargazers are available to guide guests through the constellations using high-spec telescopes and laser pointers. The award-winning observatory takes the stargazing experience to a whole new level where the beauty of Iceland's skies are revealed in the greatest detail. For a fun-filled sky watch option, why not take a dip in one of the outdoor hot-tubs and celebrate the magic of the Milky Way with a glass of champagne, a once in a lifetime Icelandic experience.





RANGÁ HAPPY HOUR

No matter how you spend your time whilst visiting Hotel Rangá, it's fair to say that at some point during your trip you are bound to drop by the Rangá bar or lounge.

Hotel Rangá's timber clad bar offers an incredible selection of drinks and has a truly impressive bar menu featuring many local beers and spirits alongside a whole plethora of award-winning whiskeys from around the globe.

Pull up one of the handcrafted and somewhat cheeky wooden barstools and sample some of the more traditional Icelandic drinks Rangá has to offer. If real-ales are your thing, then you must try a couple of beers from Icelandic artisan breweries such as Skaði Farmhouse Ale from Ölvisholt micro brewery, or, if you are made of stronger stuff, try sampling a robust glass of Einstök Wee Heavy.

To really make the most of your Icelandic escape, indulge in a cocktail or two? A popular in-house creation is the refreshing Rangá Margarita (Patrón Silver, Patrón Citrónge,

orange juice & lime), or for a more serious tippie try the Icelandic Sour (Brennivín, Reyka vodka, lemon & lime juice, Bitter & sugar syrup). If you need to warm-up after an adventurous day out, then you might be in need of the hard stuff. Ask to try a shot of Brennivín Original (Black Death), a classic accompaniment to fermented shark. Other intriguing Icelandic spirits include Katla Vodka and Flóki Sheep Dung Smoked Reserve Whisky.

Make sure you don't miss Hotel Rangá's happy hour which is very popular with guests and visitors alike, especially after a long day exploring the great Icelandic outdoors. The bar beside the restaurant is the perfect spot for a pre-dinner drink, whilst the spacious lounge upstairs is the ideal place to wind-down with family and friends and enjoy some well-deserved chill-out time Hotel Rangá style.



THE ROYAL SUITE

Out of Hotel Rangá's eight Junior and Master suites, there's only one that doesn't have a designated design theme. The Royal Suite, quite simply, is elegant, sophisticated and extremely spacious.

The Royal Suite offers exquisite views of the notorious Eyjafjallajökull volcano and of the Rangá river. In spring, guests may also open the doors to find red-necked phalaropes and grey phalaropes swimming on the small pond close by.

"We decided to have a bathtub out in the middle of the room, a beautiful jacuzzi, and then French doors in front of it to the East. You can sit there in the tub with the doors wide open in the privacy of your own room and feel like you are outside." says hotelier Friðrik Pálsson.

The room is decorated with works from many of Hotel Rangá's favorite artists and furnished with beautiful pieces from the US and Canada. There's an inviting king size bed and



The Royal Suite also boast its own private terrace overlooking the East Rangá river, from here guests can enjoy a magnificent sunrise and outstanding views of the open countryside.

two sofa beds, so it's not unusual for groups or families of up to six people to select the Royal Suite.

The suite's bathroom also boasts two showers which often become a topic of conversation. For example, Friðrik got a visit from a travel agent and his wife not long after the suite opened.

"I was showing them the suite and when the travel agent saw the showers he said they were a marvelous idea," Friðrik says. "It's brilliant having them side by side," the travel agent said. "I always take turns making the shower hot and cold in the morning and this way I could just go between the two." The travel agent's wife looked sweetly at her husband and responded: "You've always been so romantic darling."

Photo credits: Michelle Heimerman



FINE DINING

Most visitors to Iceland tend to have a fairly set idea on what to expect whilst on their travels. Outstanding scenery, dramatic weather and extreme adventures all immediately spring to mind. However, one of the greatest surprises for travellers is the exceptional cuisine on offer throughout the island. Reykjavik even has its very own Michelin starred chef and many cool eateries can be found dotted around the capital city.



The foodie scene is not restricted to the city though, and Hotel Rangá's restaurant is incredibly popular with residents and Icelanders alike. Offering an exceptional menu designed around local, organic and seasonal produce, head chef Bragi Þór Hansson creates artfully presented and mouth-watering modern Nordic cuisine. This winter, Bragi shares

his recipe for one of the key dishes on The Rangá Restaurant's seasonal menu. A fine combination of Icelandic ingredients masterfully infused with some more international flavours. This popular dish encapsulates Rangá's culinary philosophy where the herbs and vegetables share the limelight, working in perfect harmony with the beautifully cooked fresh Icelandic cod.

Did you know that herbs, tomatoes and peppers are all grown in eco-friendly, thermally heated greenhouses all around Iceland, Visit www.fridheimar.is and enjoy organic farming, Icelandic style.

PAN FRIED COD WITH ROASTED BELL PEPPERS, TOMATO SALSA AND RED PESTO (SERVES 1)

ROASTED BELL PEPPER AND TOMATO SALSA:

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 bell peppers
- 1 red onion
- 10 cherry tomatoes
- Juice from 1 lemon
- 10g chives
- Salt and pepper

METHOD:

1. Cut the peppers in half and remove all the seeds
2. Roast at 200°C for 10-15 min then allow to cool
3. When the bell pepper has cooled dice into 2cm pieces
4. Cut the tomatoes in quarters
5. Chop the red onion finely with the chives
6. Mix everything together and season with salt and pepper
7. Set aside

GREMOLATA:

INGREDIENTS:

- 10g parsley
- 10g chives
- 10g chervil
- 10g lemon zest

METHOD:

1. Chop all the herbs finely
2. Grate the zest of the lemon
3. Mix everything together
4. Set aside

CRISPY POTATOES:

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 small round new potatoes
- Vegetable oil
- Salt

METHOD:

1. Cut the potatoes into halves
2. Deep fry the potatoes until they are golden and crispy and cooked through. Or, for crispy potato strings use baking potatoes, cut into tiny strings and deep fry for a couple of minutes until golden brown.
3. Remove from the oil and set aside on some paper towel

RED PESTO:

INGREDIENTS:

- 400g sundried tomatoes
- 5 plum tomatoes
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 red chilies
- Juice from 1 lime
- Olive oil
- Salt

METHOD:

4. Put everything except the olive oil in a food processor and while blending gradually add olive oil until the consistency is smooth
5. Season with lime juice, salt and pepper
6. Set aside

PAN FRIED COD FILLET:

INGREDIENTS:

- 200g cod (one portion)
- Olive oil
- Butter
- Salt
- Lemon juice

METHOD:

1. Clean the fish fillet and pat dry with paper towel
2. Heat the oil in a small frying pan and fry the fish on a medium heat for 3-4 minutes on each side dependent on the thickness of the fillet
3. Add the butter at the very end of the cooking when the fish has been turned, spoon over the fish as the butter melts
4. Season with salt and a squeeze of lemon juice

TO SERVE:

Select a beautiful ceramic dish or artisan plate. Spoon some of the salsa into the middle of the plate, then place the potatoes on top. Place two quenelles or spoonful's of the pesto on each side of the salsa and drizzle the gremolata around the vegetables. Carefully place the cod on top of the salsa and potatoes and sprinkle with some freshly chopped seasonal herbs.





Photo credits: Daniel Colvin photography and Matthew Oliver Weddings

A WILD ROMANCE

Each year Iceland attracts thousands of adventurous couples looking to get away from it all and spend some quality time together. The rugged coastlines and wild landscapes offer the perfect antidote to hectic city-based lives where time is often limited. Iceland makes a lasting impact on all those who visit with many travellers falling for its charming and romantic atmosphere.

With such breathtaking views at every turn it's no great surprise that so many proposals, engagements, weddings and honeymoons take place in this utterly atmospheric land of fire and ice.

PERFECT PROPOSALS

With such an abundant choice of beautiful, natural locations, couples are truly spoiled for choice when it comes to the picking the perfect place for a romantic proposal. From waterfalls to wind-swept coastlines, glaciers to sleeping volcanoes, this dramatic land is literally adorned with romantic backdrops.

Location is key of course, as engagement photoshoots are incredibly popular with couples today. Iceland offers some of the most beautiful and instagramable engagement spots including:

- On the banks of the River Rangá
- Alongside the Fjallsárlón glacier lagoon
- On top of the Mýrdalsjökull Glacier
- Gluggafoss waterfall hidden in the Fljótshlíð valley
- Beneath the slopes of the Katla Volcano
- Alongside waterfalls such as Seljalandsfoss, Skógafoss and Gljúfrabúi
- Hidden within the Fjaðrárgljúfur

gorge

- At the Reynisfjara black beach near Vík
- On the beach at Stokkseyri Þakgil above Vík
- The magical Fljótshlíð area
- Foss á Síðu by Kirkjubæjarklaustur
- On the meeting point of Iceland's tectonic plates (European and North American)

Remember part of Iceland's natural charm is its wild and everchanging weather, so don't forget to have a plan B in mind and warm socks at the ready.

ENDEARING ELOPEMENTS

One of the most romantic ways to tie the knot is a secret elopement where your wedding and honeymoon become one. Often couples escape to Iceland for a unique adventure wedding in a dramatic outdoor setting. Small, boutique style weddings for a few family and friends are the most special type of celebration. Last-minute elopements are becoming more and more popular, especially with couples who have hectic or demanding careers. An Icelandic elopement can be subtle or sensational and couples often build-in an element of adventure into their celebration such as snowmobiling to the wedding spot or arriving by helicopter or super-jeep.

WILD WEDDINGS

The dramatic scenery, wild weather and romantic atmosphere of Southern Iceland make it a no.1 venue where the bride and groom want a destination wedding with a serious 'wow' factor.

Winter weddings have a fairy tale feel where snow covered mountains, frozen waterfalls and crystal-like caves provide the perfect 'Nordia' like backdrop. If you get married in the winter you may also be lucky enough to catch sight of the Northern Lights, a truly romantic event.

For religious ceremonies, Oddi Church lies just ten minutes from Hotel Rangá and is on one of the oldest church sites in Iceland. For a secluded outdoor venue, Gluggafoss lies in an enchanting hidden valley called Fljótshlíð. Gluggafoss is recognised for its three arches that look like windows. From Gluggafoss there are stunning views towards the Eyjafjallajökull Glacier.

In the spring and summer, Iceland is adorned with wild flowers, transforming the hills, lava meadows and riverbanks into a haven of floral tranquillity. Weddings during the summer can even take place at midnight as the sun never sets and Iceland

enjoys 24-hour daylight in June and July. The summer is also rainbow season, the essential accessory for any waterfall wedding photo.

HEAVENLY HONEYMOONS

If you are looking for a honeymoon with a difference, then Iceland is for you. Here, honeymoons have their own unique character and often include some adrenaline fuelled outdoor adventures. Couples can enjoy several bucket-list experiences whilst making some unforgettable memories.

Discover the beauty of the island's most remote areas from the luxury of a private plane or helicopter. This is the most romantic and indulgent way to see the frozen lakes, volcanoes, waterfalls, lava meadows, canyons and glaciers of Southern Iceland.

Take to the hills with a super jeep, all-terrain vehicle or snowmobile and enjoy the thrill of crossing rivers and traversing glaciers. Stop by a thermal pool for a swim or enjoy an atmospheric picnic in a candlelit cave.

One thing is certain, the natural wonders of Iceland's magnificent volcanic landscape provide the perfect partners for a truly wild and wonderful romance.

Photo credits:
Daniel Colvin Photography
and Matthew Oliver Weddings



DESIGNED TO IMPRESS

Hotel Rangá is very proud of the ever-growing list of couples who choose the hotel and its surroundings as the venue for their big day. Our wedding coordinator can tend to everything from booking the officiant to decorating the reception hall while our team of in-house chefs serve singular the most fabulous wedding menu. And of course, you can't have a wedding without a cake.

Gina Christie is one of Rangá's most imaginative and artistic chefs. We caught up with Gina, who is also affectionately known as Cookie, and found out how she came to be a cake-maker extraordinaire.

How did you end up in Iceland?

I'm a freelance chef and I have traveled all around the world, cooking in some amazing places. While working for a private catering business in the UK, I was approached by a company that sends chefs to far out places like Russia and Iceland to work in salmon fishing lodges. I originally came to Iceland during the summers of 1999 and 2000 and worked in the northernmost part of the island. I then returned in 2001 to open up a brand-new fishing lodge on the banks of the East Rangá river and Iceland has been my home ever since.

What about your surroundings inspires you?

I'm an eighth generation African and love the open spaces of Africa. Iceland fulfills that hankering for Africa. It's a country of big skies and absolutely stunning - I love its stark beauty. The seasons are very clearly marked here, and it is amazing to see the changes from one to the next.

Many couples choose Iceland for their wedding, why do you think this is?

Obviously, having done a few "northern lights" cakes, it's clear that they are a big inspiration for couples. Iceland is definitely a hot venue right now and I think that as people strive to find more and more unconventional places to get married in, Iceland automatically comes to mind.

When did you first start making wedding cakes?

In September 2015 I was approached by the wedding planner at Hotel Rangá, who had heard that I made cakes. I had actually never done wedding cakes before but she needed help with repairing some damage to a wedding cake. I had 2 hours to mend and make new sugar flowers to a three-tier cake and I managed it with the bride walking in as I placed the last flower. I got a phone call the next day, asking if I was interested in becoming the wedding cake maker for Hotel Rangá. The rest, as they say, is history.

How do you translate your design ideas into cake form?

A lot of my designs are based on what the bridal couple wants. I love interacting with the couples personally - we send loads of emails back and forth with ideas for flavorings, color schemes, decorations and so on. I try very hard to create the cake of their dreams and to obviously make it taste divine too.

What was the trickiest design you have had to make?

One of the most entertaining cakes I ever made was for a delightful Scottish couple who wanted a traditional Icelandic kransakaka (marzipan cake in concentric rings) but decorated with personal details from their lives. So, we had two penguins based on a John Lewis Christmas advert from a few years ago, obviously dressed in bridal finery - one puffin as a nod to getting married in Iceland and their three-legged rescue cat named Cheeky sitting on a tartan rug to show their Scottish background. It was certainly tricky to incorporate it all, along with loads of sugar flowers but it worked.

What are the most popular requests?

No single cake has been more popular than the others but the Kransakaka is one of the most popular ones and I'm often asked to decorate it with a waterfall of sugar flowers. Each cake is so different from the next and I love being able to do so many different decorations and designs.

What do you love most about your work?

I just love being able to bring dreams to life. Many times, I've been approached with very simple ideas but once they understand what I can do the design evolves into something much more interesting. My funniest one was a simple request for a very basic one tier cake with two roses on top. It ended up as three tiers with a huge waterfall of flowers cascading down the side, two puffins on top and hand piped royal icing piping on each tier.

And finally, what is the most romantic spot in Southern Iceland?

It's very difficult to choose the most romantic spot as everybody has their own idea of romance. If I had to choose, it would probably be the waterfall at Þorsteinslundur, either during high winter with snow and ice crystals everywhere or high summer with verdant green grass and sunshine. It is a spectacularly beautiful waterfall.

THE YULE LADS REINVENTED

The story of the Yule Lads originates from a poem by Jóhannes úr Kötlum and Hallberg Hallmundsson's translation. While Icelandic folklore holds the names of dozens of Yule lads, the thirteen mentioned in Jóhannes úr Kötlum's poem are the ones usually referred to as the Icelandic Santa Clauses. They're a mischievous lot, born to a troll mother who eats ill-behaved children. They are also associated with the Yule cat, who feasts on children who don't get new clothes for Christmas.

With the Yule Lad story having some rather sinister connotations, Hotel Rangá's own Auður Konráðsdóttir thought this seasonal story needed a little modern revision. Auður, who works the hotel's front desk, wanted kids to get to know the old legends without having to fear for their life. She wrote and published an interactive book about the troll family but adapted it to contemporary times.

Auður says "It's scary when an old ugly lady comes and boils children who misbehave. Children should feel like they can make mistakes without the risk of being boiled." She wanted to add humour to the story, changing it around a bit while still holding on to its essence and tradition.

"Door Slammer still slams doors," she says, referring to the 7th of the Yule Lads, "They are still pranksters but instead of punishing bad children they are friendly and funny."

The book takes the form of an app, accessible via computer, tablet or smartphone through Auður's website. It's currently available in English, French and German and children can choose to have the story read to them or read it themselves. Auður says it's a great app for kids learning to read and for those who want to learn another language. She's also working on an add-on to the app that includes easy recipes for traditional Icelandic meals.

From Sheep-Cote Clod to Candle Beggar

The stories of the Yule Lads used to be used to scare children into obedience but in recent years they have taken on a new role. They come down from the mountains, one by one from the 11th to the 24th of December, and bring presents to children who leave a shoe on their window sill.



"When I was a child we didn't get presents in our shoes every day like kids do today. It was only Candle Beggar who visited, on Christmas eve, and so, instead of putting our shoes in the window we would line them up in the hallway," Auður says.

The Yule Lad's names refer to their preferred pranks or in some cases, to their appearance. The following is the original job description of the Yule Lads:

The first, **Sheep-Cote Clod**, tries to suckle yews in farmer's sheep sheds. The second, **Gully Gawk**, steals foam from buckets of cow milk. The third, **Stubby**, is most kid's favourite. He's short and steals food from frying pans. The fourth, **Spoon Licker** simply licks spoons. The fifth is **Pot Scraper** or **Pot Licker** who steals and licks unwashed pots and the sixth is **Bowl Licker** who steals bowls of food and, you guessed it, licks them clean. As mentioned before, **Door Slammer** who stomps around and slams doors is the seventh and **Skyr Gobbler** who has a special taste for Icelandic yogurt is the eighth. The ninth, **Sausage Swiper** loves stolen sausages and the tenth, **Window Peeper**, likes to creep outside windows. **Door Sniffer**, the eleventh, has a huge nose and an insatiable appetite for stolen baked goods, while **Meat Hook**, the twelfth, snatches up any meat left out, especially smoked lamb. The final one, **Candle Beggar**, steals candles, and he also happens to be Auður's favorite.

"When I was a child we didn't get presents in our shoes every day like kids do today. It was only Candle Beggar who visited, on Christmas eve, and so, instead of putting our shoes in the window we would line them up in the hallway," Auður says.

"It was one of our Christmas traditions. After we opened our presents on Christmas eve [as most Icelanders do] we still had one thing to look forward to: laying our shoes out and then finding them filled with fruits and candy on Christmas day."

If you are interested in Auður's book ask at Hotel Rangá's front desk.



"Let me tell the story of the lads of few charms, who once upon a time used to visit our farms. They were called the Yuletide lads - at Yuletide they were due - and always came one by one, not ever, two by two."

RANGÁ RECOMMENDS

Follow Hotel Rangá's inspiring seasonal blog and discover the secrets of Southern Iceland's unique character, hidden charm and ultra-cool culture

Looking for some insider Icelandic information? Then check out Hotel Rangá's up-beat and inspiring lifestyle blog. Full of fun ideas and travel tips, the blog gets under the skin of life at Hotel Rangá and beyond. Scroll through the Rangá Recommends section and get some great advice on the very best places to visit, fun things to do, activities to try and adventures to enjoy. The dining pages of the blog highlight restaurant ideas, food and drink suggestions and include some delicious recipes from Hotel Rangá's kitchen. The photography section is rich in recommendations for capturing the essence of Iceland and includes professional advice for taking the very best shots.

Of course, a much-loved topic is the Aurora and Stargazing, take a look at Hotel Rangá's posts and discover the complex science that lies behind the magic of the elusive Northern Lights. If you are seeking romantic inspiration, the wedding page gives great advice for those planning an engagement, wedding or honeymoon in the land of fire and ice.

For travellers planning a trip to Iceland then Hotel Rangá's blog really is the go-to place for solid advice and trustworthy travel tips and ventures deep into the heart and soul of life in Southern Iceland. Check in regularly for seasonal stories at...

www.hotelrangablog.is



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