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GUIDE TO THIS
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36 Hours in: *Reykjavik*

BY KATE THORMAN



Clockwise from top: the Blue Lagoon geothermal spa; the Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Centre; the serene landscape of Videy Island; savory reindeer stew at Höfnin restaurant.



For a tiny island stranded in the middle of the North Atlantic, Iceland inspires a disproportionately large sense of awe. Natural wonders such as the aurora borealis and gigantic waterfalls fit right in with the Viking-descended society's belief in magical creatures. In the capital of Reykjavik, the landscape and history fuel a modern city with an almost painfully cool arts, food and music culture, which has bred both Björk and Sigur Rós.



Leave your bags at the sleek Hilton Reykjavik Nordica, whose glass-and-wood design and stunning views remind you that this is a Scandinavian country. No two destinations in Reykjavik are more than a mile or two apart, but stay right in the middle of everything at the chic Radisson Blu 1919 Hotel, located in an elegant, historic building.

Start your exploring on Laugavegur Street, its colorful buildings packed with art galleries, cafés and trendy boutiques. At Kraum, peruse a curated collection of works by local artists and designers. Pick up fashion by young Icelandic designers at Kiosk, and visit Nostalgaia & Spúútnik for vintage shopping. Beat the cold with traditional Icelandic outerwear from 66°North and the Nordic Store.

Brush up on art and architecture at the Reykjavik Art Museum Hafnarhús. Catch a performance at the new Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Centre, the country's first real orchestral space and an architectural marvel. No trip would be complete without a soak in one of the city's 16 thermal baths; head to Laugardalslaug to swim with the locals or marvel at the Blue Lagoon, an easy stop en route to the airport.

When you need a break, Reykjavik's coffeehouse culture provides numerous charming outposts to warm up in, including Kaffismiðja Íslands, Prikid, The Laundromat Café and Grai Kotturinn. Come mealtime, get your fill of traditional Icelandic cuisine—think reindeer, puffins and all kinds of seafood—in stylish and cozy settings at spots such as Sægreifinn, Silfur, Dill Restaurant and Höfnin.

The sun may go down early here in the winter, but rather than going to bed, Reykjavik's weekend nightlife is such a big deal that it has its own name: *riúntur*. Join the locals at lively spots such as Boston, b5, Dillon, Bakkus and Kaffibarinn for drinks, dancing, making new friends, and, possibly, even a Björk sighting. After all, this is Iceland, where anything can happen. **TL**

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