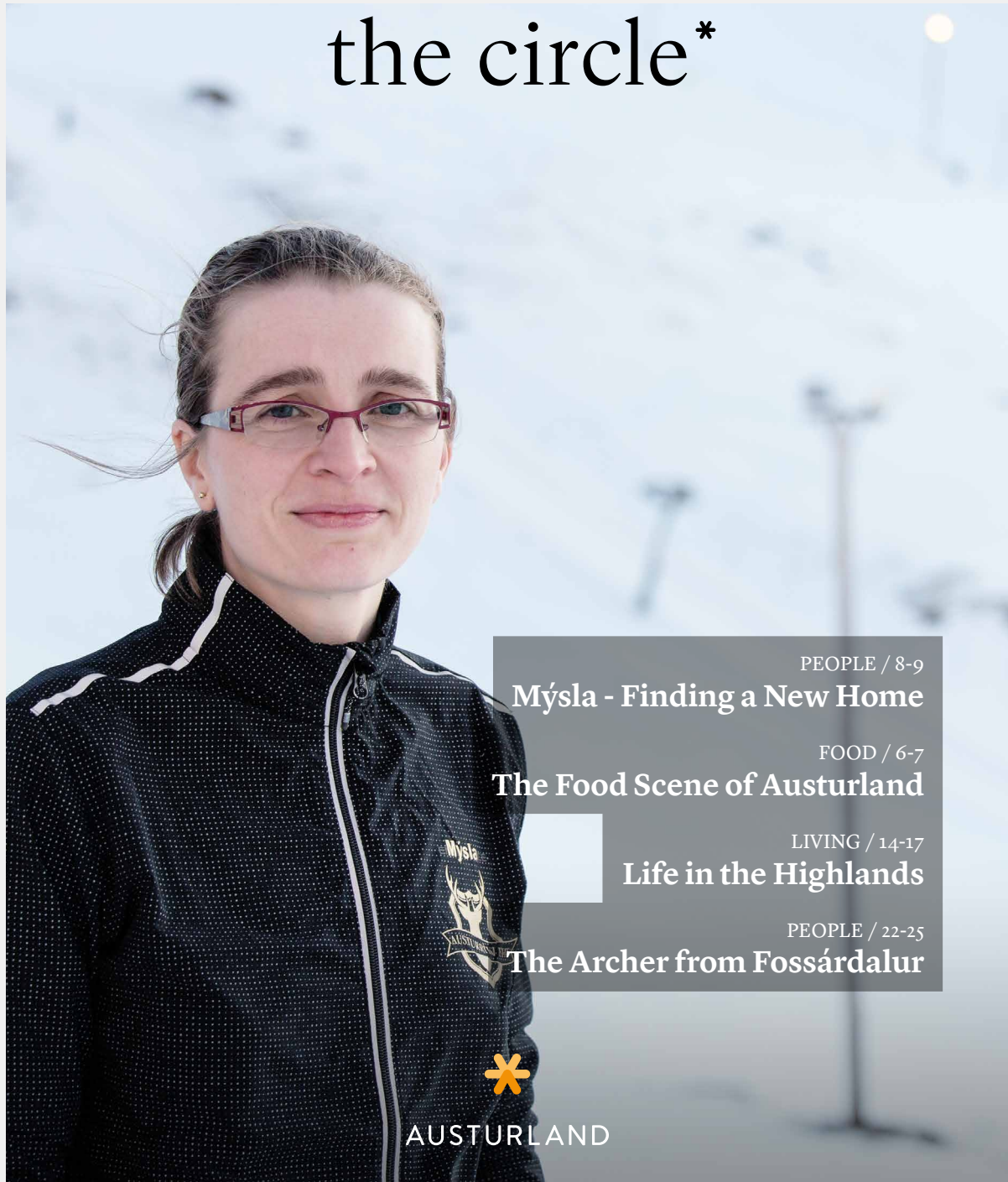


think outside the circle*



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AUSTURLAND



Photo: Josh Wood

ABOUT

Think outside the circle - *The Destination Austurland Magazine* is published by Austurbrú ses. – a regional business, cultural and education development organisation – that oversees Destination Austurland in cooperation with Samband sveitarfélaga á Austurlandi and Ferðamálasamtök Austurlands.

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ON THE COVER

Michala Krestynova aka. Mýsla from Eskifjörður.
 Photo by Daniel Örn Gíslason.

Hello, darkness, my old friend...

Here we are again; another winter season means another issue of *Think Outside the Circle*, a magazine about the part of Iceland we treasure the most: Austurland.

For this issue, we have visited the corners of East Iceland to tell you stories about this region. Some might even call these stories our secrets, but we would like to share them anyway so everyone can know the key to a good life in Austurland!

We have met people of all ages, friends and strangers. Describing all of these people one by one would be difficult, though one thing comes to mind: Austurland is full of active people! We work hard, engage in sports, dream big, and create careers. But the thing that describes Austurland best—we do all this with the whole-hearted support of our local community. In Austurland, we take care of each other!

Here in Austurland, we have decided not to fight winter's cold weather and lack of light; instead, we celebrate the season, finding joy in the pastel-colored sky during the short daylight hours, the polar stratospheric clouds on icy days, and of course, when darkness arrives, the northern lights which get us every time.

This is a time of year to relax and gather with family and friends inside our cozy homes. But in Austurland, this is also a highly appreciated season for outdoor activities and sports such as skiing, hiking, hunting and, hell yeah, shooting a bow and arrow!

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we have enjoyed creating it, and that you make the most of the winter... It's here for another two or three months!

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Editor

NANNA VIBE S JUELSBO is a Danish writer living in Seyðisfjörður. She came to Iceland for LungA Festival in 2012 and has been a regular ever since. Nowadays she works as a journalist and runs a Nordic writer's school in Seyðisfjörður. What she treasures most about living in Austurland is being able to hike in the summer mountains and jump in the fjord on a cold winter's day.



Photographer

DANIÉL ÖRN GÍSLASON is a photographer from Seyðisfjörður. Born and raised in the East, he enjoys everything the nature of Austurland has to offer: snowboarding in the mountains during the winter months or fly fishing the rivers at summer time. Daniel loves how easy it is to just get out and enjoy Austurland!



Layout

INGVI ÖRN ÞORSTEINSSON is a designer. Born and bred in Reykjavík but has lived in Seyðisfjörður for the last seven years. He loves living in a small community in Austurland and being able to work with talented people on valuable and interesting work. What he treasures most about Austurland is the nature. During winter he uses every chance he gets to go snowboarding / skiing with his family and friends.



Production Manager

JÓN KNÚTUR ÁSMUNDSSON is a native of Austurland. As a journalist he has made numerous programs for the Icelandic radio, written stories and interviews for papers and magazines. What he loves about Austurland is the fact that he doesn't spend any time stuck in traffic. His favorite thing about winter, when the weather is horrible, is staying inside with his family watching Netflix.



Art Director / Layout

DANIEL BYSTRÖM is our very own Swedish designer who has been a part of the *Destination Austurland* team more or less since the beginning. He is a bona fide resident of Austurland even though his Icelandic skills are questionable. What he loves about our region is that everyone can be themselves and there is a place for every oddball - such as himself. Daniel is a passionate skier and he loves the fact that Austurland offers the unique opportunity for skiing from top of the mountain to the shore of the fjord.



Responsible Publisher

MARÍA HJÁLMAUSDÓTTIR is from Austurland and has been part of the *Destination Austurland* team from the very beginning. She loves the contrasts of the region and the fact that she can go on a hiking trip, participate in a gay pride parade, eat a culinary dinner and go to an indie concert all in the same weekend. Her favourite thing about winter is the 3D effect of the mountains, the beautiful sunsets and sunrises over the fjords.

A Thing for Food

The food scene in Austurland is alive! With a specific focus on local and raw ingredients, Austurland is currently one of the most interesting culinary destinations in Iceland.

Our extraordinary nature is a strong part of our identity here in Austurland. Our living fjords, our unique forests, our authentic country side and vast highlands are all making Austurland special and when it comes to food, we are inspired by the variation in our landscapes.

We strive to work with food that reflects the nature around us; the vibrant, the balanced and the wild. We use an abundance of raw ingredients that our local nature generously offers: berries, reindeer, herbs, ptarmigans, sea weed and much more.

Food Manifesto

We have created a manifesto entirely on food! This serves as a leading star in all the culinary projects we are doing in this region, now and into the future.

Read it, share it and follow our work on food and other focus areas on austurland.is

- ***WE WANT TO EXPRESS PURITY, FRESHNESS AND SIMPLICITY IN OUR FOOD.***
- ***WE WANT OUR FOOD TO REFLECT ON EACH SEASON WE HAVE AT EACH MOMENT AND DEVELOP DISHES FROM LOCAL PRODUCTS AND OTHER SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES.***
- ***WE WANT TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS AND STAND UP TO PROMISES.***
- ***WE COOK WITH CARE AND RESPECT FOR THE RAW MATERIAL AND INVOLVE OUR GUESTS IN OUR FOOD CULTURE.***
- ***WE WANT TO HAVE MORE FOCUS ON HEALTHIER OPTIONS.***

Our favorite food

THE FOOD SCENE OF AUSTURLAND

We have met three experienced chefs to learn more about the local food scene and the best ingredients of Austurland.

Elísabet Þorsteinsdóttir

Chef at Klausturkaffi, the restaurant at Skriðuklaustur. Elísabet started Klausturkaffi at Skriðuklaustur 20 years ago and has worked there ever since.

EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING, I've used local ingredients. Back 20 years ago, very few restaurants here in the East were doing this. In 2009, we, a group of local people, founded "Austfirskar krásir" - a community working with a focus on local food from Austurland. Nowadays, both restaurants and individuals are more aware of our unique cuisine - and that's great news!

At Skriðuklaustur, all our food is homemade. Our restaurant's most popular options are the lunch buffet and the cake buffet, where we serve many of our popular items. The larch bullet mushroom soup and the stone bramble skyr-cake have followed us ever since the beginning.

Many of the recipes are family treasures from my mother, grandmother and friends, which give the buffets a traditional as well as local touch.

We are lucky to have a lot of ingredients just outside the door! I have a slot close to the restaurant where I grow my own vegetables such as salads, herbs and rhubarb. Other ingredients that I get from the local area are potatoes, yellow turnips and barley from Vallanes, an organic farm 30 kilometers from here.

We use a lot of wild ingredients as well. I pick angelica in the nearby forest for jams and use the seeds in bread. In the springtime, dandelions are boiled for a syrup, sorrel for use in pesto, and arctic thyme is a seasoning that goes well in almost everything.

The best ingredient of Austurland has to be our wild berries. My personal favorite is the stone bramble, which I pick in the forest in autumn and use it in my famous skyr-cake.



Top: Elísabet showing the lunch buffet at Klausturkaffi

Left: Preparing the stone bramble skyr-cake



Photos: Sigrún Júnía

” It must be the best cod in the world due to the cold waters around the East coast.

Guðjón Egilsson

Chef at Gullver, fishing trawler in Seyðisfjörður. Guðjón has been working as the sole chef onboard Gullver for the past 20 years.

IT IS FUN but troublesome to cook onboard a ship. My kitchen is 5 m² and we are on the sea for 4-6 days straight. The crew has different work schedules, which constantly change due to the weather, so I try my best. We are 15 people on board, but I cook for only 14. When I cook, I don't eat myself; I just live off the fumes.

We are the first ones to actually eat the fish we catch and it's beyond comparison! It must be the best cod in the world due to the cold waters around the East coast. If I really want to treat the crew, I either cook the cod mildly salted or deep-fried in breadcrumbs. They love it deep-fried—especially the young men!

The best food of Austurland must be our reindeer meat. This animal is so special. Reindeer live off wild herbs like thyme and moss, which gives the meat an intense taste. I have cooked deer and elk, but they are almost tasteless compared to the reindeer. We should be proud of that meat!



Guðjón in front of the trawler Gullver



Þorgerður in the school's kitchen

Þorgerður Sigurðardóttir

Chef at the primary school in Egilsstaðir. Þorgerður has been working in the kitchen at Egilsstaðaskóli for 11 years.

EGILSSTAÐASKÓLI PUTS HEALTH IN FOCUS, which is the main theme for the meals we serve here. Besides healthy meals, we cook from traditionally Icelandic recipes and prepare as much of the food as we can ourselves.

We serve fish twice a week, meat twice a week and then a vegetarian meal once a week. The ingredients we use are almost exclusively from Iceland and as much as possible here from the East. We use vegetables and barley from the organic farm Vallanes and we get fish from the harbor in Seyðisfjörður.

We are a tightknit team of five cooking for approximately 800 people every day: students, teachers, kindergarteners and staff.

I think the best ingredient of Austurland is our codfish from Seyðisfjörður. It is fresh when we cook it and still fresh when it hits the plates.

” We use vegetables and barley from the organic farm Vallanes.

Something New was Happening in Town

and That Something Was Me!

” *It’s a good life here;
I feel free. There’s
everything we need
and even more!*

*Mýsla works at the
ski slopes in Oddsskarð*

We meet Mýsla on a busy day at Oddskarð—a skiing area just a few kilometers outside Eskifjörður. She is standing behind the counter when a man opens the door to the ski rental. He greets her loudly, “Mýsla, Happy New Year!”

MÝSLA PROVIDES THE MAN WITH A NEW HELMET before he ventures out to the slopes, while we find a quiet corner upstairs in the skiing cottage for a chat about life as a foreigner in Austurland.

Mýsla is an Icelandic nickname for Míchala. She was born in the town Šumperk in the north-eastern part of the Czech Republic, and now, turning thirty-five years old and a mother of two, Mýsla finds herself in a part of the world that happened by complete chance.

“I first came to Iceland as a tourist in 2014 and spent ten days around Reykjavik. Before then, I had traveled through many of the European countries, but Iceland was the first place where it felt like home. In fact, I had the immediate feeling, ‘I want to live here.’ After my Iceland-travel, I went back to the Czech Republic and contacted an au pair agency that helped me find a job with a family in Eskifjörður.”

Three months after Mýsla arrived in Eskifjörður, she met Gabríel, a local from town. He was quite surprised that she, after only three months in the country, was already speaking the language.

“I simply had to! I had just started working here at Oddskarð as the only person in the ski rental cottage during that winter. It was the hardest, but the best way to learn the language. Now, this is my fifth season and

I love every day,” says Mýsla halfway out the door as a colleague has called for assistance from downstairs.

MÝSLA AND GABRÍEL DECIDED to move in together, and by the time they had found a house in Eskifjörður, Mýsla was expecting their first baby. Today, three-year-old Trístan and one-and-a-half-year-old Ronja are taking up much of Mýsla’s time and energy.

“These days, I spend a lot of time being a mother. But when I first arrived in Eskifjörður, everybody was inviting me for coffee, dinners and parties. I was the news in town! As a foreigner, it was easy to move here and start up a life. People really care for each other.”

Mýsla tells about her hometown Šumperk, which is similar in size to Akureyri. She remembers the feeling of walking around in the city feeling anonymous—an impossible thing in this East Icelandic town of only one thousand people.

“Sometimes, your neighbors even know things about you before you do yourself,” says Mýsla with a laugh before we go back downstairs.

IN THE FRESH SNOW OUTSIDE, the slopes are busy with people of all ages. It is the first Sunday of the year and everybody seems to be enjoying themselves.

Mýsla looks out past the ski slopes to the mountains across the fjord. The sun is lighting up mountain tops in the hazy distance.

“It’s a good life here; I feel free. There’s everything we need and even more! Not everybody can say that they live a life of freedom. I’m very lucky.”

Vopnafjörður Girl's Team has **A Dream about Soccer**

It is Tuesday afternoon in a sports hall in one of the most northeastern fjords of Iceland. Outside, yet another winter storm is threatening to close off the roads. Inside the sports hall, soccer practice is just about to begin.



Photos: Daniel Örn Gíslason

Kamilla, 15 years old, plays midfield

“I have dreamt about soccer since I started as a 5-year-old, and now my dream is about playing in both Iceland and abroad. I am getting older, and soon, I will have to move to go to high school anyway, probably to Akureyri for both school and football. In the future, I would love to play for the national team.”

Karolina, 14 years old, plays forward

“I love living and playing soccer in Vopnafjörður. If I could, I would stay here, but it’s probably not best for my career. Instead, I dream about moving to Reykjavik to play for the team Breiðablik. For a long time, I’ve thought about playing forward for them. Apart from Breiðablik, I hope to represent Iceland as a member of the national team in the future.”

Avonleigh, 15 years old, plays forward and wing

“I was born in the US, but my family moved to Bakkafjörður when I was 5 years old. At 11, we moved to Vopnafjörður, and at that time, I had never played soccer, so I started from scratch four years ago. My favorite Icelandic player is Sara Björk. She’s fought injuries and has suffered from anxiety, which I can relate to. She’s an inspiration to me.”



The football team with coach Sigurður Donnys

We have heard rumors that the girl's team in Vopnafjörður has some very promising players. So promising, that even the top league's coaches are looking east in planning future teams.

EVERY WEEK, PLAYERS MEET FOR PRACTICE in the sports hall and participate in tournaments both in Iceland and abroad. Last summer, the team's final international tournament was in Gothenburg and this summer they are going to Spain for the Costa Blanca Cup.

We catch three of the young players before the practice begins. Kamilla, Karolina and Avonleigh have all been a part of the team for years: Kamilla and Karolina joined the team when

they were 5 years old and Avonleigh began playing when she moved to Vopnafjörður at the age of 11. We sit down for a chat about playing football in this small town in Austurland.

” My favorite Icelandic player is Sara Björk. She's fought injuries and has suffered from anxiety, which I can relate to. She's an inspiration to me.

Sara Björk Gunnarsdóttir (b.1990) is the captain of Iceland's national team. On a daily basis, she lives in Germany and plays for VfL Wolfsburg.

Both Karolina and Kamilla also see Sara Björk as a role model who has worked hard to get where she is today and is a big inspiration for the girls in Vopnafjörður.

Sigurður Donnys, the Vopnafjörður team's coach, is gathering the players for today's training session. He has been the team's coach for the past 10 years and there is a strong bond between him and the players. Everyone on the team seems to know each other really well.

THE WILL TO PLAY soccer on this stormy Tuesday afternoon in Vopnafjörður is resolute. Here, even in one of the most remote fjords of Austurland, dreams about playing international soccer are not too far away.

5 questions

for an Athlete

” Growing up in a small community with a lot of freedom, access to nature and strong bonds with people is a big part of who I am and who I want to be in the future—both as a human being and as a volleyball player.

Photo: Daniel Örn Gíslason

When a sport becomes an opportunity

Galdur Máni Daviðsson has only played volleyball for the past five years. However, the young talent represents Iceland in international tournaments and plays for the local club a few fjords south of his hometown Seyðisfjörður.

Who are you?

I am 19 years old and I was born in Reykjavík—lived in Denmark for some years and moved to Seyðisfjörður with my family when I was 12. Currently, I live in Neskaupstaður and play on the local volleyball team Þróttur. We are in first place in the Icelandic league and are a promising team.

We practice five times a week and play matches almost every weekend, mainly in Reykjavík, Akureyri, Ísafjörður or abroad.

What is your volleyball story?

I began playing as a ninth-grader in Seyðisfjörður's primary school. There was no team for my age group—only for children younger than myself, but my friend and I got invited for practice anyway. While we went not being serious about it at all, I ended up really enjoying it and have played ever since.

Why volleyball?

I really like volleyball. Besides, I have good teammates, and it's great to feel I'm becoming better every day. In the future, the sport will hopefully take me somewhere else to play, so I can explore other countries, which to me, would be a great opportunity.

I just got home from a tournament in Luxembourg yesterday with the national team. We are not the highest-ranked volleyball team internationally, but we are growing bigger and better. Volleyball in Iceland has been establishing itself in recent years, and we are building up the sport.

What are your future dreams?

I dream of making a living playing volleyball. When I finish high school this summer, I will go abroad to play. There is not a lot of money in the game, so I will probably have to work a lot to save up enough before I go. I will either move to Denmark, live there with my grandmother and play for a Danish team, or I might have some options in other countries, which I cannot talk about yet.

What is Austurland for you?

I feel like living here in East Iceland has shaped me. Growing up in a small community with a lot of freedom, access to nature and strong bonds with people is a big part of who I am and who I want to be in the future—both as a human being and as a volleyball player.

Now I feel ready to move away and explore other parts of the world with my sport, but in the future, I see myself returning to East Iceland, establish a family and live my life here.

” The farm itself consists of 150 sheep, 50 goats, a few cattle and chickens.

With Nature All Around Us

Snow-covered mountains and icy roads have led me away from the ring-road and into the highlands. Here, the midwinter's pearly light rests on the open stretches.

I wonder how life is up here in mid January - a cold and rough period in the wilderness of Austurland.

Growing up in Denmark, I am used to forests, farmed land and populated areas. Traveling in the highlands of Iceland represents a completely unfamiliar feeling. There is something mythical about the wild landscape.

I ARRIVE AT MÖDRUDALUR, THE FARM AT THE HIGHEST ELEVATION IN ICELAND, consisting of a cluster of traditionally built turf houses. We are north of the glacier Vatnajökull with the volcano Askja and the mountain range Kverkfjöll in the distance.

Skuggi, a well-fed farm dog, comes to greet me and leads me inside the farm's coffee house Fjallakaffi where a group of employees are enjoying their lunch.

VILHJALMUR VERNHARDSSON was born and raised here on the farm. In fact, his family has lived at Mödrudalur for the past 170 years. Today, Villi lives up here with his wife Elisabet, their two daughters Ísold Fönn and Vorðis Antonia and their five winter employees. The employees are helping Villi and Elisabeth run the coffee house, a guesthouse, the guided highland tours and the farm itself consisting of 150 sheep, 50 goats, a few of cattle and chickens.

“The best thing about living at Mödrudalur is the landscape. I am a hunter, I drive jeeps and go cross country skiing. Spending time outside is what I love the most,” Villi explains when asked how life is in the highlands.

“We have constant light and lots of tourists and hikers in the summer. In winter, darkness rules, but that is not a problem for me. I enjoy the seasonal contrasts and so does my wife, who was a ranger in the highlands around Askja when we met. She's a highland person too!”

Elisabet and the girls stay in Akureyri during the weekdays and return to the farm on the weekends to join Villi. In Akureyri, the girls attend school and 13-year-old, Ísold Fönn, trains in ice skating. She is currently winning European championships in figure skating and spends more and more time in countries around Europe for training and tournaments.

“Ísold Fönn is a country girl and she likes living on the farm. Figure skating is a very posh sport, but when she's at home, she enjoys hunting and working in the stable with me,” says her dad. “People from the figure skating world probably would not believe their own eyes if they saw her life up here.”

” Home is in the highlands. Here, the family live of the animals farmed or hunted in the land surrounding their house.

However, home is in the highlands. Here, the family live of the animals farmed or hunted in the land surrounding their house, the fish caught in the nearby rivers and vegetables organically grown on the farm.

LOOKING AROUND, I AM NOT ABLE TO SPOT a single tree. For a tree-loving person, the landscape here presents itself as barren. When asked if Villi ever misses trees, he looks at me and smiles.

“On a clear day, you can see 100 kilometers over to Dyngjufjöll and the glacier peaks. If there were trees here, we wouldn’t be able to see that far. You’d miss the open stretches and the details of the mountains. No, I never miss trees. They’d block my view.”



Vilhjalmur and Skuggi

A traditionally built turf and wooden house



” On a clear day, you can see 100 kilometers over to Dyngjufjöll and the glacier peaks.

Icy roads and barren grounds

A DOWNY ADVENTURE

Borgarfjörður Eystri is known for its puffin colony, challenging hiking routes and incredible scenery, and in the near future, it might very well be known for its locally produced eiderdown duvets and pillows as well.

An idea that became a reality in a region of entrepreneurial spirits.

“THE IDEA OF ICELANDIC DOWN was born in the fall of 2018 when my husband Þórir and I decided to visit eider duck farmers Óli and Jóhanna at Sævarendi in Loðmundarfjörður. Óli and Jóhanna walked us through the area and explained the history and wonders of Icelandic eiderdown. This was the beginning of Icelandic Down as a company,” Ragna Óskarsdóttir explains.

Ragna, born and raised in Reykjavík, is now a resident in Borgarfjörður Eystri, where she works as the head of Icelandic Down, a company created by two local families joining forces. The roles are clear: Farmers Óli and Jóhanna take care of the nesting area and of harvesting the eiderdown in Loðmundarfjörður. Ragna, her partner Þórir and her daughter Astros and son Kristján take care of the down cleaning processes, the production and the marketing of the product—all from their headquarters, a tiny blue house in the middle of Borgarfjörður Eystri.

“The whole community, especially here in Borgarfjörður Eystri and in East Iceland generally, has been really supportive of our little adventure and everyone is ready to offer a helping hand. It’s great to be an entrepreneur in Austurland!”

Ragna elaborates: “Borgarfjörður Eystri is a part of the program from Byggðastofnun, which is called Brothættar byggðir. We got accepted into the start-up program ‘Til sjávar og sveita,’ and that was the dawn of our adventure. On top of that, we were lucky to receive a grant last spring through ‘Brothættar byggðir’ or as we call it here in Borgarfjörður ‘Betri Borgarfjörður.”

One would think that it’s risky to establish a company in a town of 100 inhabitants. Of course, a certain dose of courage is needed when venturing out on a new project, but with the support of the surrounding community, grants available for local projects and topped with the laurels of eiderdown’s history in Iceland, Ragna and her team foresee a bright future for Icelandic Down.

“ICELANDIC FARMERS HAVE BEEN USING EIDERDOWN ever since Iceland was inhabited more than 1100 years ago. Eiderdown is a completely sustainable material harvested in a collaboration between man and bird. It is a privilege to work on such a wonderful project!”



” *The whole community has been really supportive of our little adventure and everyone is ready to offer a helping hand.*

” It’s great to be
an entrepreneur
in Austurland



A proud product from Icelandic Down

Photo: Guðrún Ástros Bergsveinsdóttir

The view of Borgarfjörður Eystri



Photo: Ragnhildur Sæmundsdóttir

Nesting season begins in May



Photo: Guðrún Ástros Bergsveinsdóttir

A close-up, profile view of a man with short hair and a light beard, wearing a red and blue high-visibility jacket. He is holding a dark, handheld electronic device (possibly a GPS or communication device) in his right hand, looking at it intently. The background is bright and out of focus, suggesting an interior vehicle setting. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of his jacket and the contours of his face.

” We are one big network so, in case of emergencies, we can send people all around the island

In Just One Phone Call

Davið Kristinsson is the kind of guy that you'll find patrolling the streets right after a storm or a heavy snowfall in case anyone needs help. He is also a guy you call for advice when you're on the top of the mountain pass Fjaðarheiði in a snowstorm, wondering if you can make it home safely.

"I BECAME A PART of the local search and rescue team in Seyðisfjörður in 2014. The team needed help on a rescue call and I had a vehicle they could use. Today, I volunteer as a part of the search and rescue team, the fire brigade, and I drive the ambulance in case of emergencies."

Iceland has an impressive culture for volunteering when it comes to search and rescue work. In every little community, you will find a local search and rescue department operated by local men and women on a completely voluntary basis. Landsbjörg is the name of the national association, and it has over 4000 members spread throughout the country.

” We are also just ordinary people who have devoted time and energy to this.

"Before 2014, I never thought about being a part of any rescue squad. I thought it was an exclusive club for mountaineers and specially trained people—and I am neither! But they called me, and I assisted them in finding a missing person in the mountains, which showed me that anyone can help!"

The local search and rescue team in Seyðisfjörður consists of 10-15 active members, meaning these people can receive calls for assistance both night and day.

"We are a tightknit team who know each other really well. We are also just ordinary people who have devoted time and energy to this. Personally, because I am self-employed, I am able to reply to the daily calls and show up whenever. Just now, I came from an F3 call!" Davið explains.

Calls vary on a scale of seriousness from F1 to F4. If Davið and the team get an F1 call, there are lives at risk. In that case, Davið will drop everything and hurry to the search and rescue team's headquarters in Seyðisfjörður where the team will be briefed about the situation. An F2 call means that humans are in danger; F3 is a request of service when a car, for instance, is stuck on the mountain pass, and an F4 is a "get ready" call in case of storms and rough weather.

"We work across the local safety teams, and that is very important. For instance, the rescue team and fire brigade take training courses together. We also collaborate with other search and rescue teams here in the East, and also nationally. We are one big network so, in case of emergencies, we can send people to assist with manpower or specific knowledge all around the island."

DAVID REMEMBERS a big call a few years ago where a hunter disappeared in the mountains. From the entire East, squads on snowmobiles, skis and foot were searching for the hunter day and night. On the third day, he was finally found in the mountains and flown to Reykjavik by helicopter. Without the effort of this network of volunteers, he wouldn't have survived.

As a foreigner, I am amazed by the performance of Iceland's rescue squads. Anywhere else in the world, such men and women would probably have extended safety educations, specialized training and fulltime work in this capacity.

Davið rounds off:

"I think you get more out of us because we are volunteers who are not doing this for money. With us, it's all heart!"

” I said to myself, ‘This is it.
I need this in my life’

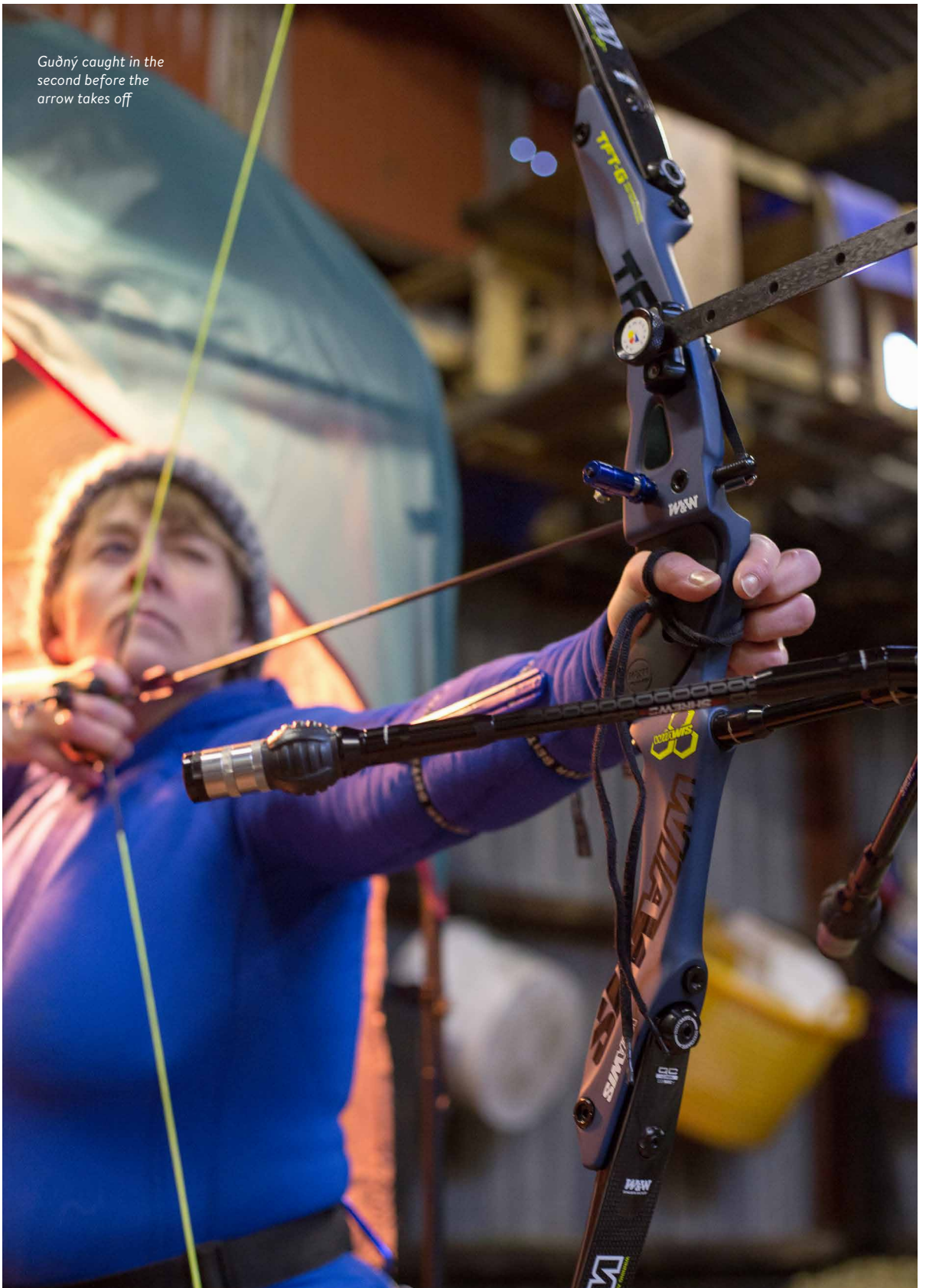


Photos: Daniel Örn Gíslason

The Archer from Fossárdalur



Gudný caught in the second before the arrow takes off



“You stand with your side to the target board. You crawl your toes together in your shoes, stiffen your hips, suck your navel in and lean a little bit forward. You look at the target, lift your bow while opening your chest, stretch your bow arm and draw the string back with the other arm’s three middle fingers. Then.... you let the arrow go.”

The arrow disappears with a loud “snap.” We are inside a hay barn with 18 meters to the target board, making it difficult to see exactly where the arrow hits. Guðný shoots five more arrows before we head down to the target board to note her points.

GUÐNÝ GRÉTA EYÞÓRSDÓTTIR IS A MOTHER OF THREE SONS, a post deliverer every other day and a sheep farmer from early morning till night. She was born in 1969 and grew up on Fossardalur, a farm 15 kilometers north of Djúpvogur. Today, Guðný and her husband, Hafliði, are the fifth generation living on the farm.

Guðný is also an archer. She shot her first arrow in 2012, participated in the Icelandic National Tournament for the first time in 2016, and secured herself a seat at the Small State’s Olympics (GSSE) in San Marino in 2017. When asked how her story in archery began, Guðný looks back at a childhood memory:

“When I was a kid, the boys in my school made their own bow and arrows from wood. I was so jealous. I really wanted to try it, but girls did not do such a thing, so I wasn’t allowed. I must have told my husband about this because, in 2012, he gave me a gift card so that I could try archery. After a couple of try-outs, I said to myself, ‘This is it. I need this in my life’ and bought my first bow.”

Archery, in Iceland, was originally a sport for people with disabilities. Though from 2012, everyone was allowed

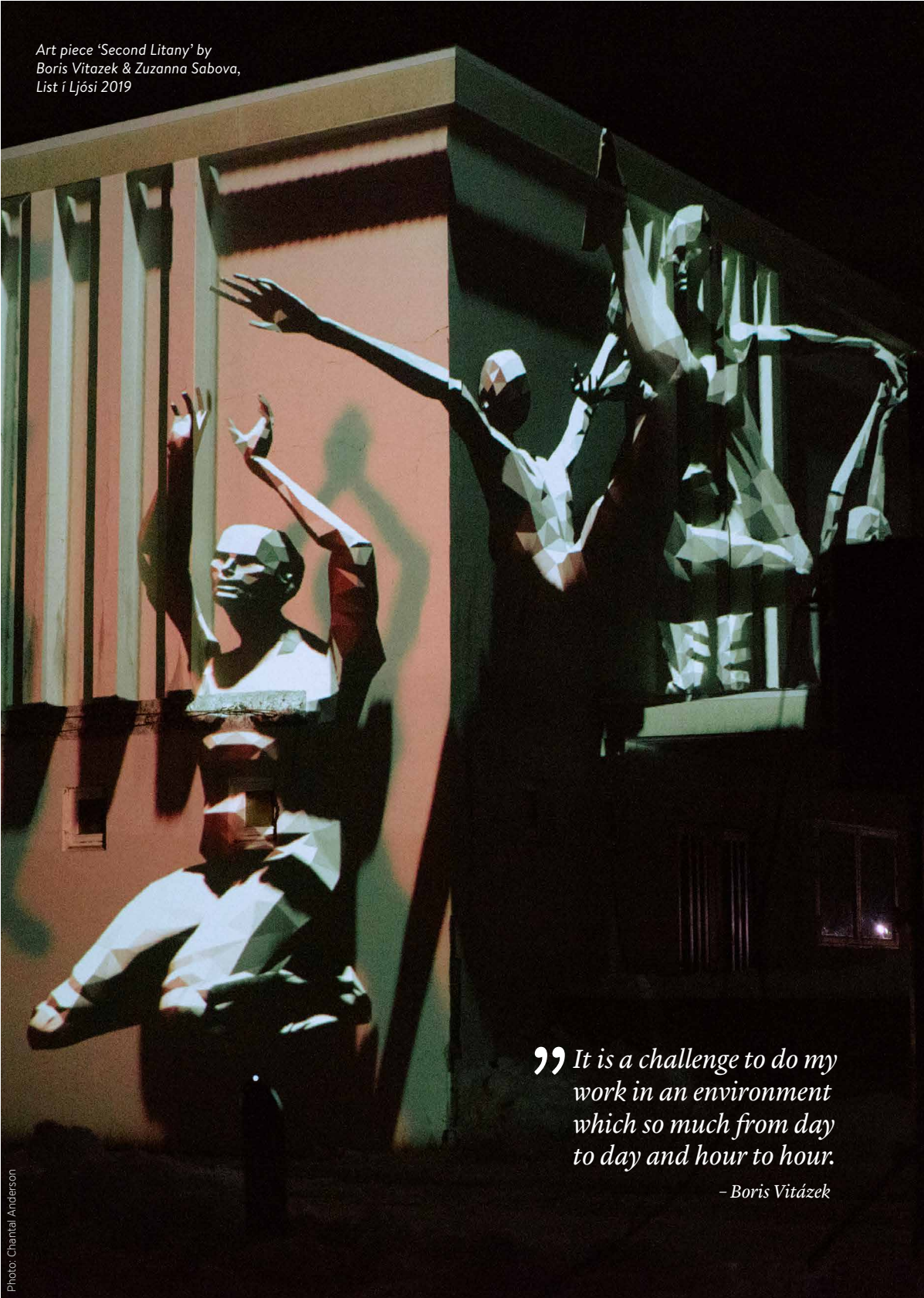
into archery at Bogfimisetrið—the Archery Center in Reykjavik. Today, you can go there, rent gear and shoot for fun. Living far away from Reykjavik, Guðný has created her own training facilities in their hay barn and outside on a 70-meter shooting field in the hills around the farm.

“THIS IS MJÖLNIR, MY BOW. IT IS NAMED AFTER THOR, THE THUNDER GOD’S HAMMER. My other bow is called Skaði, which means damage. For a long time, I was just shooting here in the barn on my own. It was not until 2015 when I met my coach Haraldur from Egilsstaðir that I began proper training.”

Guðný has participated in the Icelandic Nationals in archery every year since 2016. Being one out of only three to five competing women in Iceland, she is almost certain to bring back a medal every year. Though for Guðný, it is not all about winning—it is what the sport requires of her:

“Archery is a crazy technical sport and you have to build up your technique as every little detail makes a difference; your level of strength, your body posture, your equipment, the weather conditions and even your mood of the day. You have to know yourself well and be in contact with your body at a high level to do this.”

Art piece 'Second Litany' by
Boris Vitázek & Zuzanna Sabova,
List i Ljósi 2019



*” It is a challenge to do my
work in an environment
which so much from day
to day and hour to hour.*

- Boris Vitázek

Photo: Chantal Anderson

WHAT'S ON IN AUSTURLAND

If you happen to be in Austurland over wintertime you really cannot miss a cultural event. It is a testament to Austurland's sparkling cultural life where locals enjoy themselves and at the same time entertain the guests. Below is a selection of the main events. A closer look and you could keep yourself busy throughout the winter!



SEYÐISFJÖRÐUR
14 - 15 FEBRUARY

LIST Í LJÓSI

The annual light festival in Seyðisfjörður celebrates the return of the sun. The streets, the homes, even the surrounding mountains will be used as canvases for showing various art pieces by both Icelandic and International artists. Leading up to the festival the week from the 10th to the 14th will be full of filmscreenings, performances and art talk events.

WWW.LISTILJOSI.COM



FJARÐABYGGÐ
28 FEB - 01 MARCH

AUSTURLAND FREERIDE FESTIVAL

A new skiing festival is taking place in the snowy mountains around Fjaðabyggð. The focus is backcountry skiing and both experienced and beginners are welcome to participate! The festival will be hosting avalanche courses as well as introduction classes to backcountry skiing. A variety of cultural events such as concerts will be offered simultaneously and visitors will have a change of trying out the local cuisine.

WWW.AUSTURLAND.IS

AUSTURLAND
FREERIDE
FESTIVAL



DJÚPIVOGUR
23 - 26 APRIL

HAMMOND MUSIC FESTIVAL

Every year locals and visitors gather in Djúpivogur for the famous Hammond Festival. Here, both Icelandic and International bands will perform concerts and the town will be full of activities for people of all ages. The focus of the festival is to introduce and honour the hammond instrument. The Hammond Festival is one of the oldest music festivals in Iceland and is an event not to be missed.

WWW.HAMMOND.DJUPIVOGUR.IS

SJÁUMST!

