



JÖKULSÁRGLJÚFUR

HISTORY

For centuries, Ás was one of Iceland's leading farms, reaching from the coast to Dettifoss waterfall and west to the district boundary at Bunguveggur ridge. Including several smallholdings, Ás possessed extensive birch woods and productive hay fields. Powerful glacial floods (jökulhlaups) of the 17th and 18th centuries destroyed many of these fields and left Ás poor and insignificant. The estate once included a church, but this fell into disuse in 1816.

Svínadalur farm was long a part of Ás, but seems often to have been used only for summertime grazing and milking. During the 19th century and until 1946, people lived there year-round. Historical records mention other such summertime sites or minor farms within the Ás estate, including Fornasel, Rauðhólasel and Gilsbakki.



Falki – *Falco rusticolus*

Við Hafragil

NATURAL FEATURES

Flowing from Vatnajökull glacier, the river Jökulsá á Fjöllum empties into Öxarfjörður bay. Besides being the country's second longest river, at 206 km, its catchment area is the largest of all. North of Vatnajökull, the river crosses a barren, gently sloping plateau, but the current gains speed towards the edge of the highlands, where powerful waterfalls drop into the canyon (gljúfur) named after the river, Jökulsárgljúfur.

This canyon is one of the deepest and most breathtaking in Iceland: 25 km long, 500 m wide and in many places 100-120 m deep. The unique series of waterfalls - Selfoss, Dettifoss, Hafragilsfoss and Réttarfoss - have few equals on earth. Jökulsárgljúfur and its surroundings are thought to have been cut into the bedrock through a sequence of catastrophic glacial floods, or jökulhlaups, after the end of the last glaciation. The last such flood probably occurred some 2,000 years ago, but the canyon terrain still clearly shows its erosive force.

About 8-9,000 years ago, two volcanic fissures erupted, one of which ran parallel to today's river for a distance of some 6 km and is named after the Rauðhólar and Hljóðaklettar formations. The other fissure is named after Randarhólar hills, where, just north of Dettifoss waterfall at Hafragil, the river has cut through the feeder channel of a volcanic crater. This opened a unique cross-sectional view of the magma channel in the canyon's east wall.

Both of these fissures produced broad lava fields; however, catastrophic river floods washed large parts away, leaving cliff-edged hills behind, such as Vigabjarg in Forvöð, Eyjan in Vesturdalur and Eyjan in Ásbyrgi, all remains of former lava flows.

Jökulsárgljúfur nature is full of contrasts. Some marshy spots can be found in the Hafragil and Hólmatungur areas. The established birch woods of Ásbyrgi are delightful and provide a home to many plant species and numerous birds, of which redwings, redpolls, wrens and snipes are common. Ptarmigans, plovers and meadow pipits are frequently seen in lower-growing vegetation; around lakes and ponds, wetland birds are common. Falcons, merlins, ravens and fulmars nest in cliffs, while wheatears and snow buntings breed in barren, rocky areas.

Reynir – *Sorbus aucuparia*



Horft yfir Ásbyrgi

HIKING ROUTES

The Jökulsárgljúfur area is ideal for walking, and indeed cannot be fully explored except on foot. A number of trails have been marked through the canyon from Ásbyrgi south to Selfoss. To help hikers choose suitable routes, their lengths in kilometres are given below, along with colours indicating path difficulty, in accordance with the ratings explained on the map.



BLUE: Easy For the most part good trails with a smooth surface, without any significant obstructions or difficulties.



RED: Challenging Routes and trails which may include lengthy rough, difficult sections, and obstructions such as unbridged brooks or small rivers, loose gravel, steep sections, and so forth.



BLACK: Difficult Routes and trails involving obstacles and difficulties, such as sizeable unbridged rivers, steep slopes and cliff barriers, which may prove hazardous to the inexperienced or in poor conditions.



GREEN: For those with limited mobility These trails are over 75 cm in width and have paving, wooden platforms or compacted gravel, so that there is no loose gravel lying on the surface.

As seen above, green indicates the easiest trails and black the most difficult ones. For more information on any routes, you are welcome to speak to the rangers at the Gljúfrastofa Visitor Centre.

PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN MIND

- Avoid making noise on the campsite between 23:00 and 7:00.
- Please keep the campsite neat, and show consideration to other visitors.
- Protect vegetation on the campsite. Do not pour hot water on the ground or scorch vegetation with cooking equipment.
- Dogs should be kept on a leash within the Park boundaries at all times, and please remember to clean up after your dog.
- Damage to vegetation, such as breaking branches or uprooting plants, is prohibited, as is disturbing animal life, tampering with basalt and other geological formations or building cairns.
- Littering and burying rubbish in the National Park is prohibited, and visitors are encouraged to recycle the rubbish they leave behind.
- Bonfires are not allowed.
- Please take only pictures and memories from the National Park and try to leave nothing behind but light footprints.
- In emergency call 112

TRAILS AT ÁSBYRGI

- Á-1 Botnstjörn pond. 1 km.** Ásbyrgi parking area – Botnstjörn pond – viewpoint – return. **Points of interest:** Vegetation, birds and view of pond.
- Á-2 Eyjan hill in Ásbyrgi. 4.5 km.** Campground – Eyjan – campground. **Points of interest:** Beautiful view of Ásbyrgi. Enjoyable evening stroll.
- Á-3 Skógarstigur - through the woods. 4 km.** Visitor Centre – Ásbyrgi parking area. **Points of interest:** Forest history. Vegetation and birds.
- Á-4 Below Eyjan hill. 3.5 km.** Campground – Ásbyrgi parking area. **Points of interest:** The Eyjan cliff-sided hill; honeycomb weathering; woods and other vegetation.
- Á-5 Áshöfði ring (around Áshöfði hill). 7.5 km.** Visitor Centre – Ástjörn lake – Gilsbakki – Ás – Visitor Centre. **Points of interest:** Varying terrain, birch woods, moorland. Good view of Jökulsárgljúfur canyon
- Á-6 Áshöfði ring (Áshöfði hill loop). 7 km.** Visitor Centre – Ástjörn lake – Áshöfði – Ástjörn lake – Visitor Centre. **Points of interest:** Birds at Ástjörn lake, ponds, ravines. Beautiful view from Áshöfði.
- Á-7 Klappir. 10 km.** Visitor Centre – Klappir – return. **Points of interest:** Excellent view of Ásbyrgi canyon. Unique potholes at Klappir.
- Á-8 Kúahvammur ring. 12 km.** Visitor Centre – Klappir – Kúahvammur – Visitor Centre. **Points of interest:** Excellent view over the Ásbyrgi depression and Jökulsárgljúfur canyon. Birds and diverse vegetation.
- Á-9 Kvíar ring. 17 km.** Visitor Centre – Klappir – Kvíar – Kúahvammur – Visitor Centre. **Points of interest:** Indications of catastrophic floods in Kvíar. Ponds and bedrock in Laxavogur.

TRAILS AT VESTURDALUR

- V-1 Eyjan hill in Vesturdalur. 1 km.** Campground (by the more easterly WC) – Eyjan – campground. **Points of interest:** Viewpoints, ponds and birds.
- V-2 Hljóðaklettar (Echo Rocks). 1 km.** Hljóðaklettar parking area – Tröllid (Troll Rock) – return. **Points of interest:** Cliff acoustics near Jökulsá river and unique geological phenomena: basalt columns, cliffs and honeycomb weathering.
- V-3 Hljóðaklettar (Echo Rocks) loop. 3 km.** Hljóðaklettar parking area – Hljóðaklettar – parking area. **Points of interest:** Cliff acoustics near Jökulsá river and unique geological phenomena: basalt columns, cliffs, honeycomb weathering and caves.
- V-4 Rauðhólar (Red Hills) loop. 5 km.** Hljóðaklettar parking area – Hljóðaklettar – Rauðhólar – parking area. **Points of interest:** Extraordinary view and colourful scoria. The first part of the trail is the same as in Route V-3.
- V-5 Karl og Kerling cliffs. 2 km.** Hljóðaklettar parking area – Karl og Kerling – return. **Points of interest:** View over Jökulsá river and Hljóðaklettar, geological phenomena, folk tale.
- V-6 Svínadalur (deserted farm) loop. 7 km.** Hljóðaklettar parking area – Karl og Kerling – Kalbjarg – Svínadalur – Vesturdalur – campground – parking area. **Points of interest:** History, ruins of varying age, Jökulsá river and geological phenomena.

TRAILS AT HÓLMATUNGUR

- H-1 Hólmatungur loop. 4.5 km.** Hólmatungur parking area – Hólmaá river and falls - Jökulsá - parking area. **Points of interest:** Magnificent variety of vegetation, pretty waterfalls and rivers.
- H-2 Katlar. 2 km.** Hólmatungur parking area – Katlar – return. **Points of interest:** Vigabjarg (cliff-sided rock); Jökulsá river in a narrow gorge; waterfalls, brooks and springs.
- H-3 Ytra-Pórunnarfjall. 0.6 km.** Parking area – Ytra-Pórunnarfjall – return. **Points of interest:** Excellent view of Hólmatungur and Jökulsárgljúfur canyon

TRAILS AT DETTIFOSS (west bank)

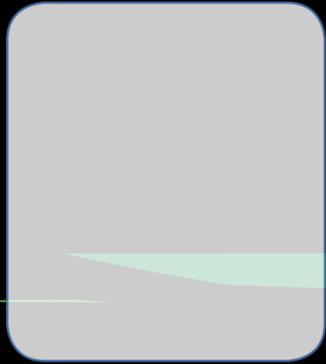
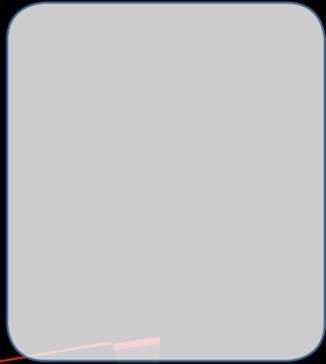
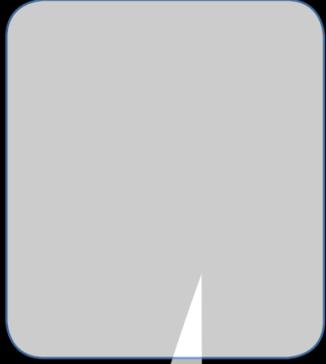
- D-1 Dettifoss. 1.5 km.** Dettifoss parking area – Dettifoss – return. **Points of interest:** Europe's most powerful waterfall; upper end of Jökulsárgljúfur canyon.
- D-2 Dettifoss loop. 2.5 km.** Dettifoss parking area – Dettifoss – Selfoss – parking area. **Points of interest:** Europe's most powerful waterfall; upper end of Jökulsárgljúfur canyon; Selfoss, the river's uppermost waterfall.
- D-3 Hafragil lowlands. 6 km.** Parking area east of Hafragil – Hafragil – Hafragil lowlands – Sanddallur – parking area. **Warning:** Steep trail; large boulders; risk of falling rocks. **Points of interest:** Springs, Jökulsá river, Hafragil waterfall and the canyon. Most spectacular hike in the Jökulsárgljúfur area.

LONGER TRAILS

- L-1 Ásbyrgi - Vesturdalur 12 km.** Visitor Centre – Klappir – Kvíar – Rauðhólar – Hljóðaklettar – Vesturdalur. **Points of interest:** Spectacular view of Ásbyrgi and the canyon; unique geological formations; diverse flora and fauna.
- L-2 Vesturdalur – Dettifoss 19.5 km.** Vesturdalur – Karl og Kerling – Kalbjarg – Hólmatungur – Pórunnarfjall – north of Hafragil – Dettifoss. **Points of interest:** Spectacular view of Ásbyrgi and the canyon; unique geological formations; diverse flora and fauna.
- L-3 Vesturdalur - Dettifoss via the Hafragil lowlands 18 km.** Vesturdalur – Karl og Kerling – Kalbjarg – Hólmatungur – Pórunnarfjall – Hafragil lowlands – Dettifoss. **Warning:** Steep trail; large boulders; risk of falling rocks. **Points of interest:** Springs, Jökulsá river, Hafragil waterfall and the canyon. Most spectacular hike in the Jökulsárgljúfur area.

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For
Conduces to a smooth surface,
without significant obstructions or
difficulties.