

RANGÁ REVIEW

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SEASONAL MAGAZINE

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HORSING AROUND

Saddle-up and discover the magic of exploring the wild and wonderful landscape of Southern Iceland on horseback this summer

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CREATIVE CUISINE

Meet one of Iceland's most talented young chefs and learn to cook modern Nordic, gourmet cuisine with Hotel Rangá's chef Bragi Þór Hansson

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COAST TO COUNTRY

The long summer days provide the perfect opportunity for bird-spotting in Iceland, from mountains and meadows to coast and country

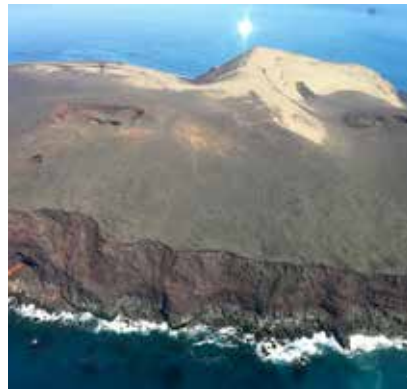




TAKE TO THE SKIES

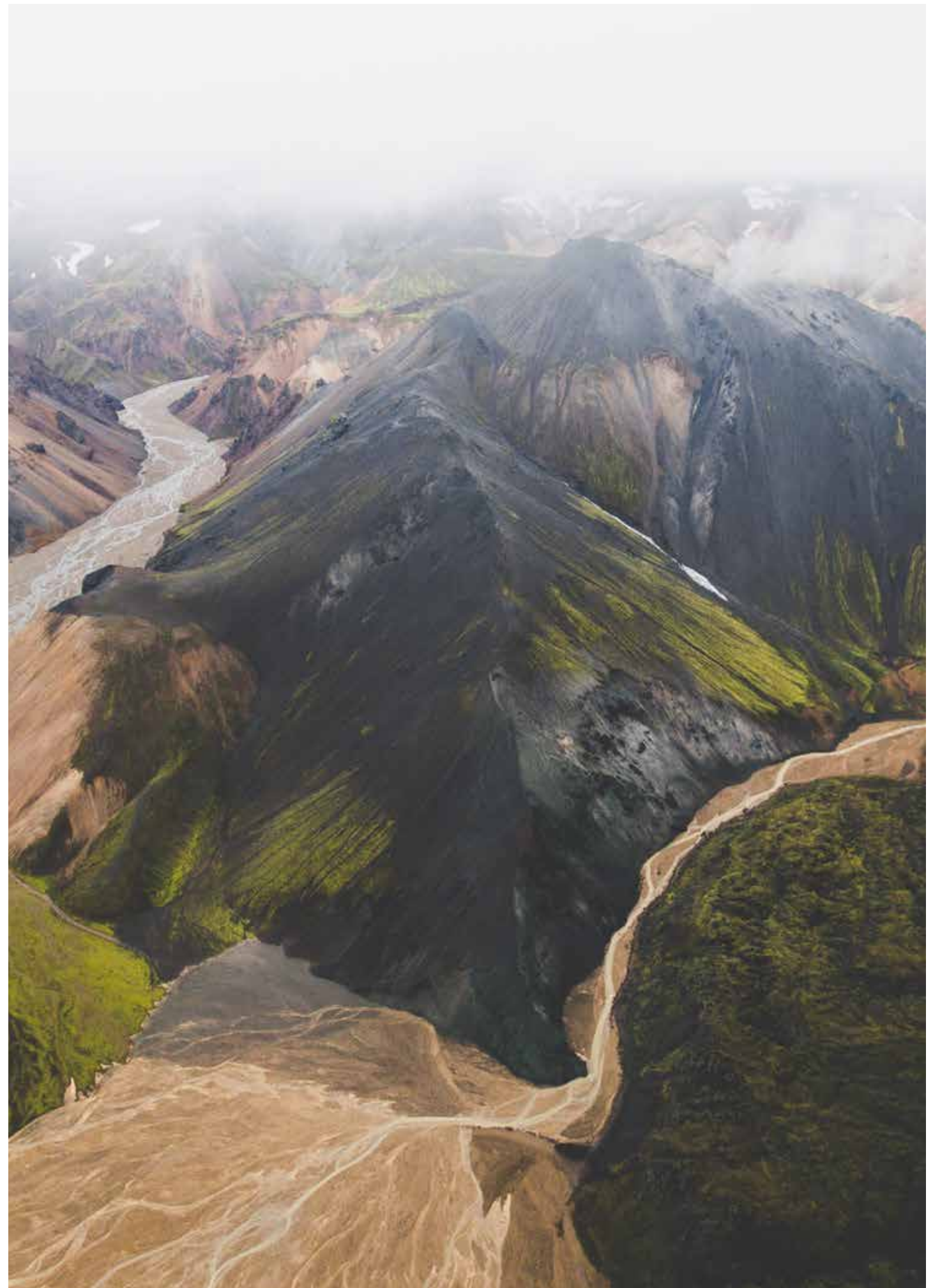
Iceland is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of those once in a lifetime, bucket-list destinations, for thousands of travellers worldwide.

The raw beauty of this unique volcanic land entices visitors from all over the world, twelve months of the year. From university students to retired couples, hikers and bikers to stargazers, film crews to pop stars, Iceland ignites a fascination in a diverse variety of visitors, all looking to experience a truly personal and authentic taste of Iceland.



With its evocative backdrop and myriad of natural landmarks, it's no surprise that many guests choose Iceland as a place in which to celebrate a special birthday, proposal, engagement or an-

niversary. Of course, when planning a milestone or romantic event, visitors want to immerse themselves in the ultimate Icelandic experience and soak up the natural beauty of this unspoilt wilderness. One of the most dramatic and mesmerising ways of witnessing Iceland's wild landscape and seeing in detail is volcanoes, mountains, lakes and waterfalls, its from above. Why not take to the skies and see Iceland in all its raw, natural, glory, take in its bold, beautiful, yet, ever-changing terrain and enjoy a VIP tour in a private plane or helicopter.





Southern Iceland offers a multitude of magical and untouched landscapes which can only be truly appreciated from above. Your private flightseeing excursion could take you to the ethereal Vatnajökull glacier and onwards into the hidden highlands of Iceland over Landmannalaugar, Langisjór, Laki and Lakagígar. Other routes pass over the Eyjafjallajökull glacier, Mount Hekla, The Þingvellir National Park,

Geysir, Gullfoss waterfall and the Þórsmörk Nature Reserve.

A plane or helicopter tour is one of the most luxurious and impressive ways to explore southern Iceland and will leave you with lasting, lifelong memories. It is also the perfect opportunity for both amateur and professional photographers to shoot Iceland's captivating countryside and vibrant landscape.



Hotel Rangá works closely with several experienced plane and helicopter companies and can arrange VIP experiences upon request, please just ask at reception.



THE BURNING HEART OF ICELAND

On the surface, Iceland has a naturally soothing and restorative atmosphere. Here, visitors find they can un-plug and unwind in a natural and energising environment.

Yet, not so far beneath its beautiful and peaceful exterior, Iceland has a complex and lively volcanic soul, one that is keeping scientists and geologists hard at work 24/7.

To better grasp the complex and volatile nature of Iceland's heartland, take a trip to the new Lava Centre, where you can enjoy an epic and educational, ground-breaking journey.

The LAVA centre features a hi-tec exhibition exploring the art of science, geology and the volcanic systems that criss-cross Iceland. Information from the past

century's volcanic eruptions demonstrate the importance volcanic activity has on contemporary Iceland. Feel first-hand the fierce forces of nature as you experience an earthquake and see the fiery heart of Iceland. Discover an impressive 12m high structure simulating the Mantle plume and the magma flow underneath Iceland's surface. In the educational learning centre you can explore the wonders of volcanoes and earthquakes through interactive computers and there's also a cinema auditorium where visitors can see the magnificence of volcanic eruptions in HD and 4K.



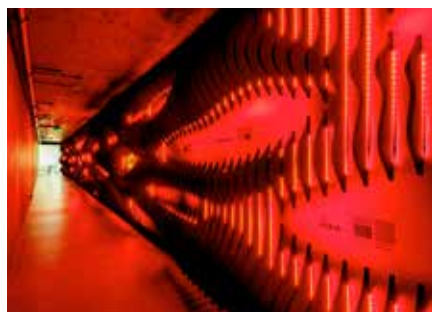
If you are travelling with kids then the Lava Centre is a great way to demonstrate how Iceland functions beneath the surface, the perfect rainy-day destination.

www.lavacentre.is

Examine the various volcanos—eruptions and lava flows, volcanic and rift systems, faults and glacial floods that make Iceland a showcase of volcanism. The centre introduces the Katla Geopark plus Iceland's elaborate and state of the art monitoring system for surveying volcanos and earthquake zones. Enjoy a sensory overload in the volcano and lava corridors and get up close and personal with Iceland's unpredictable natural wonders using the geology globe. This new educational centre shares

information in an inspiring and interactive way, interweaving a sense of wonder with the essential facts and historic data. The Lava centre also features a café and gift-shop selling artisan products and Icelandic woollens.

LAVA is located in the South of Iceland, approximately 104 km. east of Reykjavik and just a short drive from Hotel Rangá.



HORSING AROUND

One of the most joyful ways to explore Iceland's countryside in the summer is from the saddle. Gently ride through the unspoilt landscape and discover the beauty of getting back to nature. Horses are a deep-rooted part of Icelandic culture and you will find many farms offering riding excursions throughout the region.



One of the world's oldest and purest breeds, the Icelandic horse makes the perfect companion for novices and children. Known for their resilience, intelligence and gentle nature, these beautiful beasts live outdoors year-round and can endure dramatic weather conditions thanks to their wonderful coats which they shed in the summer.

This summer, why not try a horse trek led by a local guide and view the sensational scenery whilst learning about the environment. Ride through lava meadows, explore the volcanic terrain and enjoy far-reaching views of the mountains,

coast and countryside. Depending on your level of experience and time available there are numerous riding options on offer, from shorter 2-hour treks right through to horse-back adventures spread over a few days with camping en-route. Hotel Rangá can arrange small group rides or individual riding excursions with picnic lunches. Enjoy the waterfalls, rivers, farmland and meadows of Iceland this summer and make friends with the Icelandic horses, who are undoubtedly the most photogenic horses in the world, especially the blue-eyed ones, they will steal your heart.

HOT-TUB HEAVEN

Grab your swimming costume, your towelling robe and a glass of something bubbly and head for the hot-tub. One of Hotel Rangá's most popular ways to truly unwind, resting under the watchful gaze of Mount Hekla and with the sound of River Rangá drifting passed in the distance, simply sit back and relax and let your cares drift away.





NATURAL WONDERS

The ever-changing and stark contrasts in landscapes and vegetation that Iceland offers comes as a surprise to many visitors. The environment is quite different from most other places in the world and it can be a challenge to make sense of it all.

One of the best ways to understand the complexity of Iceland's spellbinding landscape is to learn by osmosis. Spend time with a local expert and you will get to truly understand the fragility and complexity of nature and the ecosystems at work in Iceland.

Volcanic eruptions cause lava flows and ashfall, that give Iceland its unique character, but at the same time, can be devastating to life, be it animals or plants.

One eco expert is Magnus Johannsson of Mudshark Tours who regularly shares his in-depth knowledge with visitors to Southern Iceland. "On our Þórsmörk tour, we discuss farming and grazing, floods and volcanic eruptions, trying to piece things together as we drive towards Þórsmörk itself. In Þórsmörk we hike a bit, learning about the vegetation and birdlife that we experience on the way. In spring, it is fun to find the first flowers of the Winter Saxifrage in bloom, later in the season, the Heath Spotted-orchid is in flower. In the



Whilst out and about on a nature tour keep an eye out for the elusive Golden Plover. To Icelanders this bird, the Lóa, with its characteristic song, is a sure sign of spring. Every Icelander knows the song about the Lóa, "Lóan er komin," which thaws the frozen heart of winter and tells us that better times are ahead."

fall, it is tempting to pick wild berries and the occasional mushroom! A stark contrast to Þórsmörk is a tour to Landmannalaugar in the heart of the highlands. By moving to higher altitudes, the temperature differs, the vegetation changes and so does the scenery. Vast black tephra-laden areas resulting from eruptions in Hekla's volcano and other volcanic systems have little or no vegetation, except near to springs where green is redefined with mosses that seem to glow with a fluorescent green. At Landmannalaugar, a nature reserve, geothermal activity plays a major role. Steaming vents dotted here and there, both large and small, make up a surreal Martian atmosphere. And the rhyolite mountains provide a never-ending feast of colours and bold formations, the perfect focal point for photographers, painters and videographers. Experiencing both tours in tandem allows you to experience the contrasts in Icelandic nature, the forces that sculpt it and the ecosystems within."

For more information about eco and nature tours ask at reception or take a look at www.mudshark.is

COAST TO COUNTRY

a bird-watchers paradise

Iceland offers the best of both worlds when it comes to bird-spotting. Not only do enthusiasts have the chance to see up to 80 different species but all set against some of the most dramatic backdrops on the planet. Below, we give a little insight into how to plan your trip and what to expect from Southern Iceland's birdlife.

When to visit: Late May and June are the prime time as all migrant birds have arrived and many species are highly visible as they pair up and secure their territories. Also, you have almost 24 hours daylight, so you can explore the region for longer periods.

Ones to Watch: Atlantic puffins flying to and from their cliffside burrows; red-necked phalaropes spinning circles city ponds; Slavonian grebe's courtship ritual; the ghostly call of a great northern diver; guillemots and razorbills jostling for cliff space; swooping gannets diving for food; the gathering of noisy whooper swans on a coastal lagoon and of course, the Icelanders fondness for celebrating spring with the arrival of the first golden plover – "Lóan er komin!".

The birds most frequently spotted along the coasts of Iceland include the Arctic Tern, eiders, waders, and passerine birds, as well as seabirds such as the Guillemot, Razorbill, the Atlantic Puffin, Fulmar, gannets, and various gulls. Destinations for bird watching day trips include the Reykjanes Peninsula, the Snæfellsnes Peninsula or the Westman Islands, where Iceland's largest puffin population lives.

Iceland's wetlands are a natural habitat for many species of birds. In the South of Iceland, not far from the village of Vík, Dyrhólaey is a visually stunning rock peninsula where various species of seabirds

can be viewed up close.

Hotel Rangá itself rests gently on the banks of the East River Rangá where you can spend time watching the daily and seasonal rhythms of its captivating birdlife. Enjoy your breakfast overlooking the river and spot swans, geese, ducks and snipes as they go about their business.

The Rangá Bird-spotting challenge.... We would love to know how many of our avian residents you spot during your stay, here is a list of our regular visitors:

- Heiðlóa** – European Golden Plover
- Svanur** – Arctic Swan / Whooper Swan
- Óðinshani** – Red-necked Phalarope
- Stelkur** – Common Redshank
- Spói** – Whimbrel
- Hrossagaukur** – Common Snipe
- Mariuerla** – White Wagtail
- Púfuttlingur** – Meadow Pipit
- Sólskrikja / Snjótittlingur** – Snow Bunting
- Sendlingur** – Purple Sandpiper
- Tjaldur** – Eurasian Oystercatcher
- Jaðrakan** – Black-tailed Godwit
- Endur** – Many types of ducks
- Gæsir** – Varieties of Geese





IN FULL BLOOM

Throughout the summer, Southern Iceland takes on a gentler character where lava meadows and farmlands boast flowering plants that soften the landscape and bring colour to the riverbanks, hills and roadsides.

Take a stroll along the river Rangá and discover a hidden world of flowering plants, here you can see many tiny, yet colourful signs of life, where is a brief guide to plant-life in Iceland.



Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*)



Harebell (*Betula pubescens*)



Arctic River-beauty (*Epilobium latifolium*)



Bag Violet (*Viola palustris*)



Arctic Poppy (*Papaver radicum*)



Lyme Grass (*Leymus arenarius*)



Arctic Willow (*Salix arctica*)



Lyngbye's Sedge (*Carex lyngbyei*)



Mountain Avens (*Dryas octopetala*)



Mountain Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*)



Moss Campion (*Silene acaulis*)



Garden Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*)



NATIONAL TREASURE

Commonly known as Mountain Avens, *Holtasóley* is found in all regions of Iceland growing mainly on gravelly mountain slopes and moorland. According to an old book on herbs its name changes to *Hárbrúða* or Hairy Doll once it has matured and gone to seed. It's also known as *rjúpnalauf* or ptarmigan leaf because the northern grouse like to feast on its leathery leaves during the winter months. Apart from being an important food source for ptarmigans, the plant has an interesting history. Long before it was voted national flower of Iceland (in October 2004) it was used as a herb for its medicinal properties: mainly as an astringent and to reduce inflammation. The leaves were also dried and used as both a substitute for tobacco and tea. Perhaps the most surprising thing reported about

the history of *Holtasóley* – given its status as a national flower – is that it was once known as “Thief’s Root”. This was because it grew in abundance in places where thieves were hung. According to folklore, *Holtasóley* has the power to attract money from the earth, but what you have to do to get it is quite frankly sinful, immoral and wicked. To get rich à la *Holtasóley*, one must first steal money from a poor widow while she’s attending mass and then bury it underneath the so-called Thief’s Root where it was supposed to double the value of the money. Not a particularly romantic story about the national flower of Iceland, but it might just explain why thieves were hung where *Holtasóley* grows. Read more about Iceland’s flowers in Hörður Kristinnsson’s book *Flowering Plants and Ferns of Iceland*.



Long tailed Skua in the arctic flowers



CREATIVE CUISINE

This summer, Hotel Rangá is delighted to announce the appointment of new head chef Bragi Þór Hansson. After many years of working and studying alongside Karl Jóhann Unnarsson, Bragi has now taken over the reins at Hotel Rangá. He is the 1st chef to graduate from the Hotel Rangá kitchen and is now making his mark in the culinary world. Here, we catch up with Bragi and discover what inspires him and fuels his passion for cooking.

How did you come to start working as a Chef?

At the age of 17 I got the chance to assist in a restaurant close to my hometown. I was given the simple tasks, peeling potatoes, cutting vegetables and doing the dishes. After that weekend there was no turning back. I signed up for culinary school the following week.

Were you formally trained before coming to Rangá?

No, I was not formally trained before coming to Rangá, but I had worked in kitchens both in Reykjavik for a year and then in London for about two years. I came home from London in 2012 to finish my Journeyman degree. That's when I started working at Rangá. In 2015 I graduated, I'm the first student to graduate from Rangá. Then in 2018 I got my master's degree and took over here as head chef.

As a cook in Iceland where the weather is extreme, what challenges does that present, for sourcing ingredients for example?

In Iceland there is a limited variety of fruits and vegetables that can be grown naturally, but we try our best to use local ingredients. Here we have greenhouses that grow tomatoes and other plants. Our fish is from the River Rangá or bought from the coast, the Lamb is all free-range from sheep that graze on the mountain moss. We use wild mushrooms, berries and herbs, as well as Angelica from the banks of the River Rangá. Organic dairy produce is sourced from nearby farms and we support local artisan growers and farmers.

How do you plan your seasonal menus?

It may be strange to say, but when planning seasonal menus I think about the vegetables and herbs first and foremost then pair these with fresh ingredients such as meat or fish. My approach combines classic flavours with more modern cooking techniques. We take traditional Icelandic ingredients and use these to create fresh and innovative Modern Nordic style menus.

What are your signature dishes or favourite ingredients to work with?

I would not say that I have a certain signature dish yet. I have a few favourite ingredients at the moment that I am working with to create unique dishes, these are currently mountain reared Icelandic lamb, fresh cod, organic Icelandic butter, onions and garlic. We prepare all ingredients with great respect and combine modern and traditional cooking methods, for example we smoke our own fish, bake our daily bread and make our own Skyr.

Tell us about your plans for the future at Hotel Rangá?

My plans are simple. I want to make the dining experience as good as possible for our guests and create food that our team are all proud of. I will keep investing time and energy in my team as a head chef would be useless if he didn't have a good team behind his back. Here at Rangá we have an exceptional team of well-trained chefs and front of house staff, we all work as one, sharing a philosophy for delivering exceptional service 24/7.

How would you describe your style of cuisine?

I try connecting my food to the environment in which we live and work. Being based in the countryside you experience nature up close and are surrounded by inspiration and varied flavours. Just on the lawn of Hotel Rangá we find Angelica growing wild by the riverbank. The river is one of the most popular salmon fishing rivers in Iceland and in the summer time there grows an abundance of arctic thyme which we pick and dry, we can then use it for the whole winter. Essentially, I cook food that I enjoy making, I cook food that I like serving and most of all I cook food that I love eating.

Head Chef, Hotel Rangá
Bragi Þór Hansson

RANGÁ RECIPE

This classic Icelandic Lamb dish uses traditional curing methods alongside more modern cooking techniques to make a delicious and flavoursome dish. Perfect for a weekend lunch with family and friends. Select the freshest and best quality ingredients when possible.

CURED LAMB WITH, PEARL ONIONS, BUTTERNUT SQUASH PUREE & DEMI-GLAZE SAUCE.

DEMI GLAZE SAUCE:

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 l red wine
- 1 large red onion
- ½ a head of celery
- 1 large carrot
- 4 springs of fresh thyme
- 3 l good beef stock
- 1 tbsp. pink pepper
- 1 tbsp. black pepper

METHOD:

1. Clean all the vegetables and cut into chunks
2. Put the oil in a pan and heat
3. Gently sauté the vegetables and pepper
4. Caramelize the vegetables
5. Add the red wine and reduce the mixture until it becomes syrupy
6. Now add the stock and let it simmer
7. Continue simmering until the liquid reduces by 50%
8. Season with salt a little sherry vinegar and knob of butter
9. Take off the heat and pass strain through a fine sieve
10. Discard vegetable mixture and pour demi-glaze into a serving jug

THE BUTTERNUT PURÉE:

INGREDIENTS:

- 1kg of butternut squash
- 200g butter
- pinch of salt

METHOD:

1. clean the butternut squash and cut into small chunks
2. put in a pan with the butter
3. let it cook gently until soft
4. when soft whizz in a blender until smooth
5. season with salt
6. add a little water if it is too thick

PEARL ONIONS:

INGREDIENTS:

- A handful of baby or pearl onions

METHOD:

1. Peel and blanch the onions for 3 minutes and then cut it into half and set aside

CRUMB TOPPING:

INGREDIENTS:

- 50g panko breadcrumbs
- 20g kale
- 20g parmesan grated

METHOD:

1. Oven dry the Kale at 100c for 20 min, then powder.
2. Toast the breadcrumbs in the oven at 160c until golden then combine with the parmesan.

THE LAMB:

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 kg fillet of lamb
- 100 g sugar
- 100 g salt

METHOD:

1. rinse the lamb fillet and remove the fat
2. mix together the salt and sugar
3. spread the salt and sugar mixture over the lamb and rest in the fridge for 45 min
4. rinse the salt mixture off the lamb and pat dry
5. pan fry the lamb on a medium heat on both sides for 2 min and then rest
6. put in a preheated oven for 2 min on 180 degrees
7. press the surface of the lamb into the crumble topping mixture

PRESENTATION >>

Carefully slice the lamb and serve alongside the puree, a few onions and the demiglaze and decorate with some micro-herbs.





FAMILY FUN

Iceland is the perfect destination for families looking to spend quality time together. Enjoy a once in a lifetime, back to nature, experience, far removed from hectic world of school runs and the daily grind of the 9-5. During the summer months, days run into nights and come June and July you are likely to discover round the clock daylight. So, why not make the most of these super-long days and escape the tourist trail, take after dinner walks along the East Rangá River or take a midnight drive through the sleeping countryside before you head for bed.

Here are some top tips for family travel:

- **Friðheimar Greenhouse** – a fascinating micro-climate where the owners have created the perfect environment for growing delicious tomatoes, see the bees at work and enjoy a fantastic lunch in the tomato-scented greenhouse
- **Waterfalls** – Southern Iceland is overflowing with waterfalls, why not create a waterfall check list and see how many you can spot during your stay and learn how to say them. For example Seljalandsfoss and Gljúfrabúi Waterfalls
- **Westman Islands** – Plan a long day out, pack a picnic and head for the land of the puffin, take a ferry from the South Coast, meet puffins up-close and visit the museum, take a challenging hillside hike and soak up the sea air.

- **Horse-riding** – Book a family trek with a local riding centre. Icelandic horses (remember... never call them ponies) are intelligent and gentle creatures, perfect for novice riders.
- **Elf-Spotting** – Seek the hidden people, look for the little houses, stone towers and clues to the existence of Iceland's 'Huldurfolk'
- **Wild Swimming** – throughout Southern Iceland you will discover naturally heated thermal pools, perfect for a refreshing family adventure
- **Sun-gazing** – In the summer months it is possible to see in detail the characteristics of our sun at Hotel Rangá's state of the art observatory. The telescopes have special filters especially designed for sun-gazing.
- **River-jet Adventure** – Ride the white-water rapids and pass by waterfalls and moun-

- tains. An adrenaline fuelled adventure for families with older children (8+ years)
- **Farm Visit** – Head to Efstidalur farm and meet the dairy cows who produce the fresh milk for the delicious ice-creams made here, remember to try at least three flavours
- **Foot-golf** – Head for Flúðir for a laughter-packed game of foot-golf. A great way to burn-off excess energy and work up an appetite.
- **Lava Centre** – An interactive and educational visitors centre, that goes beneath the surface of Iceland's volcanic history
- **Hiking** – There are many hiking trails perfect for families, why not head to Þingvellir (Thingvellir) National Park for gorgeous scenery and breathtaking views





#KNOWICELAND

To get under the skin of Iceland you really need to spend time throughout the year experiencing the rich and vibrant culture. A land steeped in history and folklore, Iceland never fails to surprise and enthrall its visitors. Hotel Rangá lies at the heart of Southern Iceland and its knowledgeable staff are always on hand with interesting facts and unusual stories about the region. Our **#KnowIceland** social media campaign is growing fast so do check out our Instagram feed and add your own **#KnowIceland** topics.

Here are some intriguing snippets to keep you going...

- Did you know that Seljalandsfoss waterfall is not the only waterfall you can walk behind in the south coast? **#knowIceland**
- Did you know Hotel Rangá's neighbouring volcano, Hekla, shares her name with almost 500 Icelandic women? **#knowIceland**
- Iceland proudly boasts the largest glacier in the world outside of the #Arctic! **#knowIceland**
- The population of Iceland is only around 337,780 in 2018 **#knowIceland**
- Have you seen the spindly rock formation **#ReynisdRangár**? As the folklore goes these are actually trolls frozen in time. The trolls were trying to drag three ships ashore when they were caught in the sunlight and turned to stone. **#knowIceland**
- Fjaðrárgljúfur in Icelandic means, "feather river canyon". Dare to try pronouncing it? **#knowIceland**
- There are 183 steps in the in the stericase beside Skógafoss **#waterfall**. The view from the **#top** is spectacular, particularly under the **#midnight sun** **#knowIceland**

