

# The North in 48 Hours: The Arctic Express

*A Local's Guide to Akureyri, Mývatn & Hidden Canyons*

The North of Iceland offers a completely different vibe than the South—wider fjords, jagged mountains, and a calmer atmosphere. Because this is a high-mileage trip, we focus on the "big hitters" and a few secret stops to make the drive worth it.

Local Rule #1: Start by 07:00 AM. The drive to Akureyri is 5 hours. To have any time for sightseeing, you must beat the morning traffic out of Reykjavík.

Local Rule #2: Check Road.is religiously. The mountain passes (like Öxnadalsheiði) can be tricky even in spring/autumn.

## Day 1: The Road to the North & The Fjord Capital

Route: Reykjavík – Kolugljúfur – Akureyri

Driving time: Approx. 5.5 hours total.

07:00 | Departure: Leave Reykjavík early. The first 2 hours are a steady drive through the scenic Borgarfjörður region.

10:30 | The Hidden Canyon: Stop at Kolugljúfur Canyon. Most travelers drive right past this on Route 1. It's a spectacular gorge with a multi-tiered waterfall just a 5-minute detour from the main road.

13:00 | Lunch in Skagafjörður: Stop in the town of Sauðárkrúkur or at a roadside stop for a quick Icelandic "Pylsa" (hot dog) to keep the momentum going.

15:30 | Arrival in Akureyri: Explore the "Capital of the North." Walk up the iconic church stairs (Akureyrarkirkja) and visit the Botanical Garden, which is one of the northernmost in the world.

17:30 | The Christmas House: Drive 10 minutes south of Akureyri to Jólhúsið (The Christmas House). It's open all year round and feels like a fairy tale.

Where to Stay (Local Favorites):

Hótel Kea: Classic elegance right in the center of Akureyri.

Sæluhús Akureyri: Modern houses with private hot tubs overlooking the fjord.

Berjaya Akureyri Hotel: Great design and a fantastic local bar/lounge.

## **Day 2: Volcanic Wonders & The Long Return**

Route: Akureyri – Goðafoss – Lake Mývatn – Reykjavík

Driving time: Approx. 6.5 hours total (long drive back).

08:00 | The Waterfall of the Gods: Drive 45 minutes east to Goðafoss. It is one of the most beautiful and historically significant waterfalls in Iceland.

10:00 | Mývatn Magic: Continue to Lake Mývatn. Visit the Hverir geothermal area (boiling mud pools) and the Dimmuborgir lava formations (The Dark Castles).

12:30 | Lunch with a View: Eat at Vogafjós Farm Resort. You can eat delicious local food (like their Geysir bread) while looking through a glass window into the cowshed.

14:30 | The North's Blue Lagoon: Take a quick look at the Mývatn Nature Baths. If you have time for a 1-hour soak, do it now before the long drive back.

16:00 | The Long Stretch: Begin the drive back to Reykjavík.

19:30 | Dinner Stop: Stop in Borgarnes at The Settlement Center for a final Icelandic meal before the last hour of driving.

21:30 | Back in Reykjavík: Arrive home tired but inspired by the vastness of the North.

## **Local Secrets for the North**

*Vaðlaheiðargöng Tunnel: There is a toll tunnel just east of Akureyri. You must pay online at [tunnel.is](https://tunnel.is) within 24 hours of passing. If you want to save money and see the view, take the mountain road (Route 84) instead (only in summer!).*

*Beer Bath: If you skip Mývatn, check out Bjórböðin (The Beer Spa) in Árskógssandur (30 mins from Akureyri). You soak in a tub of young beer, hops, and yeast!*

*Ice Cream Culture: People in Akureyri are obsessed with ice cream, regardless of the weather. Go to Brynja for the most famous "soft serve" in the country.*