

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Regarding Vestfjarðaleiðin - #TheWestfjordsWay

Díana Jóhannsdóttir, Visit Westfjords

Email: travel@westfjords.is

Phone: +354 450-3002/+354 869-1213

Regarding West Iceland

Thelma Harðardóttir, Visit West Iceland

Email: thelma@west.is

Phone: +354 433-2316

Regarding the Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration

G. Pétur Matthíasson

Email: g.petur.matthiasson@vegagerdin.is

Phone: +354 522-1000

THE NEW DRIVING ROUTE VESTFJARÐALEIÐIN (E. WESTFJORDS WAY) OF 950 KM (590 MI) OFFICIALLY OPENING IN ICELAND ON 25TH OCTOBER PROMISING ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC AND CULTURAL DRIVING ROUTES IN THE WORLD, CIRCUMNAVIGATING THE REMOTE WESTFJORDS PENINSULA AND DALABYGGÐ

- Dramatic circular driving route, unpretentious and challenging, summoned by the people of the Westfjords who deal with the elements and nature in their own way -

Dýrafjörður, Westfjords, Iceland 25th October 2020 marks the launch of *Vestfjarðaleiðin* (e. Westfjords Way) by the opening of a tunnel between Arnarfjörður and Dýrafjörður, an important link between the north and south parts of the Westfjords. The opening of the Dýrafjörður Tunnel ensures the new Westfjords Way will be open year-round by relieving the Hrafnseyrarheiði mountain pass that is unpaved and closed for long periods of the year.

Vestfjarðaleiðin is however more than just a scenic route as it is also a way of life in the Westfjords and Dalabyggð, the part that looks a little bit like a head on Iceland's body. The Westfjords have in this way always stood proud from the rest of Iceland, physically and culturally.

The Westfjords peninsula is older than Iceland's body, dramatically marked by the Ice age 10 thousand years ago with deep fjords that provide a unique driving route adorned with cliffs, craggy mountains, valleys, lowlands and unique flora and fauna. An environment that has shaped the Westfjords culture and its people to adopt the Westfjords Way of life.

Off the Beaten Track Only 111 KM (69 MI) From Reykjavik

Threading its way along the coast, moors and passes in the Westfjords peninsula *Vestfjarðaleiðin* is ideal to explore and experience the unspoiled and undiscovered wilderness alternating with the traditional culture of the Westfjords.

Starting in Dalabyggð, *Vestfjarðaleiðin* is only 111 KM (69 MI) from Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, providing the traveller an enticing option of the road less travelled to the typical Iceland Ring Road (1322 KM (821 MI)). With dramatic ever-changing landscapes and history, the sparsely populated area offers Earth Check Certification protecting the wilderness that is dotted by villages and intriguing stops in abundance.

"Vestfjarðaleiðin, or the Westfjords Way, is definitely very appealing to city dwellers and active travellers

around the world at this point. The clean and crisp nature is the exact opposite to the densely populated man-made cities of modern times and therefore an ideal escape. The people of Westfjords and Dalabyggð are respectful of nature and the environment and the sparsely populated area makes for the perfect destination where the nature is literally refreshing, challenging you to immerse yourself in a feeling we really need now, the feeling of being alive and well” states Mrs. Dána Jóhannsdóttir from Visit Westfjords.

Slow Tourism, Slow Food and Slow Good

In today’s world of increasingly manic and stressful daily life *Vestfjarðaleiðin* is a perfect weeklong antidote. Starting off from Route 1 heading onwards to Eiríksstaðir (nr. 1 on accompanying map), where son of Eirik the Red, Leifur Eiríksson discoverer of North America, is believed to have planned his excursion by the central fire pit, the present excursion will typically take a week travelling through places such as:

- Búðardalur and Klofningur with its panoramic view (nr. 2 on map)
- Reykhólar, a paradise of the outdoors (nr. 3 on map)
- The amazing and remote Rauðasandur golden pink beach (nr. 4)
- The Westernmost point of Iceland Látrabjarg, Europe’s largest bird cliff (nr. 5)
- Dynjandi the iconic cascading waterfall of the Westfjords (nr. 7)
- The highly instagrammable geothermal pool of Drangsnæs
- And numerous beautiful villages famous for fresh produce and lively activities such as whale watching, the Arctic Fox Centre, outdoor sports, art exhibitions, music and sea angling to name a few

“*Vestfjarðaleiðin* is closely connected to, well... The Westfjords Way of living. There is no doubling back as it is a circular route. It is also an undiscovered part of Iceland that provides you a do-it-yourself approach that really inspires the modern traveller. And it provides a completely different experience depending on if you do *Vestfjarðaleiðin* during winter or summer. As a native in the Westfjords I think the route mirrors the magical and mystical phenomenon’s that shape our everyday life. Once you experience either the 24-hour sunlight or the dancing Northern Lights you will know what I mean” says born and raised Westfjorian, Jón Páll Hreinsson, Mayor of Bolungarvík.

“We live in a genuine paradise of the outdoors,” says Mr. Rúnar Karlsson, owner of Borea Adventures. “Anyone should be able to find something that appeals to their palate. *Vestfjarðaleiðin* provides both a guide towards how we do things here in the Westfjords and the area which is our own playground. No matter your age, you will find a mountain to climb, a fjord to row in or a path to travel.”

Every Five Minutes There is Something That Demands Attention

Only about 7 thousand people live in the entire Westfjords peninsula, scattered along the 950 KM route. It makes the area an ideal destination for people who like go their own way. Without public transportation the locals have a healthy and active attitude towards living that visitors can experience.

Driving highlights and interesting diversions are abundant with boast worthy experiences such as the aforementioned mountain pass between Hrafnseyri and Þingeyri; the road around Klofningur; Arnarneshamar Tunnel; and the Neshringur loop.

Quirky and unexpected experiences are treasures found along the way; Samúel Jónsson Sculptures; Museum of Sorcery & Witchcraft; The Old Book Store in Flateyri; The Sea Monster Museum; and the Sheep Farming Museum.

Natural highlights such as Hornstrandir, one of Europe’s last true wilderness areas and Látrabjarg Cliff; Rauðasandur’s golden pink beach; Hvammsfjörður and Hvítanes Seal colony are worth taking time to explore.

As is typical for Iceland water plays a large role. Natural hot springs, geothermal pools, black or golden beaches, waterfalls and the sea are all enveloping with the necessary activities as well.

A simple activity like enjoying the fresh air can become otherworldly with no people around. Bolafjall mountain hike; Kleifabúi statue at Kleifaheiði mountain pass; Dynjandi waterfall; the exciting experience of flying into Ísafjörður; skiing; having a guide take you into the wild; hiking up to the Trolls seat, Naustahvilft or to hike along the old road to Bolungarvík, Óshlíð, are all unique experiences where you can, weather allowing, enjoy endless vistas in the crisp and clear atmosphere.

Immersing in stories while making your own is easy with Viking Sagas, museums and events around places such as Hnjótur Museum; the remote Heydalur Guesthouse (no cell phone connection!); Eiríksstaðir Viking Museum; Eldsmiðjan Iron making; Ósvör Maritime Museum and Jón Sigurðsson Museum at Hrafnseyri where you can spot whales in the bay on a good day.

Eating well, not mere sustenance, is key to the area as local produce is abundant with the Atlantic Ocean and local farms providing top quality food. Examples are: Erpsstaðir Dairy farm which is open to visitors; Fisherman, Suðureyri; Tjörhúsið in the oldest part of Ísafjörður village; Restaurant Galdur; Sætt og Salt; Dokkan brewery; cafes such as Kaffi Sól, Litlibær and the cosy Simbahöllin in beautiful Þingeyri as well as Saltverk and Norðursalt.

A Huge Step Towards Introducing the Westfjords to the World

Mrs. Gunnþórunn Bender, owner of Westfjords Adventures, says that *Vestfjarðaleiðin* has successfully united the community and tourist operators in the Westfjords and Dalabyggð municipality. “We are now physically interlinked as well as socially both as residents in the area but also as regards our guests who can better relate to our way of life,” says Mrs. Gunnþórunn.

Vestfjarðaleiðin will be an enticing option for anyone who wants to experience the purest form of Iceland, says Mrs. Thelma Harðardóttir from Visit West Iceland. “I believe that people will experience not only the different light and the nature from what people are used to from their home, but also the rare peace and quiet that is so difficult to find in today’s world. We are so happy to be able to share this experience with visitors as we are indeed, the gateway to the Westfjords and a part of *Vestfjarðaleiðin* and its lifestyle.”

Mrs. Jóhanna María Sigmundsdóttir agrees, “It’s simply great to have a circular route that introduces travellers to our way of life, our culture and the nature as dramatically as *Vestfjarðaleiðin* does.”

Vestfjarðaleiðin will be open from October 25th, year round.

###

About Visit Westfjords

Visit Westfjords is an official body of tourism in the Westfjords of Iceland. Mainly working in destination marketing and promotion of tourism. More than 50 tourism companies in the Westfjords are official partners of Visit Westfjords. www.westfjords.is

See what it looks like #Westfjords #TheWestfjordsWay – Instagram: @visitwestfjords

About Visit West Iceland

The purpose of the West Iceland Marketing Office is to integrate marketing and promotion in West Iceland by conducting this activity in one place, in cooperation with tour and travel operators and the municipalities, as well as clusters and organisations within the area. www.west.is

See what it looks like #WestIceland #TheWestfjordsWay

Press Release 26.10.2020

Hear what it sounds like: Look for the Spotify playlist; "The Westfjords Way" with a lot of Icelandic songs created by the people of the Westfjords Way.

Press Photos: <https://www.westfjords.is/en/inspiration/photos/vestfjardaleidin-thewestfjordsway-press-photos>