

Iceland

Hot destination in Northern Atlantic

Meeting and incentive organizers looking for something new and out of the ordinary sooner or later might want to take a close look at Iceland. And that's not only because of the breathtaking landscapes, Icelanders also emphasize another significant asset: they're small enough to plan events without any major hassle, but cosmopolitan enough to warrant for the experience needed to successfully stage events.



Iceland has much more assets than its spectacular landscape.

Iceland is Europe's second-largest island state, and the world's largest volcanic island as well, and it is most notable for its spectacular landscape, charming inhabitants, and unique cultural wealth. And even though the island is only three-and-a-half flight hours away from Europe and five flight hours from Northern America, it still is somewhat of an exotic place to travel. This past year, the Island of Fire and Ice wel-

comed 485,657 visitors, which adds up to a plus of 8.5% as compared with the preceding year. Approximately 10% of these, 43,942 to be exact, traveled here from Germany. "We're delighted about being able to maintain the aspired upward trend, and we hope it will persist", said David Johannsson, director of the Iceland tourism bureau in Germany with office in Neu-Isenburg near Frankfurt. He is confident

that an array of marketing activities and additional flight connections in summer (Cologne/Germanwings and Hamburg/Lufthansa) will support efforts to establish Iceland as trendy destination. And Iceland has got a number of impressive assets. A ranking by the World Economic Forum this past year put the island at fourth place of altogether 124 surveyed tourism destinations. Some decisive arguments for this excellent

result are Iceland's good security and health system, state-of-the-art communication technologies and the high hygiene standards. A total of 13 criteria considered significant for any destination's tourism development were examined in the ranking survey's candidate countries; these criteria include infrastructure and hotel capacities as well as political stability, natural and cultural resources as well as security concerns in the particular destination areas.

And then there is another aspect consistently gaining in significance: Iceland is exploiting the considerable amount of energy produced by its volcanic activity. In combination with the enormous hydroenergy generated by glacier meltwater, the island has at its disposal sheer unlimited quantities of renewable energy. Currently, 72 percent of the energy consumed on Iceland is renewable, clean, and economically priced. This is in fact the world's highest share in consumption of sustainable energy. In the EU, that share is at 7%; the global share of renewable energy is 13 percent.

Blue Lagoon

An energizing meeting place



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The Blue Lagoon, one of Iceland's most popular attractions, offers a variety of services ranging from a unique spa experience to exclusively designed meeting and conference rooms. The dynamic natural surroundings are conveyed into the interior facilities, providing guests with the inspiration and energy needed for a successful meeting.

After a day of meetings or conferences, a dip in the Blue Lagoon is ideal. Guests can take advantage of a spa sauna, steam baths and energizing in-water spa treatments and massages.

The Blue Lagoon cocktail served in the lagoon is a perfect treat for conference guests while taking the waters.



Traditional Icelandic housing.

This fact should also be a significant marketing asset for Iceland in promoting its meeting and incentive potential, because tour operators and organizers are increasingly also taking ecological and environmental issues into account for deciding for or against a destination. Apart from that, the Iceland Convention & Incentive Bureau points out: "With 300,000 inhabitants, we're small enough to conveniently and efficiently plan events, but cosmopolitan enough to warrant for the experience needed to successfully stage all kinds of meetings or events." And that comes to visitor eyes just by taking a walk through Iceland's capital city of Reykjavik with its lively restaurant, nightlife and shopping scene. The 200,000 inhabitants of Reykjavik are known for their innovative style. A stroll down the main shipping streets Laugavegur und Skólavörðustígur will suffice to demonstrate that impressively; they're lined with numerous art and handicraft galleries, music and

book shops, and fashion boutiques with mainstream apparel or offbeat avant-garde Icelandic fashion designs. And those seeking to recover from sight-seeking tours or shopping sprees will find a large selection of downtown cafés and restaurants. Iceland's chefs-de-cuisine have won a large number of international culinary awards in the past years, and that will tell above all in chic restaurants in Reykjavik. Fresh fish, seafood and lamb dishes are standard fare in many restaurants, but those with a craving for Indian, Japanese or French cuisine will also find

what they're looking for. And Reykjavik is also notable for its exciting nightlife. Night owls may choose from cozy bars, trendy cocktail bars and nightclubs or also live concerts.

Lively cultural scene in Reykjavik

After long and strenuous days and nights, the best way to refuel energy is in one of the no less than 16 geothermal pools in the Greater Reykjavik region. In view of this range of spa facilities, the Iceland metropolis might ac-

tually advertise itself as health resort.

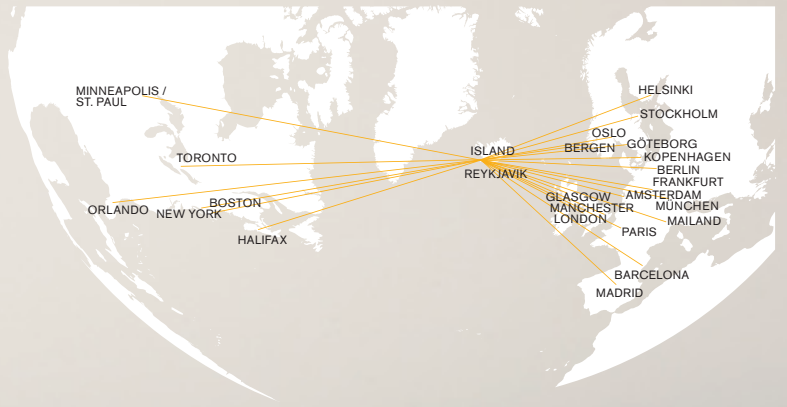
Of course there is also a very lively cultural scene. Reykjavik most probably has more museums, art galleries and cultural events than many other cities of comparable size. In addition to Iceland's symphonic orchestra, opera, theater and dance troupes all performing on a regular basis there are numerous art and culture festivals scheduled throughout the entire year.

These events, such as the art festival in Reykjavik, the Culture Night, the Winter Light Festival or the Iceland Airwaves Festival, represent Icelandic and international talents and of course also provide an outstanding setting for incentives or pre and post convention programs.

And talking about culture: there's a new major project which should further intensify art lovers' and meeting organizers' focus on Reykjavik from December 2009. That's the latest the **Icelandic National Concert & Conference Centre** is scheduled to open its doors in what was formerly Reykjavik's old port. The new center's exterior architecture is designed to be reminiscent of basalt formations typical for Iceland, but the extensive use of steel and glass is designated to give the complex a transparent and light ambiance. Renowned designer Olafur Eliasson created the glass facade. Structured into numerous and partially colored glass elements, the façade will produce kaleidoscopic ef-



Whale watching is just one of many incentive possibilities.



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Island ist der perfekte Ort für Incentivereisen, mit zahlreichen Möglichkeiten für spannende Outdoor-Aktivitäten: Hochlandexpeditionen mit Supertruck, Snowscootertouren, Eisklettern, Bergsteigen, Walbeobachtungen, Golfspielen, Angeln, Hochseeangeln, Reiten oder einfach nur Entspannung in einem dampfenden Geothermalpool. Ausserdem bietet Ihnen Island modernste Konferenzeinrichtungen, zuvorkommendsten Service in entspannter Atmosphäre an.

Setzen Sie doch einfach ein Abenteuer in Island als nächsten Punkt auf Ihre Tagesordnung - wir von ICELANDAIR sorgen dafür, dass es wahr wird!

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The atrium at the Grand Hotel Reykjavik with its stained glass windows.

fects in reflection of sunlight throughout the entire year. The new complex itself will consist of three adjacent sections: the concert hall with 1,800 seats, the rehearsal hall seating 450 persons, and a purpose-built conference hall with 750 seats, which may also be subdivided into two

separate smaller units. In designing the center, architects took great care to assure that it may be used both for single large-sized events as well as also for smaller functions running parallel without interfering with each other. The range of facilities is rounded out by yet another multifunc-



One of the 14 conference rooms at the Grand Hotel Reykjavik.

part of an impressive urban development project for the old port area. The project among other things encompasses a World Trade Center, a new pier for cruise vessels and a 5-star hotel with approximately 400 rooms. The latter will be directly linked to the new Concert&Conference Centre, which will enable concert visitors and conference participants to get to their event dry-shod even in foul weather. Negotiations with an international hotel chain on conclusion of a management agreement are just short of being concluded; sources have it that it might be a hotel operator affiliated to the Starwood group. A pedestrian walkway will directly link the new city district to downtown Reykjavik.

Irrespective of the new hotel scheduled to go into operation in spring 2010, the city already now has an impressive array of meeting and incentive hotels available. Certainly one of the flagships is the **Grand Hotel Reykjavik**, which since the opening of its new hotel tower has added 205 new rooms to its prior inventory of 108 and which now with 313 rooms is the hitherto largest hotel in Iceland. Meeting facilities encompass 14 conference rooms for between 12 and 450 persons with an overall

area of 1,500 sqms. Management is currently considering options for expanding the 450-person Gullteigur conference room in the old hotel wing to a capacity of 700 persons in the scope of modernization work. The bar in the Midgardur-Atrium with its stained-glass windows designed by Leifur Breidfjord is the perfect place for enjoying a pre or post meeting drink; the windows are the largest of their kind in Iceland. Only a few walking minutes away, the **Hilton Reykjavik Nordica** holds altogether 252 contemporarily furnished rooms as well as eleven meeting and multifunction rooms available, among these a bi-partitionable conference hall with a size of 530

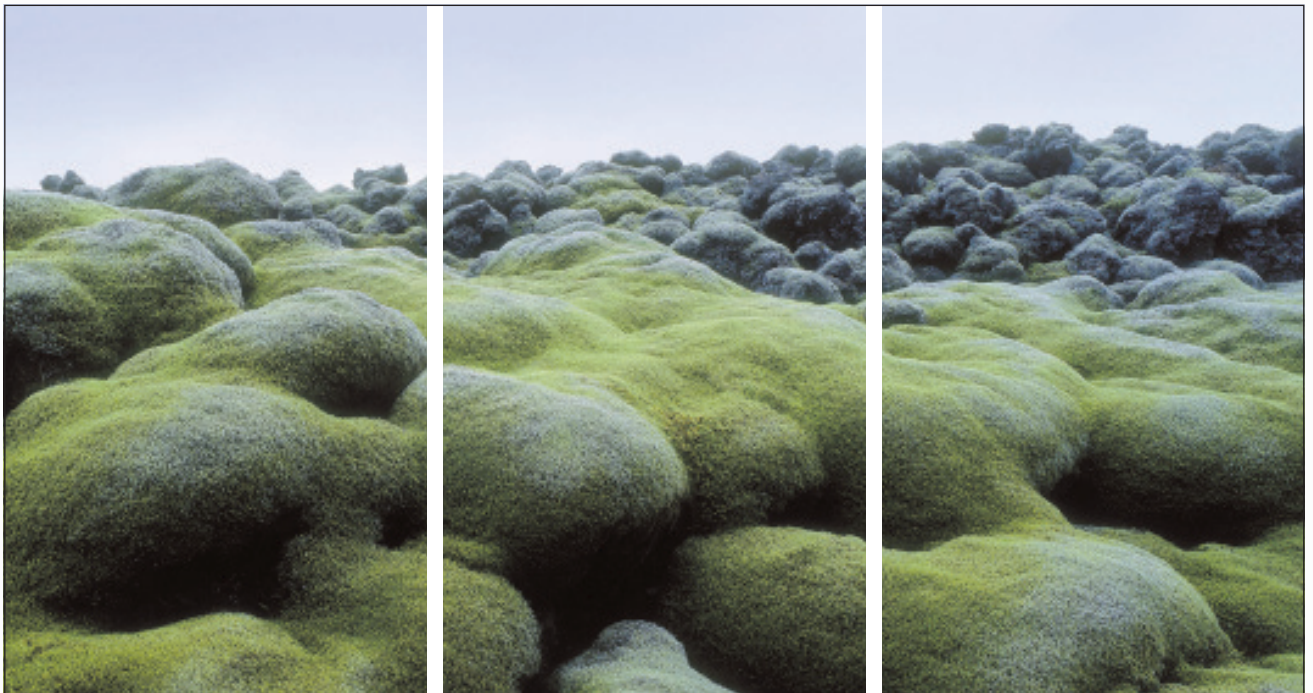
sqms, which may be expanded by another 440 sqms into the adjacent foyer, thereby considerably increasing operational flexibility. And the Hilton's VOX Restaurant with its spectacular lunch buffet is a genuine insider's tip, not only for conference guests. Located only a few walking minutes away from downtown Reykjavik, the **Radisson SAS Saga Hotel** just recently celebrated its 45th birthday, which demonstrates impressively that it has been well-established on the local market for a considerable period of time. Its specifics: 209 rooms in the 4-star category as well as nine meeting

rooms, the largest of which can accommodate up to 400 delegates. The gourmet-restaurant The Grill on the top floor with an outstanding view on Reykjavik is certainly one of this hotel's highlights. The expanding **CenterHotels** company currently operates five hotels and altogether 339 rooms in downtown Reykjavik; the hotels differ significantly from each other. The CenterHotel Klöpp for instance is a 3-star hotel with 46 renovated rooms; the Plaza has 104 rooms in various categories held in a more classical style, which also characterizes the Skjadbreyd with its 33 rooms. The Cen-

terHotelThingholt (52 rooms) planned by Icelandic architect Gulla Jonsdottir and the Hotel Arnarhvoll opened in August 2007 with altogether 104 rooms are genuine designer hotels. Above all the latter two hotels should be popular among smaller incentive groups.

But not to forget: meetings may also be effortlessly organized outside Reykjavik, and that occasionally at most unique locations. There is, for example, the almost legendary **Blue Lagoon**, Iceland's probably best-known geothermal bath. The conference room installed here with a perfect view on the lagoon can accommodate up to 90 persons; another smaller boardroom for up to 12 per-

Impressive array of meeting hotels



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sons is also available. After meetings are over, a bath in the Blue lagoon including massage and beauty treatment is practically a must-do. In view of Iceland's impressive nature, extracurricular outdoor activities are something all organizers of congresses, conferences, and incentives will have to include in their plans. And options are almost unlimited: be it snowmobiles tours, taking a ride on one of the typical Icelandic back excursions near Reykjavik or whale watching near Husavik. Snaeland Grimsson have set up their own incentive and events department capable of satisfying MICE clients' wishes. The first institution to contact in any case is the **Iceland Convention & Incentive Bureau**. It provides unbiased and free advice, is specialized on arranging meetings and incentives, and will provide all information on tour operators, hotels, unique locations or traveling.

Outdoor activities a must-do

One of the oldest and most experienced operators in the industry is **Snaeland Grimsson**, a family-run company active in bus charter and group business for more than 50 years. Based on their many years of experience and their impressive bus fleet with vehicles of all categories,

they can arrange customized programs for groups of all sizes and interests. There is for instance the classical Iceland round-trip on the belt highway or theme tours such as geological excursions, highland Safari tours or various hiking trips. Those interested might want to concentrate their program on one of the island's specific regions, for example Myvatn in the north, the Vatnajökull glacier in the southeast, horseback excursions near Reykjavik or whale watching near Husavik. Snaeland

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www.icelandconvention.com



Icelandair

Modern cabins and more flights

Iceland's carrier Icelandair plans to have modernized the entire cabin equipment of its Boeing 757 fleet by summer of this year. The measures costing a total of around 20 million euros will include installation of new modern seats and an Inflight Entertainment System with personal screen for each passenger. This system will allow customers to make their own specific choice from an extensive selection of the latest motion pictures, TV programs, music, interactive games, e-books, flight updates as well as information about their destination. Further sophistication of this system to include interfaces for online-purchasing and music downloads is in the planning phase. The new seats are designed in compliance with current ergonomic standards and offer passengers a high degree of comfort, convenience, and legroom.

Other new features available to Icelandair customers in Germany in the 2008 summer season: from May of this year, the airline will offer an entirely new direct service to Toronto. Passengers may choose from between a maximum of seven Icelandair flights per week between Germany and Toronto (5x from/to Frankfurt, 2x from/to

Berlin). In early and late season periods (May; September-October), the airline will operate up to four flights per week from/to Frankfurt and one per week from/to Berlin. Flights to Halifax are again also on this year's flight program. Owing to the significant demand for this service in the past year, the season for offering these flights will be extended. From late April through the end of October, Icelandair will operate between three and five flights per week from Frankfurt and Berlin to Halifax and will also maintain the flight connections in winter 2008/2009.

Similar to flight-schedule gearing for Icelandair destinations in the US (New York, Boston, Orlando, Minneapolis), onward flight connections in Iceland between Germany and Canada are perfectly attuned to each other and allow passengers to fly onward to their destinations in between one and one-and-a-half.

The new connection schedule expands the range of available flights in summer to no less than 15 direct flights per week between Germany and Iceland in June, July and August: from/to Frankfurt (10 flights per week), Berlin (3 flights per week) and Munich (2 flights per week).



Snowmobile tour organized by tour operator Snaeland Grimsson.