

ACTION AUSTURLAND

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN
AUSTURLAND 2018-2021



AUSTURLAND

ACTION AUSTURLAND

Destination Management Plan
Austurland 2018-2021

This Destination Management Plan
has been produced by Austurbrú
in collaboration with
Ferðamálastofa
Icelandic Tourist Board

PROJECT MANAGERS:

María Hjálmarsdóttir
Daniel Byström

CONTACT:

maria@austurbru.is
daniel@designnation.se

Copyright © 2018
Áfangastaðurinn Austurland
Destination Austurland
All rights reserved



AUSTURLAND

Content

| | |
|--|-----------|
| FOREWORD | 5 |
| SECTION 1 : EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 7 |
| WHY A DMP? | 7 |
| OUR VISION | 8 |
| SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | 10 |
| SECTION 2 : INTRODUCTION | 13 |
| BACKGROUND | 13 |
| ÁFANGASTAÐURINN AUSTURLAND..... | 15 |
| ROLE & VALUE OF A DMP..... | 26 |
| SECTION 3 : WHERE ARE WE NOW? – SITUATION ANALYSIS | 28 |
| DESTINATION AUDIT | 28 |
| DESTINATION PROJECTS | 42 |
| MARKET ASSESSMENT..... | 46 |
| IMAGE & MARKET APPEAL..... | 50 |
| DESTINATION PERFORMANCE..... | 52 |
| TOURISM IMPACT ASSESSMENT | 54 |
| POLICY & MARKET CONTEXT..... | 56 |
| SWOT ANALYSIS | 58 |
| GAP ANALYSIS | 60 |
| CHALLENGES..... | 61 |
| SECTION 4 : WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE? – FUTURE AIMS | 62 |
| OUR VISION | 62 |
| LOCAL, REGIONAL & NATIONAL PLANS..... | 62 |
| STRATEGIC AIMS..... | 63 |
| HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES | 68 |
| SECTION 5 : HOW WILL WE GET THERE? – STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN | 69 |
| TYPE OF TOURISM DESIRED | 69 |
| MARKET PRIORITIES | 70 |
| THE DESTINATION OFFER..... | 75 |
| MINIMISING NEGATIVE IMPACTS | 79 |
| ACTION PLAN | 80 |
| SECTION 6 : HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE'RE SUCCESSFUL? – MEASUREMENT | 88 |
| PROGRESS..... | 88 |
| SECTION 7 : RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS | 89 |
| RESOURCES | 89 |
| REFERENCES | 90 |



Photo: Rhombic Sandoval

Gakktu í bæinn!

Tourism is one of the future pillars for a strong community in Austurland. As stated in the Austurland Agenda for 2015-2020, "Austurland is the land of opportunities". With good interaction of tourism with other driving forces in the community, we can enhance the quality of life for the inhabitants, thus increasing the opportunities of Austurland to attract people and businesses.

"Gakktu í bæinn" is an old Icelandic greeting, which refers to welcoming people to our home. Icelandic hospitality as it has evolved over the centuries is part of the cultural values, as well as Icelandic nature, which our guests seek to experience. To promote tourism in the business community as well as safeguarding nature and our cultural and community value, we need to be organized and work together.

The project Destination Austurland began in 2014 at the initiative of the Austurland Tourism Organization. The project was hosted at Austurbrú, which has led it in collaboration with various stakeholders in Austurland, under the guidance of Daniels Byström, a Destination Designer from Sweden. Those who participated in the initial steps of the project realized the importance of learning from the experience of others, seeking out best practices and aiming for doing even better. The goal has not been to design Austurland as a destination for visitors. The goal has been to summarize what Austurland is in our hearts, the inhabitants of the area, and work on a vision for Austurland as a destination for residents and visitors.

Over the past few years, the project has enlisted the participation of a large group of people, municipalities, companies and institutions in Austurland as well as nationally in Iceland. Everyone has pitched in and a valuable consensus has evolved around project. But it's not



all a "bed of roses", Austurland faces several challenges regarding tourism development. The region is far away from the main gateway to Iceland; the country is a relatively expensive destination and the lack of domestic transport infrastructure and distances restrains the flow of guests across the country. Most of the companies in tourism in Austurland are family run businesses that are relying on better utilization of the infrastructure. The business is very seasonal in the region, and even the utilization in high season could be much better. Investment in the industry is lower in Austurland than in regions closer to the main gateway to Iceland and that also contributes to less flow of guests visiting Austurland.

Destination planning is one way of analyzing, organizing and encouraging the implementation of the necessary remedial actions, thus safeguarding the values that are the basis of our guests' interest in visiting us, as well as to contribute to the benefit of the community in Austurland.

It is my hope that this Destination Management Plan, as well as its Action Plan, will encourage stakeholders to work on prioritized projects, so that we can reduce visible bottlenecks in Austurland development for the benefit of future generations of locals and guests.

Jóna Árný Þórðardóttir
Managing Director of Austurbrú



Photo: Hannes Stuever

Why a DMP?

Tourism is a significant contributor to the Austurland economy. In the latest years tourism has grown to become one of our primary industries, and the number of people employed in tourism-related sectors is increasing.

Austurland has a fantastic potential to develop our destination, to utilize our tourist resources and attract more tourism to our region. At the same time, we need to do it in a sustainable way. Tourism is affecting our environment and communities. We need to manage our destination to increase the positive impacts on our region, and minimize the negative impacts.

We strongly believe that destination planning must involve everyone. We are all part of our destination. We are developing our destination of Austurland in an inclusive process, where we invite all stakeholders to take action together.

This Destination Management Plan - DMP, helps us to better understand our preconditions for development, where we are now, where we aim to be and how we are making progress. It is kind of a business plan for our destination. The DMP also stakes out the path for us to take action over the next three years.

The DMP helps us to attract the kind of tourism that we want to have. It also helps us to control how our actions for development are leading to positive progress.

We have in Austurland already taken many steps forward for improving our destination. With this DMP, an important piece is falling into place. We now have a full set of tools needed to really take action, and to achieve the objectives that we have set up for our destination.

This DMP can also be considered as a call for everyone involved in our Destination Development to take action.

Action Austurland!



See also the summarized version of our DMP

Our Vision

Our vision for 2018-2021 is to develop into a strong and sustainable destination with all year around tourism.

We need to build up our organisation around our destination of Austurland. Our aim is to be highly professional in everything we do. This also means that we will need to work closer to local, regional and national frameworks, where we ask for more involvement in our Destination Development. We need to work smart and efficient.

To become more professional, we need to establish and secure the function of our DMO - Destination Management Organization. In three years time, our vision is that Austurland DMO has grown strong.

We will be better equipped to support companies who are operating within tourism in the region, to monitor the progress and to set new strategic aims for the development of our destination.

STRATEGIC AIMS

Our strategic aims are results that we will achieve by focusing on our high-level objectives.

COLLABORATION BEYOND BORDERS

More cooperation among regions, municipalities, companies, and communities. More intersectoral partnerships.

KEEP TO OUR ROOTS

Develop with a strong connection to our values.

ALL SEASONS

Develop our destination and content with an all year around perspective.

INFRASTRUCTURE, INFORMATION & FACILITIES ALONG THE ROADS

Improve with focus on high standard and connection to Austurland.

TRANSPORT & ACCESS

Develop traveling alternatives and improve accessibility.

GENERATE REVENUE & GOOD STORIES

Refine and develop experiences to increase the value.

FOLLOW OUR BRAND TO THE CORE

Develop with a strong connection to our values.



COLLABORATION
BEYOND BORDERS



KEEP TO
OUR ROOTS



ALL
SEASONS



INFRASTRUCTURE,
INFORMATION & FACILITIES
ALONG THE ROADS



TRANSPORT
& ACCESS



GENERATE REVENUE
& GOOD STORIES



FOLLOW OUR BRAND
TO THE CORE



HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES

Within each of our high-level objectives we have defined actions, measurable targets and distribution of responsibilities.

ESTABLISH AUSTURLAND TO BECOME A STRONG & SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION

Result oriented, progressive and long term Destination Management.

SUPPORT OUR CLUSTERS

Connect to, and develop together with, our clusters and networks.

GROW COMPETENCE

Dialogue with the industry, be responsive and support.

URBAN PLANNING & COMMUNITY PLANNING

Always include Austurland in all urban planning and community planning projects.

Sustainable Development

As has been emphasized many times before within our initiative Áfangastaðurinn Austurland, sustainable tourism is, and will continue to be, a central focal point when developing our destination.¹

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has defined sustainable tourism as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”.²

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world, and has a considerable role to play in delivering sustainable development in many countries. At the same time it must be well managed so that it benefits local communities and the natural and cultural environments upon which it depends.

Sustainable tourism should not be regarded as a separate component of tourism, as a set of niche products, but rather as a condition of the tourism sector as a whole, which should work to become more sustainable.

T4SDG

Austurland aims to support the T4SDG platform - Tourism For Sustainable Development Goals - set up by UNWTO.

The UNWTO Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. The SDGs are part of the resolution “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Tourism can and must play a significant role in delivering sustainable solutions for people, the planet, prosperity and peace.

Tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly to all of the SDGs, and connected targets.³

The SDGs cover social and economic development issues including poverty, hunger, health, education, global warming, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, urbanization, environment and social justice.

Responsible Tourism

Austurland DMO has signed a declaration with *Ábyrg ferðapjónusta - Responsible tourism*, which is an incentive for Icelandic destinations and tourism companies to agree on some clear and simple actions on responsible tourism.⁴

Ábyrg ferðapjónusta is being patronized by the President of Iceland, and supported by *Festa - Samfélagábyrgð fyrirtækja (Center for Corporate Social Responsibility)* and *Íslenski Ferðaklasinn (Iceland Tourism Cluster)*, in cooperation with *Ferðamálastofa (Icelandic Tourist Board)*, *SAF - Samtaka ferðapjónustunnar (Icelandic Travel Industry Association)*, *Íslandsstofa (Promote Iceland)*, *MAS - Markaðsstofur landshlutanna (Regional Marketing Offices of Iceland)*, *Visit Reykjavík* and *Safetravel Iceland*.

The purpose of Ábyrg ferðapjónusta is to maintain Iceland’s status as an optimal future destination for tourists by supporting sustainability for future generations of the nation.

The destinations and companies involved aim to:

- Demonstrate exemplary behaviour and respect for nature.
- Ensure the safety of guests and treat them courteously.
- Respect the rights of employees.
- Have a positive impact on the local community.

Sustainability Framework

Austurland DMO has defined a structure and function of our Destination Management, connecting to sustainable strategies, planning and development goals on International, National, Regional and Local levels.

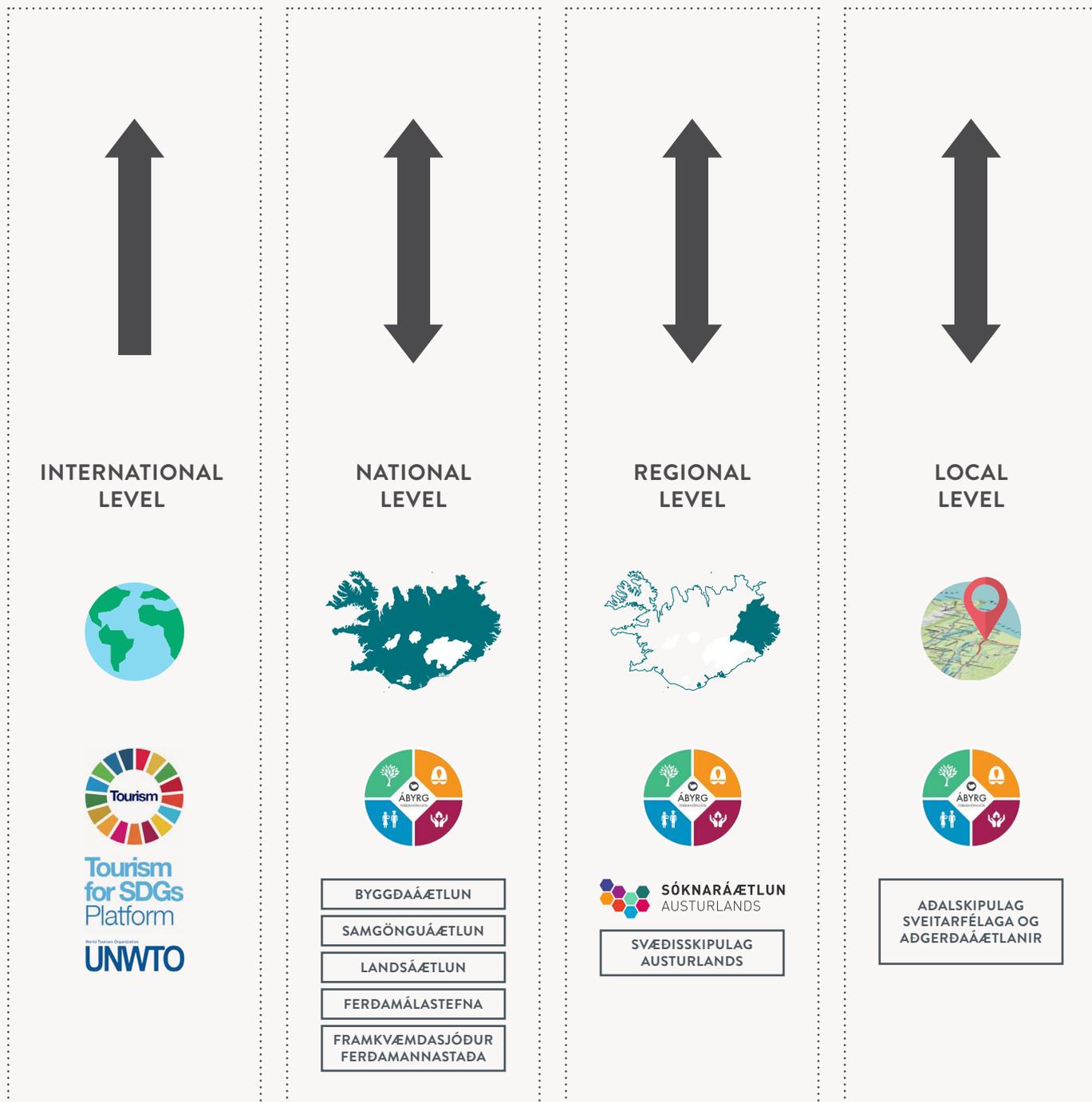
- Internationally we aim to engage into the UNWTO Sustainable Goals.
- Nationally we connect to Ábyrg ferðapjónusta, Byggðaáætlun, Samgönguáætlun, Landsáætlun, Ferðamálastefna and Framkvæmdasjóður ferðamannastaða.
- Regionally we connect to Sóknaráætlun Austurlands and Svæðisskipulag Austurlands.
- Locally we connect to Aðalskipulag sveitarfélaga og aðgerðaáætlanir.

FRAMEWORK - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING



AUSTURLAND

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT



Destination Austurland connects to sustainable development and planning on a International, National, Regional and Local levels.



Photo: Maria de la Parra

Background

This Destination Management Plan (DMP), is our guide for further actions when we are taking the next steps in developing our destination of Austurland. The DMP provide an understanding of our current situation, where we are, the challenges we face and the opportunities we can see. It lists our analysed targets and objectives, and the actions and tasks we need to accomplish.

The Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Austurland 2018 -2021, is based in the need for Destination Management and planning for a sustainable development of our tourism.

Since 2014, we have in Austurland completed an exhaustive process of analysing, developing and managing our destination. Our focus has been to develop Austurland to become a more attractive region to visit, as well as to work and live in. Within this process, it has also been a central priority to establish a function for Destination Management, and to prepare a DMP for Austurland.

In October 2015 the national strategy *Vegvísir í ferðapjónustu (Road Map for Tourism in Iceland 2015-2020)* was published. The road map emphasizes on the following seven key elements:⁵

- **Coordination** - a better *coordinated management* of tourism with a holistic approach
- **Providing a positive visitor experience** - enhance *positive visitor experiences* from hospitality, quality, service and more
- **Reliable data** - provide more *reliable data* from intensified research of the tourist sector
- **Nature conservation** - ensure an efficient *nature conservation* in synergy with tourism
- **Skills and quality** - enhance *skills and quality awareness* within the tourism industry
- **Increased profitability** - increase *profitability* from tourism based on realistic targets
- **A better distribution of tourists** - increase *distribution of tourists* season-wise and geographically

The strategy *Vegvísir í ferðapjónustu* point out, among other things, work plan priorities for Iceland. It is stated that effective DMPs will be made for every region in the country.⁶

Furthermore, it is appointed as measures for 2015-2020 that tourist destinations shall be organised in each region according to a DMP with service charges collected where appropriate and where value added services are being offered. Service charges are expected to be channelled into, among other things, nature and heritage conservation and further developing of destinations.⁷

The following expected results 2015-2020 are stated in *Vegvísir í ferðapjónustu*:

- Municipalities should have taken tourist destinations into account in their planning, covering among other things the protection of nature and heritage, hygiene issues, facilities and maintenance, safety issues, prevention, access and visitor management where applicable, in addition to signs and the provision of information.
- Destinations where services and facilities are in place will receive payments from service charges that are used for development.
- Facilities and services for tourists are significantly improving every year in destinations around the country with regard to, among other things, hygiene conditions and safety protection. The protection of nature and conservation of heritage and the landscape are prioritised.

The national DMP program was first announced in 2015, while the national program of preparing regional DMPs was launched and started in April 2017. *Ferðamálastofa (Icelandic Tourist Board)* was, along with Stjórnstöð ferðamála, assigned to control the preparation of regional DMPs. The regional marketing offices was appointed to carry out the development of the DMPs, with *Ferðamálastofa* overseeing the project.⁸

Through a holistic approach taking into account the planning and coordination of development and management of tourist flows in each region, the aim with the DMPs is to strengthen the local tourism support frameworks.

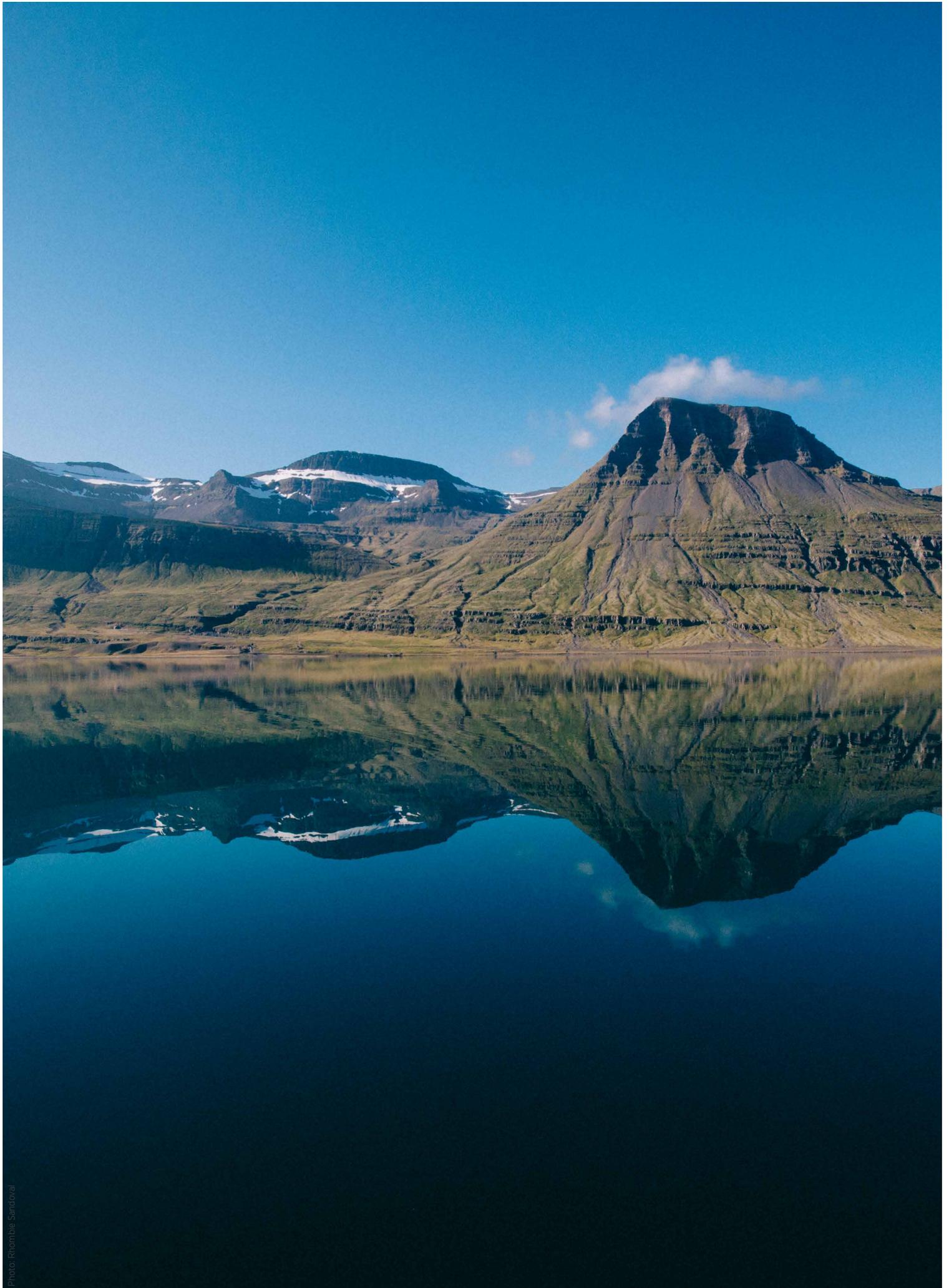


Photo: Rhombie Sandoval

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland

When preparing the DMP for Austurland, our regional initiative Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has a central role. It is therefore necessary to provide a summary of the previous steps that have been taken within the initiative.

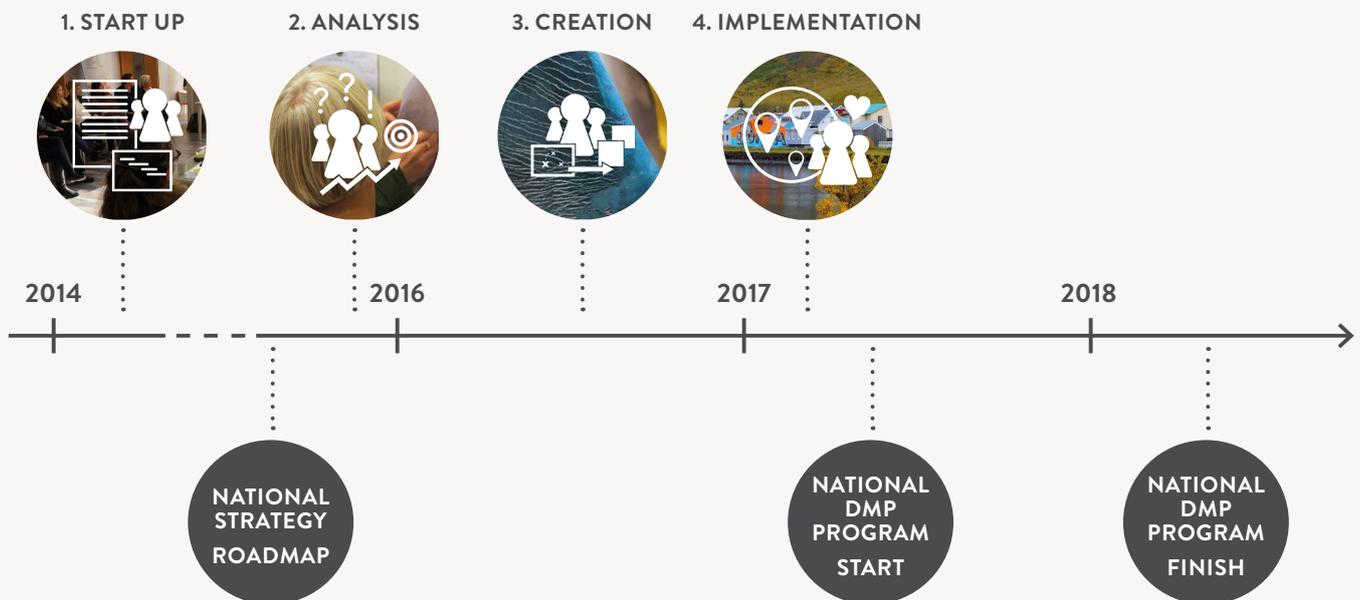
Since 2014, we have in Austurland completed an exhaustive process of analysing, developing and managing our destination. Our focus has been to develop Austurland to become a more attractive region to visit, as well as to work and live in. Within this process, it has also been a central priority to establish a function for Destination Management, and to prepare a DMP for Austurland.

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland emerged from the local and regional needs with a strong conviction that Destination Development should be an involving process, and work in synergy with regional development.

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland was founded by the regional tourism organisation *FAUST - Ferðamálasamtök Austurlands (Tourism Association of Austurland)*. Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has since the start been managed and run by *Austurbrú*, who represents the development of the economy, society, administration, college and continuous education, research, knowledge and culture in Austurland.⁹

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has been integrated into *Sóknaráætlun Austurlands 2015-2019 (SSA - Regional Strategy for Austurland 2015-2019)*, and based in the national strategy *Vegvísir í ferðaþjónustu (Road Map for Tourism in Iceland 2015-2020)* and the national DMP program.¹⁰

ÁFANGASTAÐURINN AUSTURLAND INITIATIVE



Timeline of Áfangastaðurinn Austurland initiative and National DMP Program

The purpose of the initiative Áfangastaðurinn Austurland is to develop the region with focus on the well-being of communities and residents, and to strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination.

The aim is to develop Austurland to a top class destination, and an outstanding work and living area. A municipal and regional storefront that attracts residents, companies and investments.

A sustainable approach has always been a central aspect for the initiative; considering economic, social and environmental aspects, on basis of heritage of places, and existing and future needs of people. The method of Destination Design is applied in line with this emphasis, focusing on development out from shared understanding and shared visions.

The cross-border collaboration and intersectoral co-creation is essential. The development process is based in a deep dialogue with all the community. This involves all the municipalities in the region, companies, associations, and people who live and work in Austurland.

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland works from a joint development process owned and run by all the stakeholders together. The process is open for participants from all across the community, from young to old, from different disciplines and backgrounds.

For more information about Áfangastaðurinn Austurland, read our previous studies and reports:

Start-up report: Finding Austurland

- First step, pre-study and project plan

Analysis & Strategy Report: Austurland in Our Mind

- Destination Development strategy, research & benchmarking summarized

Creation Report: Story of Austurland

- Destination Design program, toolbox & organisation plan



Previous reports of Áfangastaðurinn Austurland

STATUS

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has achieved to establish a community movement, and a framework for a continuous collaborative development over time.

Following list contains some of the activities that taken place within Áfangastaðurinn Austurland. The outcomes from our earlier efforts are highly relevant since they serve as basis for this DMP.

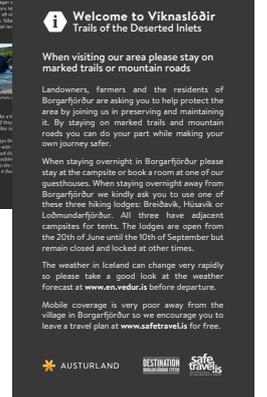
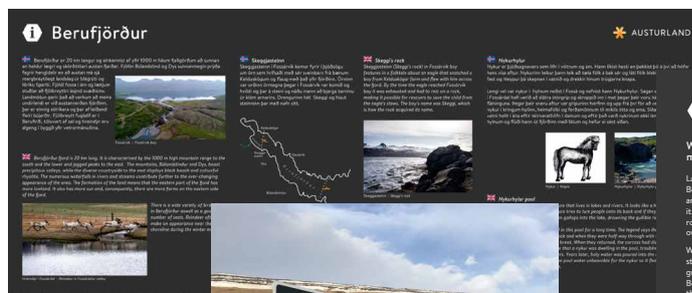
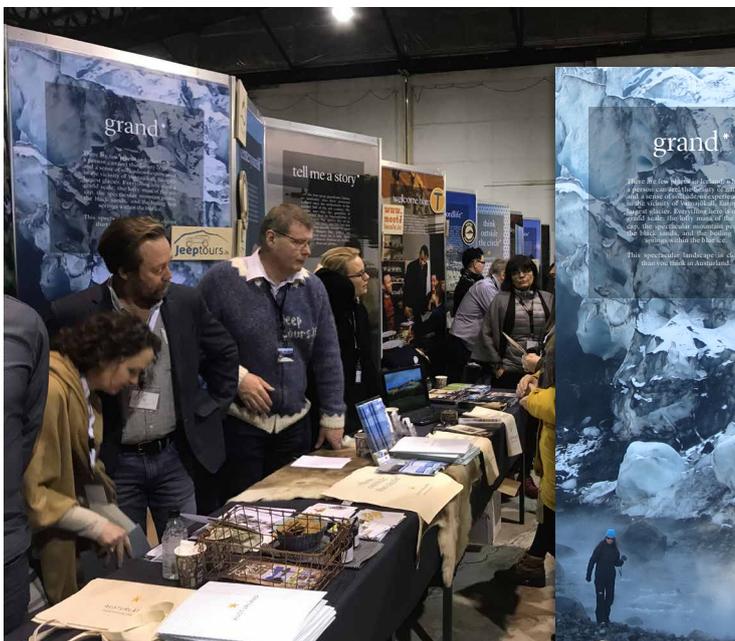
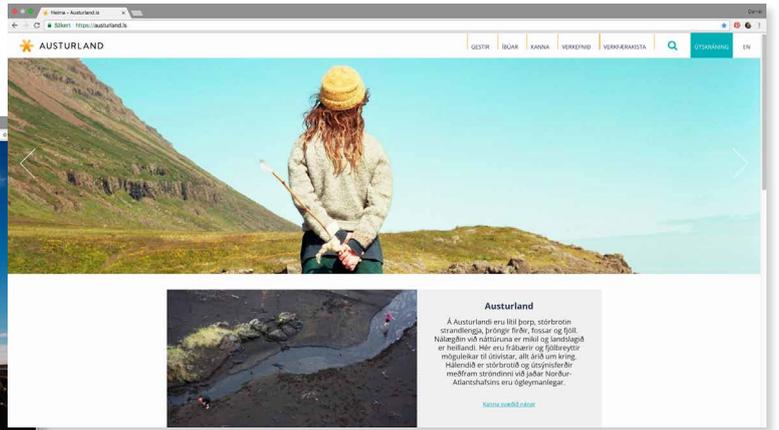
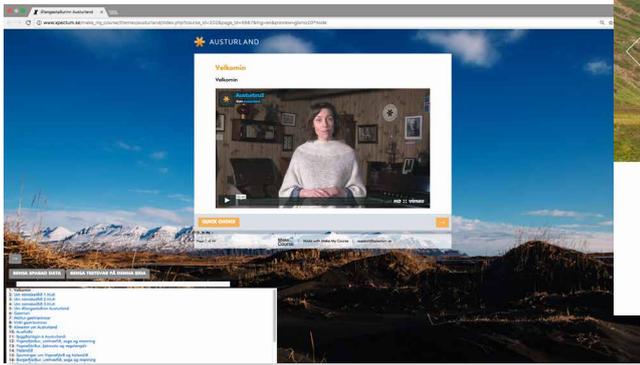
Áfangastaðurinn Austurland Activities & Produced Material:

Start-up Workshop - 2014
Project Plan - 2014
Stakeholder Mapping - 2014
Competence List - 2014
Destination Development Start-up Report - 2015
Inventory Analysis – Austurland Content - 2015
Destination Surveys - 2015 & 2017
Benchmarking - Destination Development 2015
Strategy Workshop – 2015
Austurland Brand Platform - Tool 2015
Austurland Target Audiences - Tool 2015
Destination Development Strategy Report - 2015
Focus Group Workshop – 2016
Austurland Focus Areas Manifesto – Tool 2016
Place Brands Analysis - 2016
Austurland Visual Identity - 2016
Austurland Sign Programme - 2016
Austurland Identity Meeting - 2016
Destination Development Creation Report - 2017
Austurland Communication Platform - Tool 2017
Austurland Web Development - 2017
Austurland Web Launch Event - 2017
Online Course Hostmanship, Service & Hospitality - 2017
Design March Exhibition & Event - 2017
Austurland Photo Language - Tool 2017
Austurland Map - 2017
Austurland Activity Guide - 2017
Art Attack Neskaupstaður – 2017
Destination Austurland Magazine
Austurland Travel Show Concepts
Austurland Marketing Plans
Information & Marketing Material
Establishing a Destination Management Organization
Destination Management Plan

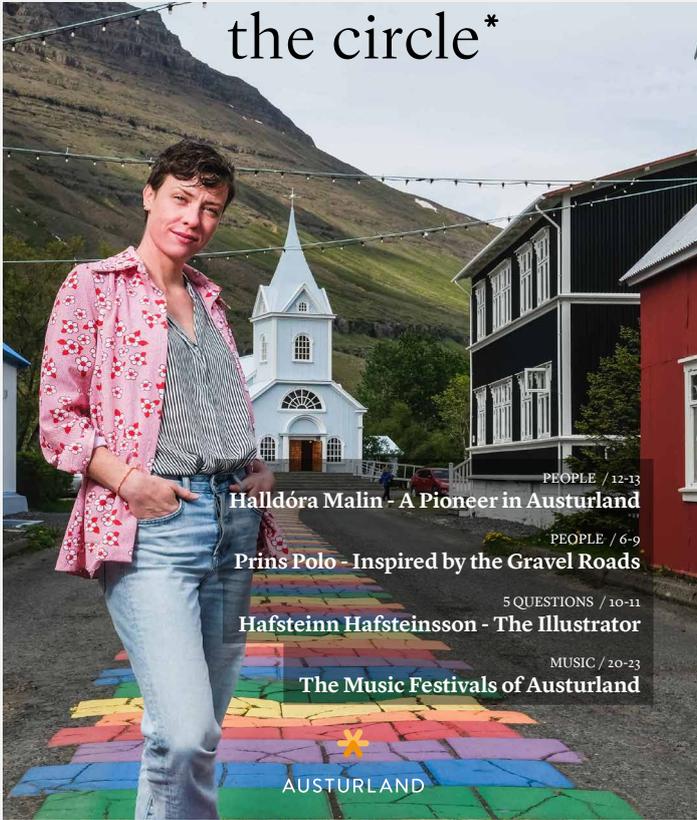
Áfangastaðurinn Austurland Presentations & meetings:

Residents of Austurland
Municipalities of Austurland
FAUST - Ferðamálasamtök Austurlands
Prospective partners
Journalists & photographers
SSA - Samband sveitarfélaga á Austurlandi
SIS - Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga
Egilsstaðir Airport
Austfirskar Krásir
Íslenski ferðaklasinn
Stjórnstöð ferðamála
Íslandsstofa
Ferðamálastofa
MAS - Markaðsstofur landshlutanna
SAF - Samtaka ferðaþjónustunnar
Háskóli Íslands
HönnunarMars
The Minister of Finance
Minister of Tourism, Industry and Innovation
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Slow Food International
BEDA - The Bureau of European Design Associations
Design Region Sweden
Business & Design Lab, Gothenburg University
Traena Municipality, Norway
NORA - North Atlantic Cooperation
Norsk Opplevelsekonferense, Norway

*It is important for Áfangastaðurinn Austurland to keep up a momentum and work proactive.
The list of activities, produced material, presentations and meetings is always growing.*



think outside the circle*



PEOPLE / 12-13

Halldóra Malin - A Pioneer in Austurland

PEOPLE / 6-9

Prins Polo - Inspired by the Gravel Roads

5 QUESTIONS / 10-11

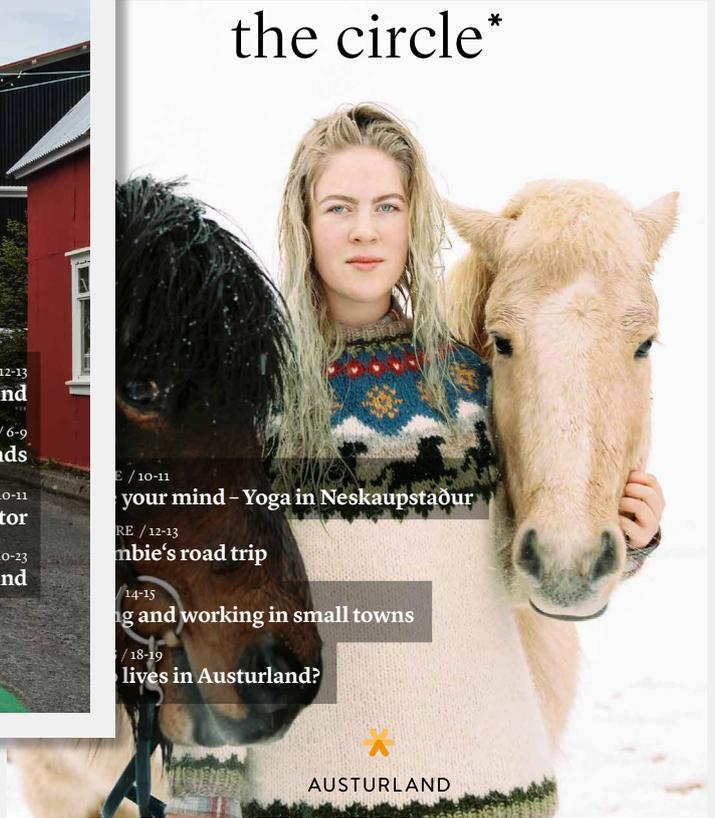
Hafsteinn Hafsteinsson - The Illustrator

MUSIC / 20-23

The Music Festivals of Austurland

AUSTURLAND

think outside the circle*



PEOPLE / 10-11

Yoga in Neskaupstaður

TRAVEL / 12-13

Sam's road trip

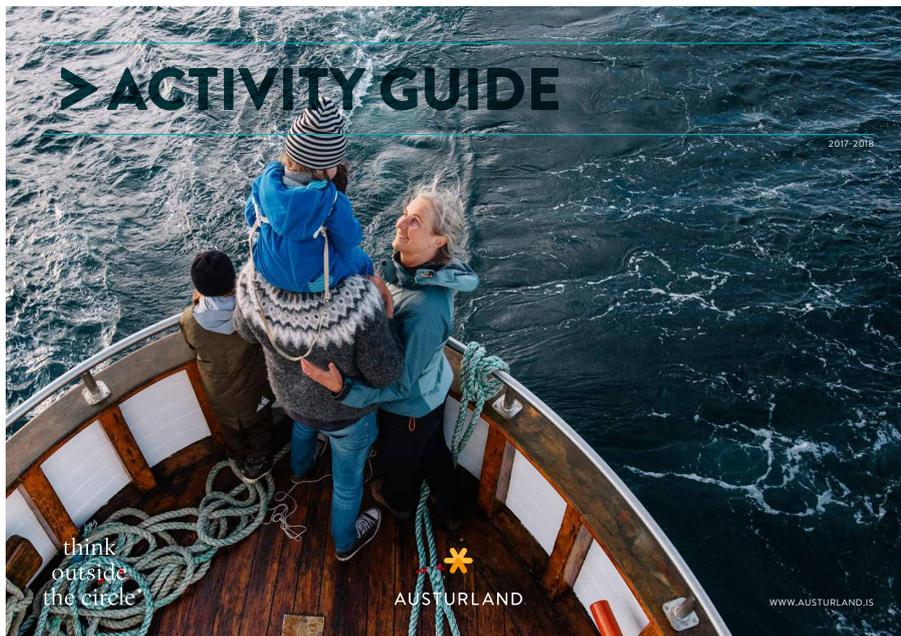
PEOPLE / 14-15

Living and working in small towns

PEOPLE / 18-19

Who lives in Austurland?

AUSTURLAND



> ACTIVITY GUIDE

2017-2018

think outside the circle*

AUSTURLAND

WWW.AUSTURLAND.IS

OUR TAKE ON DMP

A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and the apportionment of resources.¹¹

Destination Management Plans should cover all the fundamental aspects of Destination Management, including:

- Tourism performance and impacts
- Working structures and communication
- Overall appeal and appearance, access, infrastructure and visitor services
- Destination image, branding and promotion (marketing)
- Product mix – development needs and opportunities

All good DMP's should address and work through following five clear steps:¹²

1. Agreeing to plan together

Why do this and who to involve?

2. Gathering the evidence

How well are we doing now?

3. Setting the direction

Where do we want to get to?

4. Identifying the action

What do we need to do to get there?

5. Measuring progress and keeping it going

Have we got there yet?

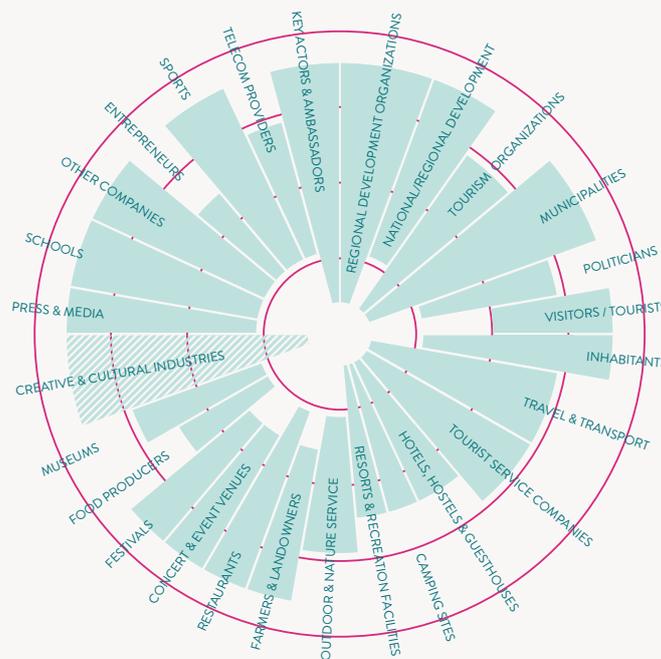
As the following list shows, Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has systematically processed these steps.

1. Agreeing to plan together

- Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has mapped all stakeholders and started an inclusive movement for developing our destination.
- The stakeholder mapping has been, and will continue to be, one fundamental tool for the Destination Management and further development process. Within the mapping we have defined central actors, key stakeholders, primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. The stakeholder mapping help us to overview who are being involved and how.

2. Gathering the Evidence

- Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has conducted surveys among visitors and residents to define situation and vision. We have also made solid benchmarking of best practises and extensive research of national and regional strategies.
- In order to gather and collate continuous evidence, and to provide a solid base for setting objectives and actions, a function has been established within Austurbrú for managing the destination – a Destination Management Organization (DMO).



Stakeholder map describing the roles as central actors, key stakeholders, primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. The different roles describe on which levels the stakeholders should be involved; Strategic, Tactical and Operative levels.¹³

3. Setting the Direction

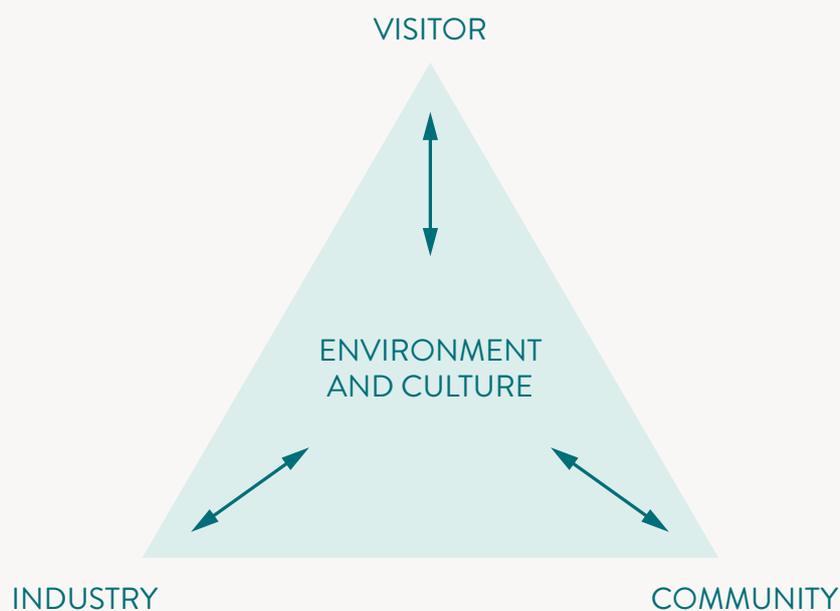
- Áfangastaðurinn Austurland has prepared a design and development strategy aiming to establish Austurland as a distinct destination with a sustainable and long term focus.
- Through preparing this DMP, we are clarifying and agreeing on the directions for Austurland, including articulating our vision, agreeing on our aims & priorities and setting measurable objectives.

4. Identifying the Action

- From the strategies and aims that has been set up through Áfangastaðurinn Austurland, steps has been taken for implementation. These have been within building a sense of a place of Austurland as a destination, planning and carrying through joint marketing efforts, building up a web portal for Austurland, creating a toolbox for Destination Development , training program for tourist companies and more.
- Through preparing this DMP, we are agreeing on the next steps to be accomplished in the upcoming years. The DMP contains an action list. These actions need to be specified and distributed, and only by working together we can meet our objectives.

5. Measuring Progress

- Through preparing this DMP, we are agreeing on measurable targets for a long-term successful and sustainable tourism industry for the whole destination of Austurland.
- Within Áfangastaðurinn Austurland we are highlighting on both the opportunities and the challenges that we need to front within our Destination Development.
- Since the very start of the initiative it has been crucial to connect the Destination Development to Destination Management. In order to do so the VICE-model has been adopted. The VICE model presents Destination Management as the interactions between the visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them and the environment where this interaction takes place. The environment, can be understood in its broadest sense to include all built and natural resources on which many tourism products are based.



The VICE model : A successful, sustainable tourism industry needs to identify how to: Welcome, involve and satisfy **Visitors**. Achieve a profitable and prosperous **Industry**. Engage and benefit host **Communities**. Protect and enhance the local **Environment**.

AUSTURLAND DMO

If there is an existing Destination Management Organization (DMO), or equivalent group of stakeholders, it should be responsible for leading the development of the DMP.¹⁴

Since Austurland does not have an existing DMO from before, it was decided to establish this function before preparing the DMP. We believe it is fundamental to establish the DMO before, in order to properly prepare and follow up on the DMP.

Austurland DMO was established during 2017 as a function within Austurbrú, which enables the Destination Management to be organised within existing frameworks.

Austurland DMO is to ensure further development, with a long-term and sustainable approach in connection to local, regional and national perspectives. The progress of our Destination Development need to be based in professional management, which includes measuring and evaluating of our efforts; focusing on strategic and desired results for all of Austurland.

Organisation of Austurland DMO

Austurland DMO connects to specific skills needed within our Destination Management, and includes representation on strategic levels for regional development.

Since Austurland DMO has major impact on the regional development, it is crucial that the function is built around local knowledge and legitimacy.

- Austurland DMO is being managed through a steering-committee within Austurbrú. The committee is in direct contact with the operative project group, and closely connected to relevant authorities. This ensures an interaction between national, regional and local levels.
- The project group has the operative responsibility, lead by a Destination Coordinator together with supportive competences. The project group is also connected to an advisory board of expertise and clusters based in Austurland.
- Furthermore, the operation also connects to representatives from the municipalities in Austurland, responsible for local destination marketing, urban planning and other relevant functions.

DMO can sometimes be referred to as a Destination Marketing Organization. But since the responsibilities extend far beyond the traditional role of promotion, sales and advertising, a Destination Management Organization that fully embraces the role is more up to date.

DMOs today should not only lead on marketing, but must also be strategic leaders in Destination Development. This role requires them to drive and coordinate destination management activities within the framework of a coherent strategy. Promotion must attract people to visit in the first place; creating a suitable environment and quality delivery on the ground will ensure that visitors' expectations are met at the destination. The visitors will then both recommend the destination to others and return themselves on a future occasion.

Framework of Austurland DMO

The approach of Austurland DMO is to build up core competencies, and to strengthen local networks and develop professionalism in our Destination Management.

Ultimately the aim is to support the local resources and processes, to enable ongoing development based on local needs in line with regional strategies and sustainable Destination Management.

Austurland DMO is to be considered as a resource, from where local processes get support, knowledge, expertise and other resources needed for implementation and development activities.

Austurland DMO also aims to support the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises to reach regional, national and international markets and to engage in innovation processes. By facilitating improved conditions for business and product development, it will increase innovation, competitiveness and profitability.

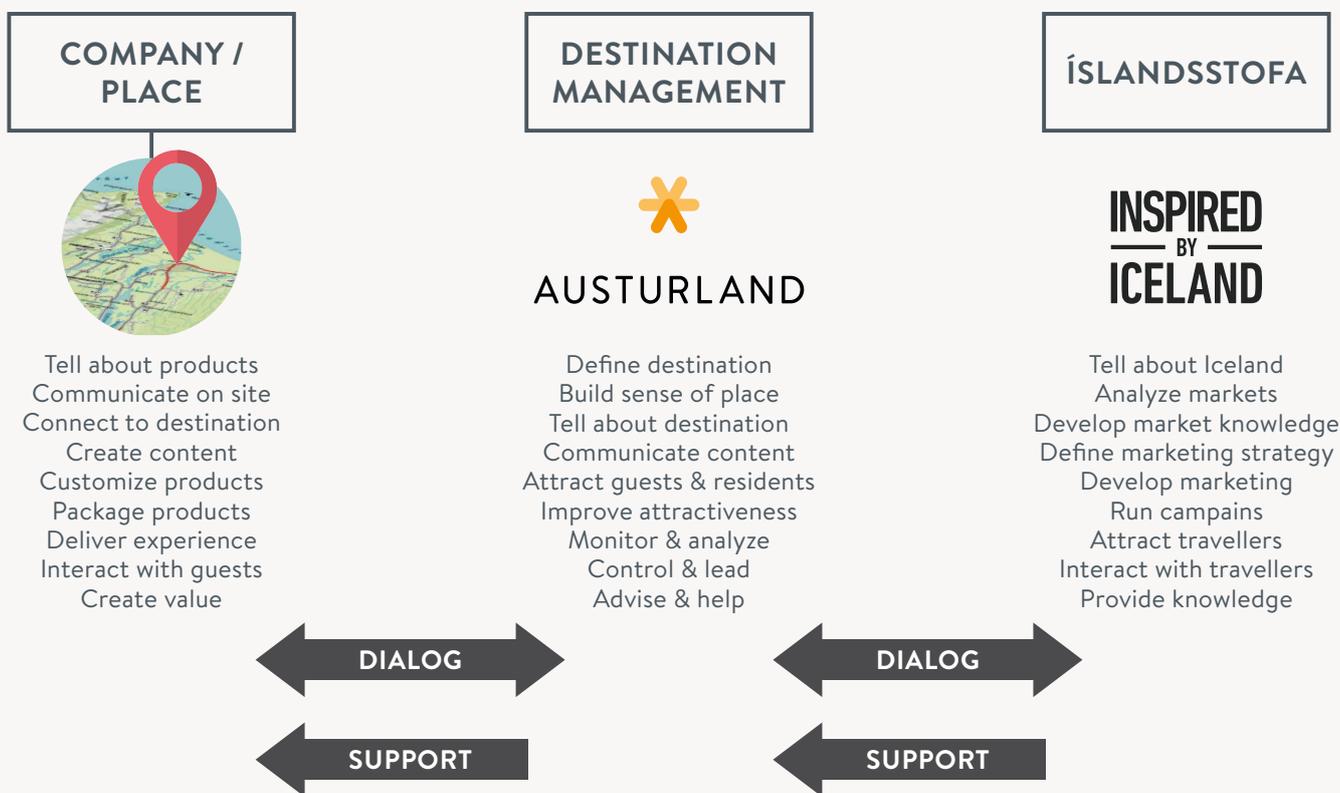
Through customized support at the right level, based on specific needs, there are great opportunities to achieve excellent results in thematic product development connected to the unique values of Austurland, and with increased collaboration between stakeholders.

Austurland DMO supports efforts directed specifically to individual stakeholder needs, or through joint efforts by bringing together municipalities, companies and other parties.

Austurland DMO sets both long and short term strategies, market- and activity plans that support and facilitate destination export efforts in line with sustainable Destination Development.

Austurland DMO is run with full transparency and insight. In order to communicate our actions, annual reports is being made and presented in open meetings. This ensures continuation in the same spirit as the Áfangastaðurinn Austurland initiative was founded from, based on shared understanding, shared visions and shared commitments.

FRAMEWORK EXAMPLE - MARKETING



Austurland Destination Management Organization is a resource providing support in connection to regional and national frameworks,.

PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Austurland DMO is run through partnership. The intention is to keep emphasizing on co-ownership and co-creation.

The partnership model of Austurland DMO is supporting the regional aims and strategies. The model can be described as a three; it is a metaphor suitable for explaining the structure and function.

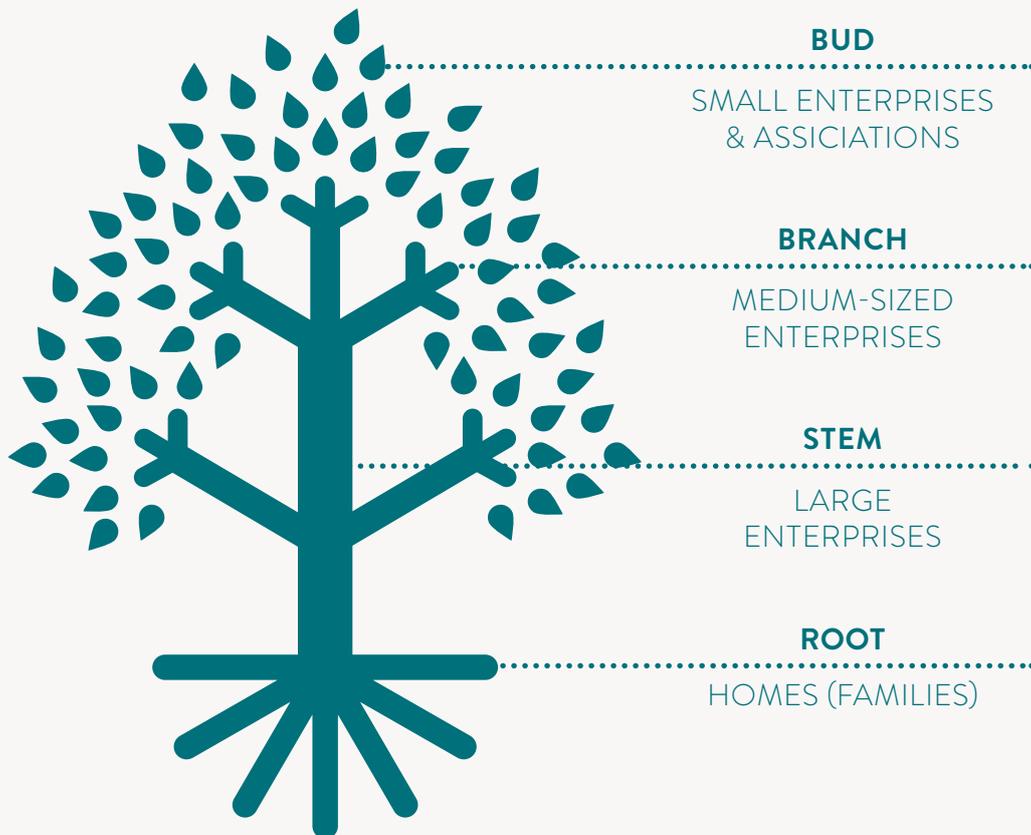
It is an organic, and ever developing model, focusing on circular processes. Its structure depends on mutual commitment from all stakeholders, exchanging benefits in symbiosis.

Austurland DMO partnership model stands strong with the roots firmly established in the residents. As it from the beginning has been important to involve the residents in the regional Destination Development and identity, the Austurland DMO continues to operate in the same spirit. The roots of the tree get nutrients and water from the ground.

The tree trunk, or the stem, is large companies who are active within Austurland. The stem brings the nutrients and water up to the branches. It refers to all kind of companies from different sectors who are part of, and cares about, the regional welfare and development.

The branches widen the tree towards the sun to get the best out of the light. The branches are average sized businesses, always aiming to grow and is in need of the nutrients and water to do so.

The branches hold smaller branches, spurs and buds. These are all the smaller businesses and entrepreneurs. The leafs growing on the tree give oxygen back to the environment of Austurland.



Austurland DMO partnership model



Role & Value of a DMP

by Tom Buncle, Consultant, Iceland Destination Management Plan Program, Stjórnstöð ferðamála

Global Growth: Opportunities and Threats for Iceland

Tourism is a truly global sector, which has grown exponentially in recent years, not least in Iceland. It has the potential, if managed properly, to bring significant economic, social and environmental benefits to communities around the country. But it also has the potential to damage communities and the environment, if it is not managed effectively.

The greatest benefits come from foreign exchange revenue from visitors, particularly to remoter areas and at times of year when they are needed most, which provides jobs and livelihoods for local people. Tourism can often deliver such benefits where other industries can't, particularly in remoter rural communities. Tourism can thereby keep remoter communities alive and prosperous, provide facilities that might not be sustainable by the population of the local community alone, and help drive the demand for skills development leading to higher paid jobs, as well as inject fresh spirit into local cultural and artistic life.

But, as tourism numbers increase around the world, and particularly in Iceland, the need to minimise potentially negative impacts and ensure tourism delivers the benefits desired, becomes greater. Most especially with the power of social media, there can be a risk of natural environmental sites in particular not being ready or able to cope with a sudden increase in demand. Too many visitors at one time in any area can also strain residents' tolerance, especially if they are unaware of the benefits visitors bring. Equally, too many visitors can destroy the visitor experience, leading to negative publicity and, possibly, reputational damage to the destination.

The Need for Holistic Planning

These potential benefits and risks highlight the need to develop a robust approach to developing and managing tourism responsibly, so that the benefits are maximised and disadvantages minimised. Tourism transcends many different sectors. That is why it should be considered as an important element in community, local and regional planning. But it is not just about infrastructure,

environmental, physical, spatial and economic development planning. Tourism should also feature in planning for the arts, culture, transport, and social policy.

Ultimately, the contribution tourism makes to the community will be dependent on the quality of its integration into community, local, and regional (and national) planning. Destination Management Planning does not cut across these other planning processes. A Destination Management plan represents a plan specifically focused on tourism, which should be integrated within these other plans. This represents a truly holistic approach to planning, which provides the best chance of developing responsible tourism and ensuring tourism provides the greatest possible benefits to communities and any potentially negative impacts are minimised.

“DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING IS ABOUT ATTRACTING THE KIND OF TOURISM YOU WANT”

(Tom Buncle, Yellow Railroad: “Destination Management Planning: Getting The Tourism You Want and Staying Competitive” presentation, Regional DMP Development in Iceland (Oct 2016))

What is Destination Management Planning?

‘Destination Management’ means taking a much wider and more holistic perspective than merely ‘destination marketing’. It is as much about considering residents’ desires and the destination’s long-term sustainability as it is about visitor demands. Destinations have begun to recognise a need to address their tourism offer to attract visitors who will be most valuable to them, or to minimise the negative impacts of tourism growth on their natural and built environment and on residents’ lifestyle.

Destination Management Planning is a tool, which enables people in a destination to decide how they want tourism to contribute to their economic and social life and take steps to achieve this. Quite simply, at its core, Destination Management Planning is no more than *people working together in a defined area to develop a plan*, which satisfies *visitor desires* and delivers *sustainable benefits for the community*.

The following definition, by Visit England, sums it up well:

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT IS A PROCESS OF LEADING, INFLUENCING AND COORDINATING THE MANAGEMENT OF ALL THE ASPECTS OF A DESTINATION THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE, TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE NEEDS OF VISITORS, LOCAL RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES AND THE ENVIRONMENT. ¹⁵

Importantly, this definition addresses four stakeholder groups or sectors, whose demands need to be met for responsible, sustainable Destination Management.

These are:

- Visitors
- Local residents
- Businesses
- The environment

Achieving harmony between these four is the 'holy grail' of responsible, sustainable tourism, which is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization as

"TOURISM THAT TAKES FULL ACCOUNT OF ITS CURRENT AND FUTURE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF VISITORS, THE INDUSTRY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOST COMMUNITIES" ¹⁶

But it is not always easy. Different stakeholders' desires can sometimes be in conflict with each other. For instance, businesses' desire for greater revenue might place a strain on environmental sites or residents' tolerance of visitors; whereas access regulations that are too strict might threaten businesses' profitability. Equally, residents' tolerance of visitors might be higher if they understood the contribution tourism makes to the local economy and their lifestyles.

Consequently, sound Destination Management Planning provides an effective way to maximise the benefit tourism brings to an area while minimising its negative impact, thereby ensuring the area's visitor economy is developed as responsibly and sustainably as possible. Satisfying the desires and needs of these four sectors represents the 'virtuous circle' of responsible, sustainable tourism development –where the type of tourism a destination receives is optimal for all four stakeholder interests:

What is a Destination Management Plan?

Like any business, a Destination Management plan (DMP) is no more than a plan to develop the area's (tourism) business. The primary differences between a company business plan and a DMP are that the destination has many more stakeholders who have an interest in the development of the destination; and they do not control the product, which is generally intangible –being the experience the visitor has while enjoying the destination's natural environment and its built and cultural heritage. Therefore, a DMP has to take a wider range of, sometimes competing, stakeholder interests into account. This also necessitates a more collaborative form of management of the DMP.

Importantly, a DMP is not a static, 'one-off' document. It should be considered as a live plan, which will guide the way the destination develops on an ongoing basis. Therefore, it should be continuously reviewed and updated as circumstances change and lessons are learnt.

The importance of collaboration amongst a range of destination stakeholders, as well as the action-orientation of a DMP is clearly described by Visit England's DMP definition:

A DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (DMP) IS A SHARED STATEMENT OF INTENT TO MANAGE A DESTINATION OVER A STATED PERIOD OF TIME, ARTICULATING THE ROLES OF THE DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS AND IDENTIFYING CLEAR ACTIONS THAT THEY WILL TAKE AND THE APPORTIONMENT OF RESOURCES. ¹⁷

In summary, a DMP provides a destination with the best opportunity to plan for its future by attracting the type of tourism it wants and minimising any negative impacts.

Destination Audit

Our destination, Austurland is the easternmost region in Iceland. Often also referred to as the East fjords or East Iceland. We have taken a strategic choice to use Austurland as standard in our communication.

Our landscape of Austurland is spread over 15,792 km², consisting of picturesque fjords - firðir, grown inland valleys and forest - hérað and vast highlands – hálendi. Austurland is also the home to major parts of Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Europe.

With a population of 10.490 inhabitants Austurland is largely a rural area with an agglomeration of towns, villages and farms positioned along the ocean coastline and close to the rivers. Despite being sparsely populated we have a lively economy with creative communities, good infrastructure, strong companies within fishery and aluminium industries.

Austurland has become a vibrant destination for tourists looking for wild nature, authentic experiences and creative power. We can offer endless possibilities for exploring beautiful nature, enjoying local food and culture and

experiencing unforgettable outdoor adventures. This has also resulted in an advancing visitor economy, and tourism has become one of the primary industries for the region.

Tourism resources

The captivating sceneries of Austurland stretches from the glaciers to the sea. Vast barren expanses and green valleys with stands of trees, hot springs and crystal-clear mountain brooks, beautiful waterfalls and glassy-surfaced fjords with pristine beaches.

Whether you want to fish for salmon, swim, go bird-watching, climb mountains, eat good food, or just enjoy being alive and inhaling the clean air below the Arctic, you can do it all in Austurland. Moreover, there is one thing here that you can see nowhere else: Icelandic reindeer in the wild – roaming in the mountains of Austurland, and as well around the towns in the lowland.

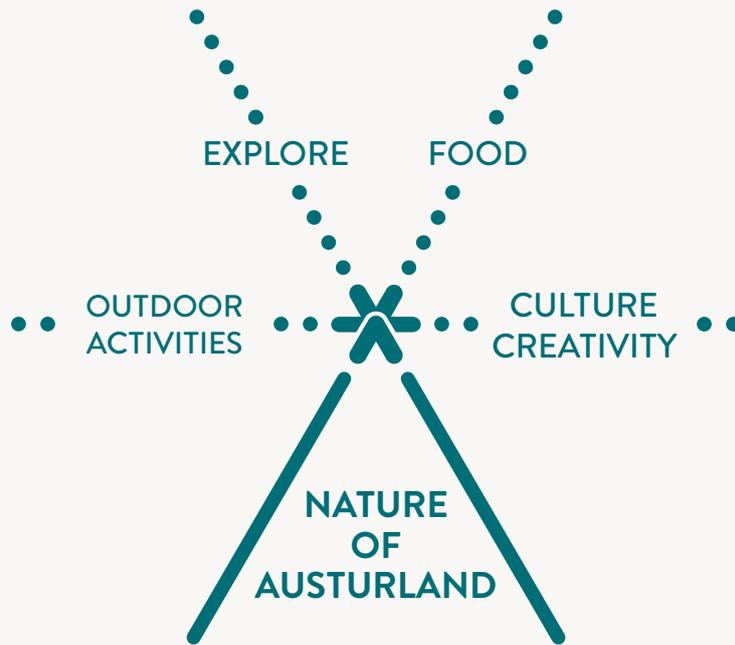
We have defined focus areas that are of particular significance for Austurland. These are *Outdoor Activities, Explore, Food, Culture and Creativity*. The main pillar, that connects to all of our focus areas, is our nature.



10.490
INHABITANTS

15.792 KM²

Destination Austurland - Information about the region



FIRDİR / FJORDS



HÉRAÐ / INLAND VALLEYS & FOREST



HÁLENDI / HIGHLANDS

Our Focus Areas for Destination Austurland are Outdoor Activities, Explore, Food, Culture and Creativity. All of our Focus Areas connect to the nature of Austurland, consisting of firðir - fjords, hérað - inland valleys & forest and hálendi - highlands.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Austurland is a hiker's paradise. We are proud of our variety of hiking trails, for instance along the coast and in the mountains neighbouring the glacier Vatnajökull. Hiking maps have been published for a major part of the area, so that it is easy to set off on your own, although there are also many organized walking tours.

Among the marked hiking areas is Víknaslóðir close to Borgarfjörður Eystri. It is one of the most known with various trails such as the popular hike to Stóruurð. Other examples is the Gerpir area with many marked trails between different fjords. Around Egilsstaðir there are as well many marked trails under the name of Pearls of Fljótshálsa with shorter trails, attracting many of the locals and visitors to make daytrips. Many more could be mentioned since Austurland has many trails in all parts of the region. There are active hiking organisations publishing maps of marked trails all over Austurland.

Austurland has two ski areas. One of them is Oddskarð in Fjarðabyggð. Besides serving as training ground for winter sports in Fjarðabyggð, the ski area attracts skiers and snowboarders of all ages on weekends in the winter. One lift begins at 513 m in altitude and ends by bringing the skier to a height of 840 m, with a fabulous view over Reyðarfjörður. As one of the country's most scenic skiing sites, Oddskarð is often referred to as the East Iceland Alps. There is also a children's lift and a ski lodge with a small diner.

The other ski resort is located in Stafdalur, only 10 minutes drive above the village of Seyðisfjörður. There is an excellent ski resort operated jointly by the skiing clubs of Seyðisfjörður and Fljótshálsa. The area is constantly undergoing improvement and currently offers one 1000 m lift, flood-lighting, and a comfortable chalet. Facilities for Alpine downhill skiing, snowboarding, and snowmobiles.

The highlands of Austurland have unique natural features. A sizeable part of the area is covered by the largest glacier in Europe, Vatnajökull. Fire and ice meet in the north at Kverkfjöll mountains, and Snæfell, Iceland's highest peak outside glaciers, towers over the landscape toward the east. Warm springs formerly visited by outlaws are now enjoyed by tourists, who appreciate their health-giving properties. It is easy to find and enjoy solitude in these vast wastelands, but there is also the company of the sheep and reindeer which graze on the extensive ranges stretching from the glacier down to the valleys.

Rich fishing grounds gave Austurland a certain advantage and were the source of contact with foreign mariners. French vessels fished for cod in the waters off the East Fjords in centuries past, and Norwegian entrepreneurs built up fishing villages during the herring boom and the years when whaling was at its height. Times change, and modern technology is now employed in both fishing and processing the catch. Nevertheless, history lives on, both in our villages that still flourish and in places where only ruins bear witness to the dreams of the past.



NUMBER OF COMPANIES SELLING ACTIVITIES:

5 HIKING
(ONE-DAY TOURS & MULTI DAY TOURS)



1 MEET THE LOCALS TOUR
(VILLAGE WALK)



4 JEEP TOUR
(ONE-DAY TOURS & MULTI DAY TOURS)



3 SEA ACTIVITY
(BOAT, SEA ANGLING, KAYAK)



4 MOUNTAIN BIKE
(MTB)



6 HORSE RIDING



NUMBER OF MARKED HIKING TRAILS:

102



EMPHASES REGARDING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES:

- We need to develop experience concepts connecting to the promises in our manifesto.
- We need to improve and maintain our trails.
- We need to communicate more about hiking in Austurland.
- We need to improve our hiking maps and keep them updated.
- We should develop strong products and experience concepts in connection to hiking.
- We need to ensure the protection of our natural values and focus on responsible tourism in the balance between humans and nature.
- We need to maintain and preserve our coastal environments, and we should develop more products and experience concepts in connection to our fjords.
- We need to improve the dialogue and support framework. This includes the interaction between our Destination Management Organization and our tourist companies, clusters and networks, and organizations and authorities.
- We need to make better use of our tools and strategies, and get into action.

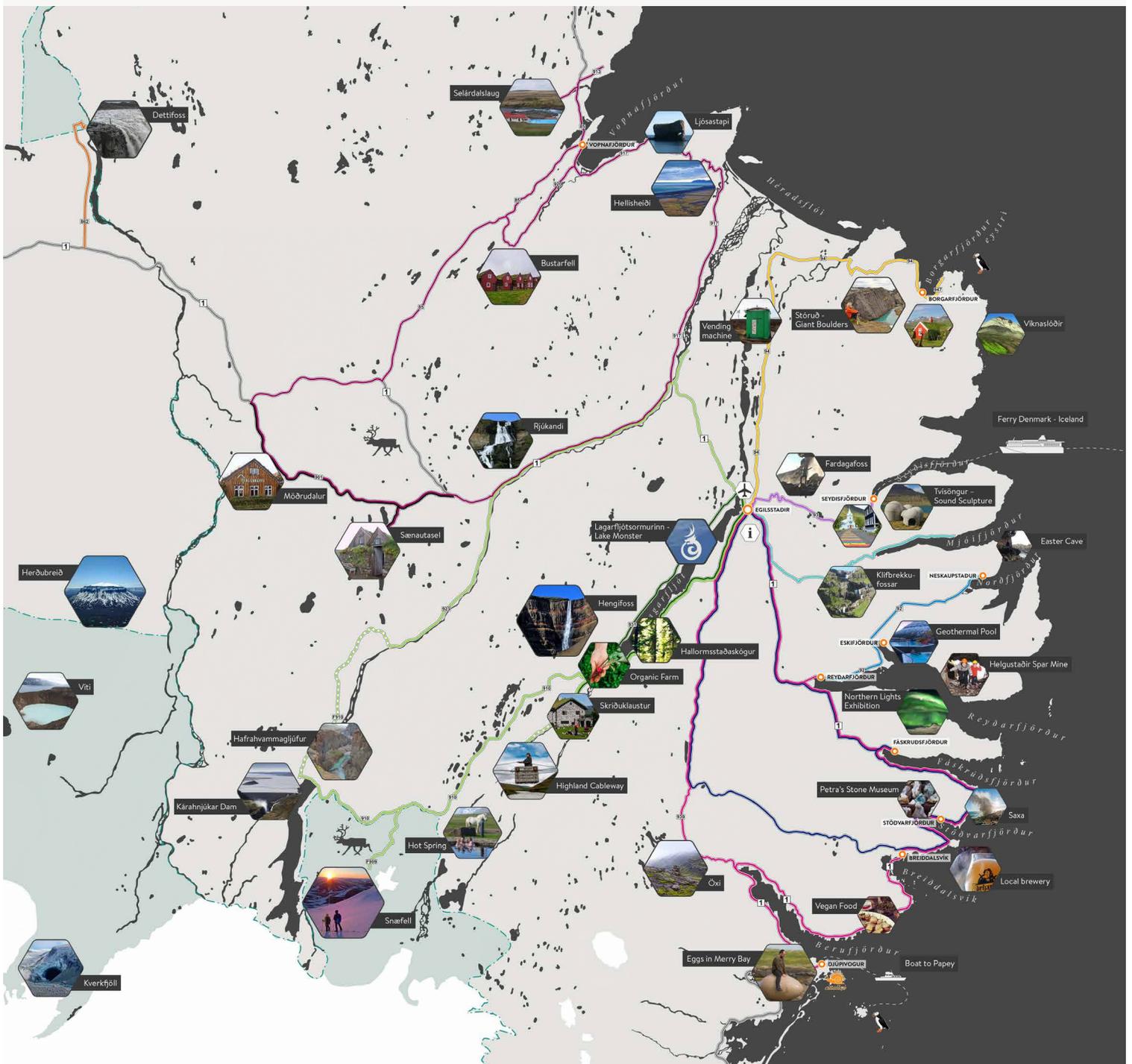
EXPLORE

Within Austurland we have many beautiful routes. By highlighting routes and build experience concepts in connection to them, we hope to be able to attract visitors for touring around more and stay longer in our region.

When developing the experiences around our routes, we should use our manifesto emphasizing on our focus areas. We need to improve the signages along the roads, using the identity for Austurland and our sign program. And we need to maintain and develop walking, hiking and biking paths and encourage visitors to explore our beautiful nature.

However, most important is that we do not only develop the accessibility without evaluating the positive and negative impacts.

To always improve the access to all places must not always be the recipe. Many times, because of various reasons, places must be protected or even closed for tourism. We always need to be careful, respectful and strategic when building new roads, parking lots and paths. We must ask ourselves what kind of development actually lead to increased positive values, and what kind of development that has the opposite effect and leads to negative impacts.



ROUTES IN AUSTURLAND:

-  **EUROPE'S MOST POWERFUL** 1 Hour : Dettifoss
 -  **THE NORTH RING** 3 Hours : Vopnafjörður – Sænautasel – Möðrudalur
 -  **HIGHLAND CULTURE** 45 Minutes : Sænautasel – Möðrudalur
 -  **TO THE HIGHLANDS** 3,5 Hours : Egilsstaðir – Laugarfell – Kárahnjúkar – Jökuldalur
 -  **AROUND THE LAKE** 1,5 Hours : Egilsstaðir – Valbjófsstaður – Fellabær
 -  **NEXT STOP: PUFFIN** 1,5 Hours : Borgarfjörður eystri
 -  **OPEN YOUR MIND** 30 Minutes : Seyðisfjörður
 -  **RURAL EXPERIENCE** 1 Hour : Mjóifjörður
 -  **FROM FJORD TO FJORD** 45 Minutes : Reyðarfjörður – Eskifjörður – Norðfjörður
 -  **THE COASTAL EXPERIENCE** 3,5 Hours :
Egilsstaðir – Fáskrúðsfjörður – Stöðvarfjörður – Breiðdalsvík – Djúpivogur – Öxi
 -  **THE SOUTH RING** 3 Hours :
Egilsstaðir – Fáskrúðsfjörður – Stöðvarfjörður – Breiðdalsvík – Breiðdalsheiði
-

EMPHASES REGARDING EXPLORE:

- *We need to develop experience concepts connecting to the promises in our manifesto.*
- *We need to utilize better the many alternatives for traveling around and exploring Austurland. We have a big variation of circle routes, shortcuts over mountain passes and places of interest all around Austurland. We need to point out places and routes that we should emphasize more on, and develop these strategically.*
- *Our resting points and service facilities along the roads need more attention. Public lavatories, information signs, safe places to stop the car and walking paths. We need to put more emphasis on improvement here, to make it functional and attractive for our guests and residents.*

FOOD

Austurland is a fertile area which enjoys a mild climate in the summer and offers rich diversity in its landscape as well as in its food.

The fjords are numerous where mountains, ocean, and small fishing villages define the scene. Fljótsdalshérað, the area around Egilsstaðir is known for its forestry, the glacial lake of Lagarfljót as well as plains and vegetation. From a food point of view, this is Iceland's wild side with reindeer, geese, berries, wild mushrooms and herbs as local ingredients.

Austurland is the oldest part of Iceland; the soil is very fertile as ash from numerous volcanoes has spread over the fields for centuries. It is by definition "a cold area" in Iceland, meaning that is outside the North-Atlantic ridge and therefore short of geothermal energy. Agriculture in Austurland is therefore shaped by other resources to grow food here at the 66°N. The organic farm in Vallanes has created natural conditions for their barley and vegetables by creating shelter for them by planting forests and shelterbelts.

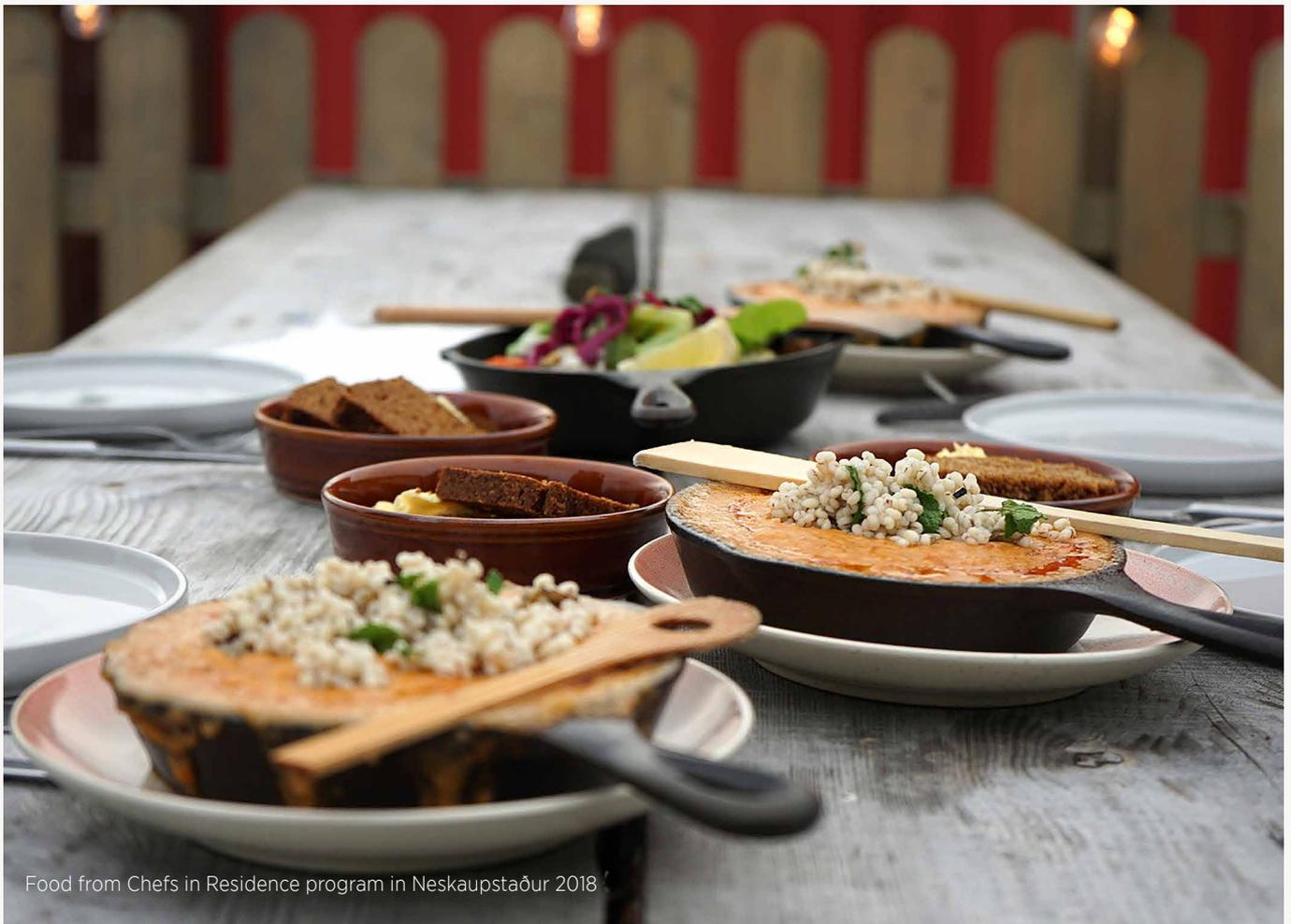
Food tourism, or culinary tourism, is a growing trend. Austurland owns great opportunities to develop and getting better known for our local food.

The pantry of Austurland is full of local delicacies. Dairy products, seeds, lamb, fish, reindeer, berries, mushrooms are just some examples, and there are more to explore.

Food tourism is about promoting restaurants, food producers, ingredients, local cuisine, cooking and events as sellable products. Food experiences attract people.

Food tourism also comprises more opportunities for side attractions; as collecting, hunting, fishing or preparing the food.

By providing knowledge and telling stories about the ingredients, the experience enhances and the value for the audience increases. It is also important to ensure the supply of local ingredients, and be able to serve dishes from the fjords and the landscapes of Austurland.



Food from Chefs in Residence program in Neskaupstaður 2018

Photo: Li Wistrom

NUMBER OF DINING OPTIONS:

29 RESTAURANTS
(14 OF 29 RESTAURANTS SERVE LOCAL FOOD)

19 CAFÉS

10 FAST FOOD PLACES

3 BISTROS

1 DINER



EMPHASES REGARDING FOOD:

- We need to develop experience concepts connecting to the promises in our manifesto.
- We need to emphasise on Culinary tourism, connecting to the spirit of New Nordic Kitchen and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.
- We need to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of consumption changes regarding cultural development, climate change and the availability of food.
- We need to emphasise more on the connection between tourism, innovation and food.
- We need more restaurants serving local products.
- We need to connect food producers together to develop new local dishes.
- We need to assist and work closer together with our food clusters in Austurland.

CULTURE & CREATIVITY

While the inhabitants of Austurland are few in number, we have a rich, assorted culture. Local residents have grown up with folktales about elves, trolls, monsters, and ogres, and these stories, along with the spectacular scenery, have shaped us as creative individuals who know what we want.

We have interesting museums whose collections depict everything from the hard struggle for existence in previous centuries to the technological revolution of the twentieth century.

Austurland is busy with many events, all year around. As inhabitants we organize, participate in, and invite visitors to enjoy cultural events that include art exhibitions, theatre productions, concerts, and town festivals.

A considerable amount of cultural centres, art residents, ateliers, workshops and studios are also found in the towns of Austurland. Hús Handanna Icelandic Art & Design shop in Egilsstaðir is an ambitious business venture: a shop originally set up to promote local arts, crafts and design. The shop also includes work of designers from all over Iceland. Local food products are likewise an important and tasty part of the store's selection. Since 2016 the Tourist Info for Austurland has also been located in Hús Handanna.



LungA Art Festival in Seyðisfjörður

Photo: Rhombie Sandóval

NUMBER OF EVENTS & CULTURAL CENTERS:

4 BIGGER MUSIC FESTIVALS

3 ART FESTIVALS

15 LOCAL TOWN FESTIVALS

5 SPORT EVENTS

8 ART RESIDENCIES

7 CULTURAL CENTERS

AND NUMEROUS OF OTHER LOCAL EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

EMPHASES REGARDING CULTURE & CREATIVITY:

- *We need to develop experience concepts connecting to the promises in our manifesto.*
- *We need to encourage cultural collaborations and support sustainable development, by joint efforts for an inclusive, accessible and equal culture that challenges norms and stereotypes, and strengthens individuals' sense of belonging and meaningfulness.*
- *We should keep a strong connection to our heritage, and at the same time welcome new influences.*
- *We need to contribute to a creative spirit characterized by inspiration, sharing, proactive dialogues and highlighting of success stories.*
- *We need to support our companies in creative processes and product development leading to innovative concepts.*
- *We want all parts of the destination to be more unique by adding an extra layer of high quality cultural & creative standards.*
- *We need to involve cultural and creative industries more in our Destination Development.*
- *We need to communicate our local events better, both in Icelandic and English.*
- *We need cultural events to be accessible to our guests.*

TOURIST INFORMATION

Austurland has one general information centre located in Egilsstaðir, offering help and service for our guests when exploring our destination. Furthermore, there are places that provide tourist information on different locations around in Austurland. In total we have 11 places serving as tourist information nodes, where of 6 are open all year.

Tourist information can also be found online through www.east.is or www.austurland.is, or through the municipal destination websites of Austurland.

The Internet is by far the most useful information for tourists to Iceland. ¹⁸

EMPHASES REGARDING TOURIST INFORMATION:

- *We always need to work with our information, to keep it up to date, meaningful and inspiring.*
- *We need to think big and focus on the story of Austurland.*
- *We need to increase and improve our digital presence. As more of hosting is getting digitalized and automated, we need to increase the standard of our tourist information online.*
- *We need to adapt to new technology and consumer behavior. The digitalization also provides us the opportunity to constantly and efficiently refine our offerings, and be able to measure the response. The visitor data can be used for make strategic decisions on marketing campaigns and product development.*

ACCESSIBILITY BY CAR

Many tourists come to our destination by car as they are driving around Iceland. Highway number 1, most commonly referred to as the ring-road around Iceland, goes through Austurland.

In the past years the traffic along the ring road in Austurland has increased from 2016 to 2017 by 16,3 % which is the highest increase of all regions in Iceland. ¹⁹

The driving time to Reykjavík from Egilsstaðir is about 8 hours, approximately the same whether the north or south route is chosen. Akureyri is 3 hours away.

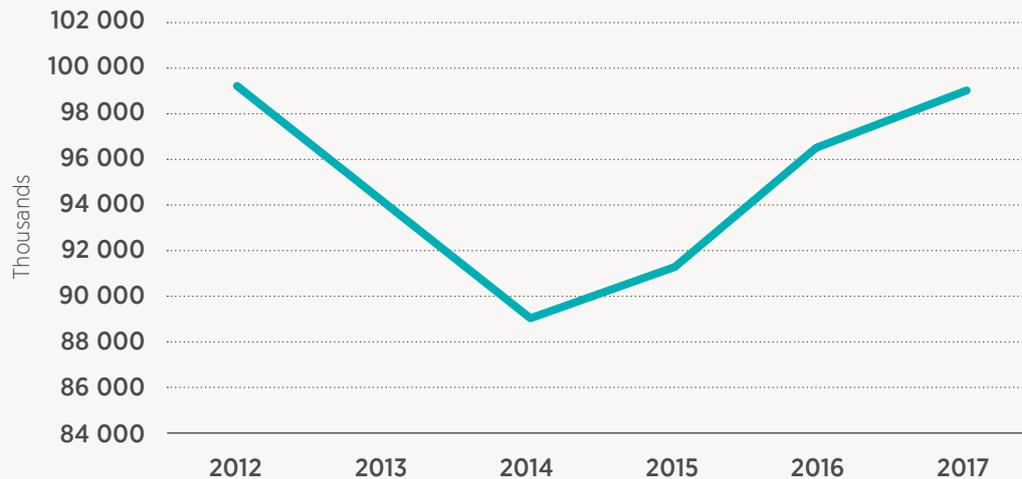
Egilsstaðir is a crossroad. From here there is a wide range of alternatives for touring around and experience Austurland and another close by destinations. Some of Iceland's most popular tourist attractions are located within just a few hours drive. Vatnajökull National Park (1 hour), Mývatn (2 hours), Húsavík (3 hours), Höfn (2,5 hours) and Jökulsárlón (3,5 hours).

ACCESSIBILITY BY AIR

Egilsstaðir International Airport is one of four airports in Iceland which fulfill requirements for international flights. The airport serves as an alternate airport for Keflavik Airport and is open all year around and can safely serve commercial jets.

There are three scheduled flights daily between Egilsstaðir and Reykjavik all year around, with a flying time around 45 minutes. The airport also regularly serves international charter and private flights. The airport is run by Isavia for the state.

PASSENGERS EGILSSTAÐIR AIRPORT BY YEARS ²⁰



EMPHASES REGARDING ACCESSIBILITY BY AIR:

- *We need to focus on developing our destination, and by doing so attract and establish international direct flights to Egilsstaðir Airport.*
- *We need to enhance the recognition of our Destination Austurland Brand at all entrances. This includes our regional airport. The connection to our brand, and our destination design, should be visible in the interior of the entrance hall, at information signs and more.*
- *We need to make it easier to travel to Austurland. This includes eliminating obstacles for travellers to Austurland, by improving the transfer from Keflavík International Airport to Reykjavík Domestic Airport, and further to our destinations.*

ACCESSIBILITY BY BOAT

The ferry MS Norröna sails weekly between Seyðisfjörður, Tórshavn in the Faroe Islands and Hirtshals in Denmark. The ferry transports people, cars and goods by trucks. It has a capacity of 1482 passengers, and space for 800 cars and also cargo. Most of the coastal towns in Austurland have large harbours, serving fishing industries, commercial transports and cruise ships.

Since 2010, cruise ship passengers to Iceland have increased significantly from 72,000 in 2010 to 101,000 in 2016. The mean annual increase has been 7.3% per year. ²¹

The biggest ports for cruise ships in Austurland is Djúpvogur, Eskifjörður and Seyðisfjörður.

AMOUNT OF SHIPS COMING IN AND PASSENGER NUMBERS

| | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2017 | |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Ships | PAX | Ships | PAX | Ships | PAX | Ships | PAX |
| Eskifjörður | 7 | 4 500 | 6 | 4 400 | 3 | 1 700 | 5 | 3 700 |
| Djúpvogur | 1 | 300 | 3 | 600 | 3 | 1 800 | 5 | 3 900 |
| Seyðisfjörður | 9 | 5 600 | 14 | 10 100 | 16 | 14 800 | 18 | 20 100 |

EMPHASES REGARDING ACCESSIBILITY BY BOAT:

- We need to enhance the recognition of our Destination Austurland Brand in the interior of entrance halls, at information signs and more.
- We need to provide better information about Austurland, and be more visible, at the cruise ships, Norröna and harbour areas.
- We need to reflect on the increase of cruise ships, and measure the positive and negative impacts. Evaluate and set up aims for future cruise ship tourism to Austurland.
- We should develop sustainable boat tourism, utilize opportunities for exploring Austurland from the sea and offer more experiences connected to ocean adventures.

TOURIST COMPANIES

In recent years we have seen significant increase of establishing new companies within the tourism industry. It has been a rapid growth of new licensing for companies working within tourism and as well connected to tourism such as restaurants.

In 2016-2017 there were 82 new registrations for accommodations in the area and 22 new registrations for restaurants.

There are in total 35 authorised Travel Agencies and 7 authorised Tour Operators in the whole of Austurland. (*Ferðamálastofa*)

NUMBER OF COMPANIES HOLDING LICENCES PURSUANT TO THE TOURISM ADMINISTRATION ACT:

35 AUTHORISED TRAVEL AGENCIES



7 AUTHORISED TOUR OPERATORS



EMPHASES REGARDING ACCOMMODATIONS:

- *We need to emphasize on the mix of accommodation and that we are meeting the needs of the guests.*
- *We need to make sure that all accommodations are registered legally and have all right permits to be operating.*
- *We need to connect to Airbnb rental owners to work together on marketing for Austurland.*
- *We need to make sure that all hosts are welcoming and have knowledge on the area.*

Accommodations

Guesthouses with private facilities are the most common accommodation type in Austurland.

Hotels are few, but most of them are family run, so they have a strong connection to the region. Only some of the hotels are part of a bigger chain. There is a very big increase in Airbnb and hostels in the area.

There is a gap in the market regarding luxury hotels (5 stars). Only one accommodation place would fall under the category of luxury accommodation, and that is a country resort.

NUMBER OF ACCOMMODATIONS: ²²

20 HOTELS

48 GUEST HOUSES

26 COTTAGES

11 HOSTELS

174 ACTIVE AIRBNB RENTALS

3 LODGES

32 CAMPSITES

Destination Projects

Following maps show popular destinations within Austurland, ongoing projects within municipalities, and places that may have potential for development.

The ongoing projects are partly or fully funded, while priority projects are either without funding or partly funded.

This list is processed together with the municipalities of Austurland, and gives a clear picture of the development in the area. The listed projects are based within the municipalities. Private projects are not part of the list.

POPULAR DESTINATIONS

Vopnafjörður

1. HELLISHEIÐI
2. BUSTARFELL
3. SELÁRLAUG
4. SKJÓLFJÖRUR
5. FUGLABJARGANES

Fljótsdalshérað

6. SÆNAUTASEL
7. MÖÐRUDALUR
8. LAGARFLJOT LAKE
9. STÓRURÐ
10. HALLORMSSTAÐUR FOREST

Fjarðabyggð

11. KLIFBREKKUFOSSAR
12. AVALANCHE BARRIERS
13. EASTER CAVE (PÁSKAHELLIR)
14. HELGUSTADIR SPAR MINE
15. PETRA'S STONE COLLECTION
16. MELERY BLACK BEACH

Djúpivogur

17. TEIGARHORN
18. PAPEY
19. EGGS OF THE MERRY BAY
20. ÖXI MOUNTAIN ROAD
21. DJÚPIVOGUR BLACK BEACH

Fljótsdalur

22. SNÆFELL - VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK
23. LAUGARFELL HOT SPRINGS
24. WILDERNESS CENTER
25. SKRÍÐUKLAUSTUR
26. HENGIFOSS

Seyðisfjörður

27. SKÁLANES
28. TVÍSÖNGUR SOUND SCULPTURE
29. SKAFTFELL - CENTER FOR VISUAL ART
30. RAINBOW STREET (NORÐURGATA)

Borgarfjörður Eystri

31. HAFNARHÓLMI
32. LINDARBAKKI
33. ÁLFABORG (ELF CITY)
34. VÍKNASLÓÐIR TRAILS
35. NJARÐVÍKURSKRÍÐUR (ROAD)

POPULAR DESTINATIONS



ONGOING PROJECTS

Fljótsdalshérað

1. STAPAVÍK
2. SELSKOGUR & EYVINDARÁRGIL
3. FJARÐARHEIDI REST STOP

Fjarðabyggð

4. SAXA
5. STREITISHVARF LIGHTHOUSE
6. HÓLMANES

Fljótsdalur

7. HENGIFOSS SERVICE HOUSE

Seyðisfjörður

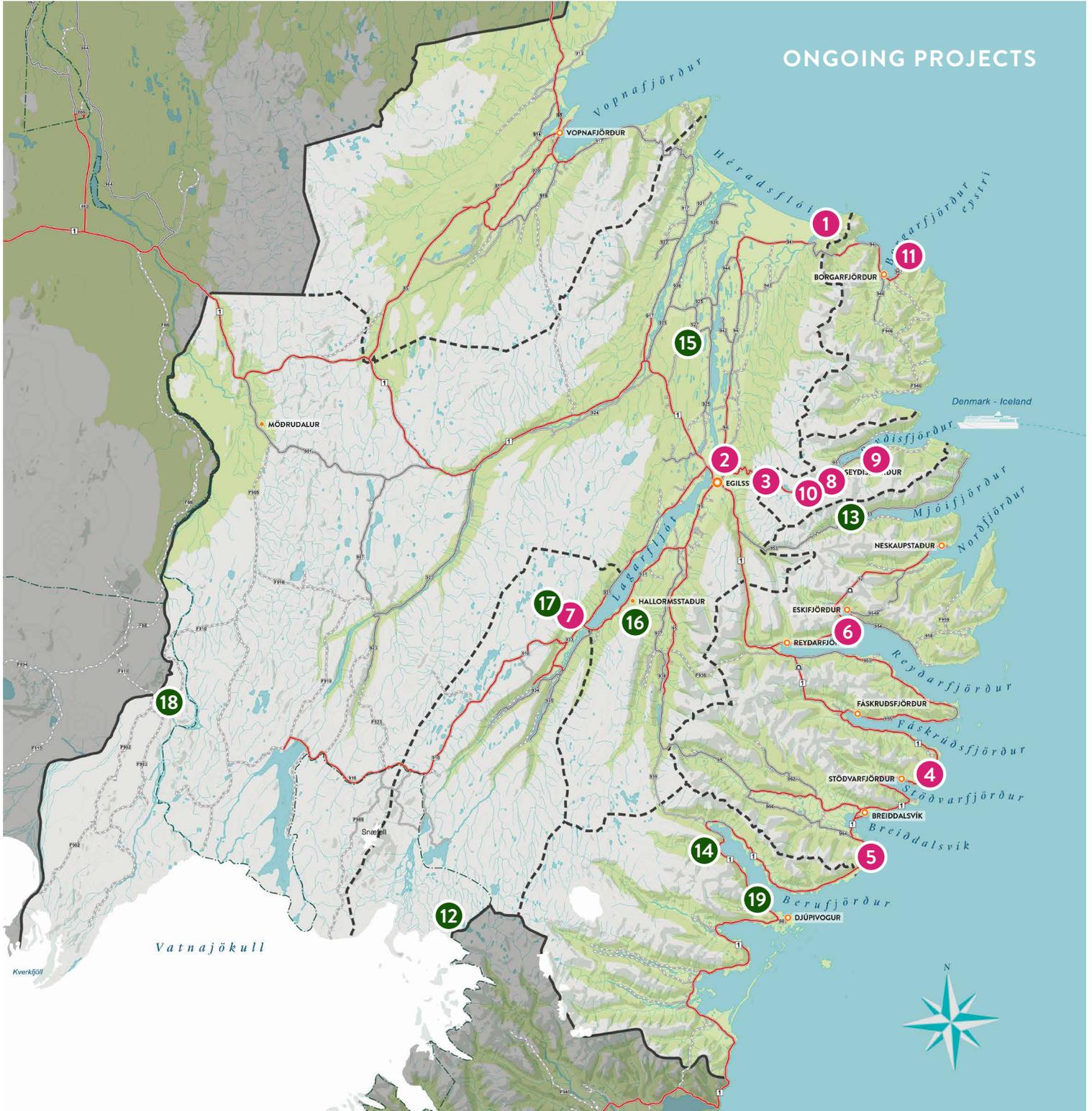
8. GUFUFOSS
9. TVÍSÖNGUR HIKING
10. NEDRI STAFUR REST STOP

Borgarfjörður Eystri

11. HAFNARHÓLMI

Landsáætlun projects

12. BLANDA VIÐ GELDINGAFELL
13. FJÁRBORG Í MJÓAFIRÐI
14. FOSSÁRDALUR
15. GALTASTADIR FRAM
16. HALLORMSTADARSKÓGUR
17. HENGIFOSS
18. KREPPUTUNGA
19. TEIGARHORN



ONGOING PROJECTS

POTENTIAL PLACES

Vopnafjörður

1. HOFSKIRKJA
2. BÖÐVARSDALUR

Fljótsdalshérað

3. HUSEY
4. YTRI RJÚKANDI
5. HAFRAHVAMMAGLJUFUR
6. LAUGARVELLIR
7. KÁRAHNJÚKAR
8. KVERKFJÖLL

Fjarðabyggð

9. KLIFBREKKUFOSSAR
10. GEITHÚSÁRGIL
11. FRENCH GRAVEYARD
12. FLÖGUFOSS

Fljótsdalur

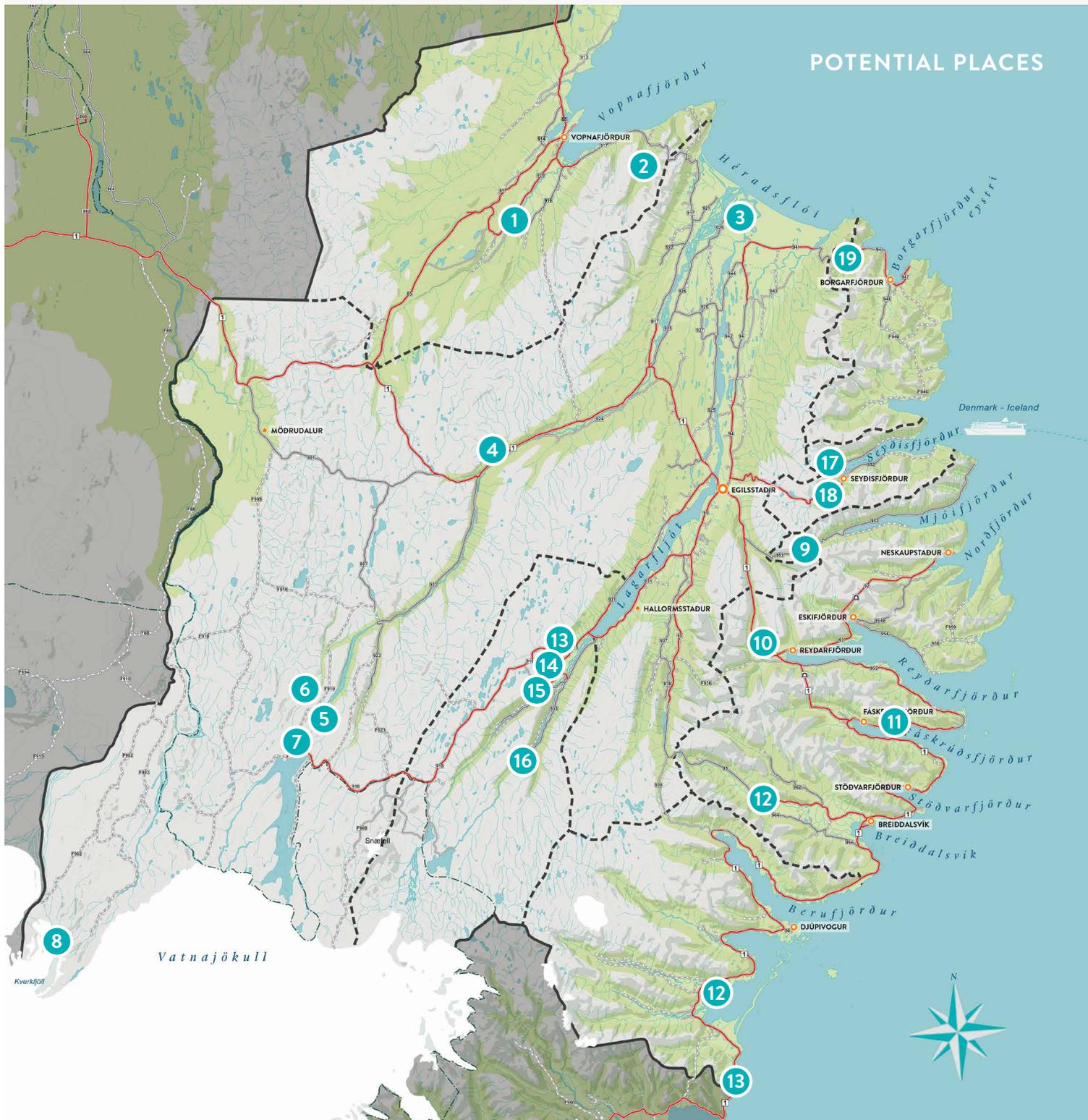
13. BESSASTAÐAÁRGIL
14. VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK / SNÆFELLSSTOFA
15. VALÞJÓFSSTAÐARKIRKJA
16. STRÚTSFOSS

Seyðisfjörður

17. VESTURDALUR
18. FJARÐARSELVIRKJUN

Borgarfjörður Eystri

19. INNRA-HVANNAGIL



Market Assessment

Increase of tourism globally

Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world.²³

Tourism has boasted virtually uninterrupted growth over time, despite occasional shocks, demonstrating the sector's strength and resilience. International tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million globally in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1,235 million in 2016.

International tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to increase by 3.3% a year between 2010 and 2030 to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, according to UNWTO's long-term forecast report *Tourism Towards 2030*.

The increase of tourism to Iceland

The number of foreign visitors to Iceland has nearly quadrupled since 2010 until 2016. The average yearly growth rate has been 24.4% since 2010. The biggest increase was from 2015 to 2016, or 39%²⁴

Moreover, as the numbers show, the increase in tourism continues. Departures of foreign passengers from Iceland through Keflavík International Airport were 2,2 million in the year 2017. This is an increase of 24.2% from 2016.²⁵

When divided by nationality, US and UK citizens are by far the most numerous with 41% of the total number of departures, followed by Germans (7.1%), Canadians (4.7%) and the French (4.6%).

All the seasons showed an increase in departures of foreign passengers between the years 2016 and 2017. The share of winter tourism increased in all marketing zones except in the Nordic countries. This is similar to the trend seen in recent years towards less fluctuation in tourism between seasons.

The growth of Icelandic tourism sector

The growth of the tourist sector and its development, entail great opportunities for the community to increase prosperity and positive regional development. Tourism has played a major role in Iceland's economic growth in recent years and at the same time created thousands of new jobs.²⁶

Since 2012, the number of employees in tourism-related sectors has increased yearly by more than 60%. The total number of people employed in tourism-related sectors was 19,500 in January 2016, or the month the fewest were employed, and 28,900 in August 2016, when the most were employed. Tourism's share of foreign exchange earnings has grown from 23.7% to 39.2% between 2012-2016 according to measurements on the export of goods and services.²⁷

Market Assessment for Austurland

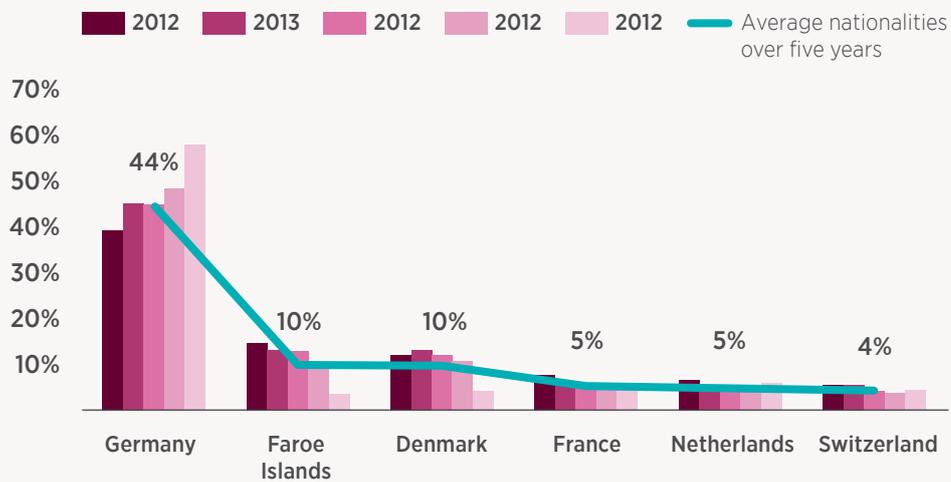
Germany, USA and France are the three biggest markets for Austurland.

When doing an assessment of the markets interested of visiting Austurland it is important to look at the arrivals at all accommodation types, and as well arrivals from the ferry coming to Seyðisfjörður.

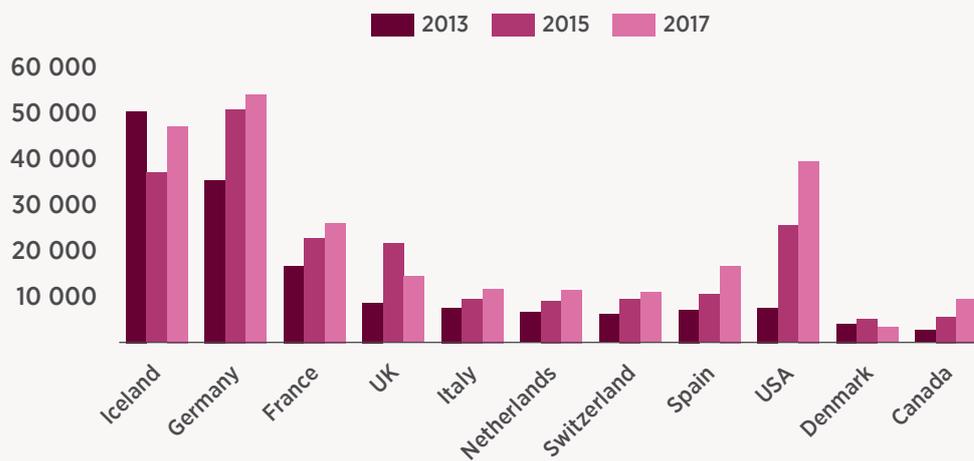
Germany is our biggest market, and as can be seen from the monitoring, a large part of the visitors from Germany take the ferry to Seyðisfjörður.

When looking into nationality of the guest nights in Austurland, we can see that the domestic market is very important for the accommodations. The biggest foreign markets are Germany, France, USA, UK and Spain.

SMYRIL LINE FERRY TO SEYÐISFJÖRÐUR PASSENGERS AFTER NATIONALITY



ARRIVALS IN ALL REGISTERED ACCOMMODATIONS AFTER NATIONALITY ²⁸



MAIN MARKETS AND TRENDS

GERMANY

Germans visit Austurland mainly during the summer, and autumn is growing as well. During 2017 Austurland had 54,000 German guest arrivals, of which about 75% during the summer.

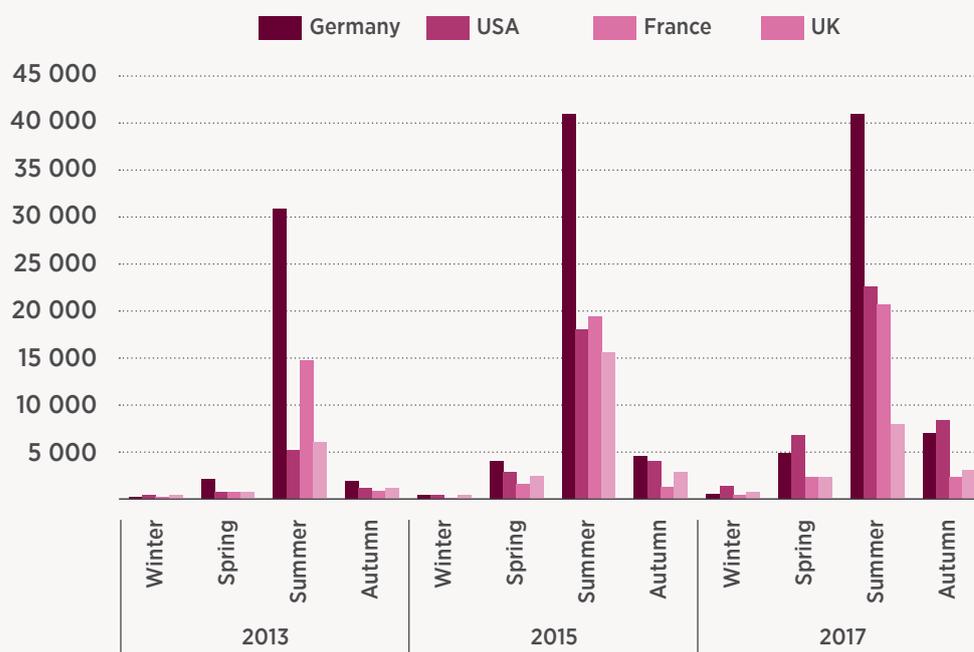
USA

The USA market is the fastest growing market in Austurland and is increasing during all seasons between the years. The highest relative increase can be seen during low season (September-April).

FRANCE

The French market has been steadily growing in the past years. As seen on in the following chart Austurland distinguishes from Iceland in total from having an increase of French tourists over the summer period. Otherwise, there are similarities in the trend compared to Iceland in total.

MAIN FOREIGN MARKETS AFTER SEASONS ²⁹



EMPHASES REGARDING MARKET ASSESSMENT:

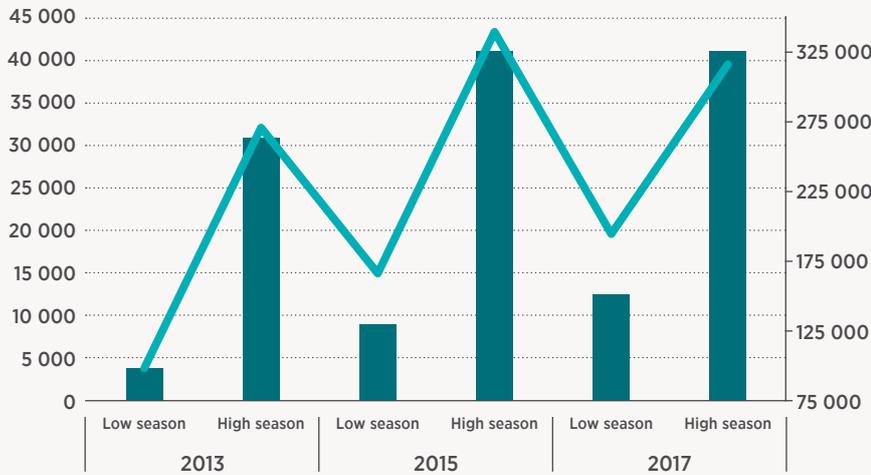
- We need to follow data carefully and spot changes that occur with new emerging markets.
- We need to be open for adjustment in Austurland to offer a variety of accommodation possibilities to meet the demands of guests.
- We need to connect the data to the marketing plan of Austurland to be reaching out to the right markets.

GUEST ARRIVALS FROM 2013 TO 2017:

By analysing each market after seasons, we can see the trends and compare towards the numbers for Iceland in total.

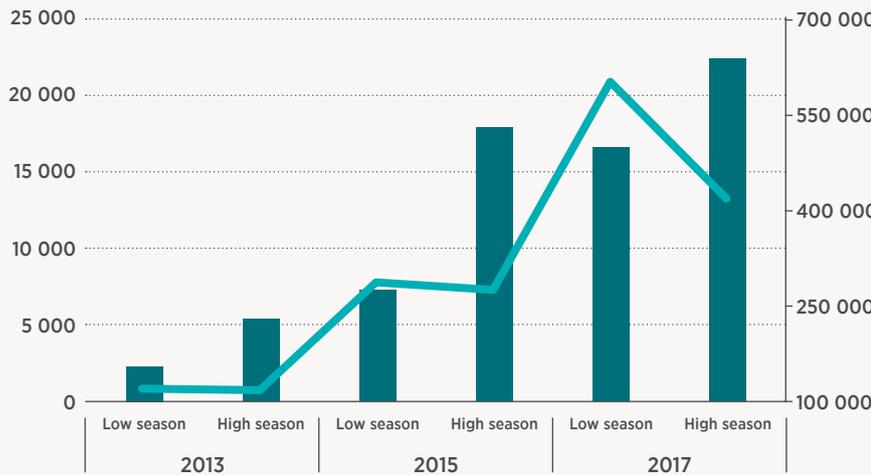
Austurland **Iceland**

GERMAN ARRIVALS TO ALL TYPES OF REGISTRED ACCOMMODATIONS - AUSTURLAND VS ICELAND ³⁰



- +200%** arrivals to Austurland during low season
- +95%** arrivals to Iceland during low season
- +32%** arrivals to Austurland during high season
- +16%** arrivals to Iceland during high season
- +52%** arrivals to Austurland
- +37%** arrivals to Iceland

US ARRIVALS TO ALL TYPES OF REGISTRED ACCOMMODATIONS - AUSTURLAND VS ICELAND ³¹



- +634%** arrivals to Austurland during low season
- +412%** arrivals to Iceland during low season
- +322%** arrivals to Austurland during high season
- +255%** arrivals to Iceland during high season
- +415%** arrivals to Austurland
- +334%** arrivals to Iceland

FRENCH ARRIVALS TO ALL TYPES OF REGISTRED ACCOMMODATIONS - AUSTURLAND VS ICELAND ³²



- +159%** arrivals to Austurland during low season
- +138%** arrivals to Iceland during low season
- +40%** arrivals to Austurland during high season
- +1%** arrivals to Iceland during high season
- +55%** arrivals to Austurland
- +30%** arrivals to Iceland

Image & Market Appeal

In the recent years, Austurland has made extensive efforts in organizing our Destination Planning within the initiative Áfangastaðurinn Austurland. Within this work, it has also been included in strengthening our Brand Image and Market Appeal.

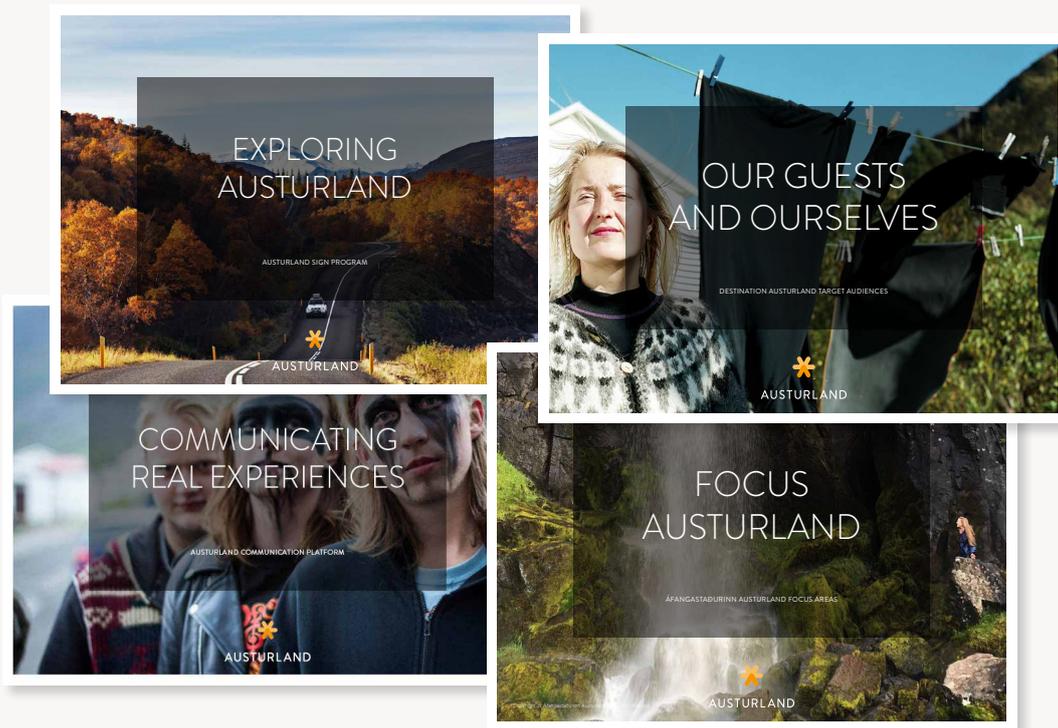
Our Brand Platform for Austurland was developed through an involving process where all the stakeholders and residents were invited to take part. It is based in research through a series of meetings, workshops, and interviews. Furthermore, an extensive business intelligence analysis and benchmarking was made, and surveys are reaching out to both visitors and residents.

Our Brand Platform should be always the starting-point when communicating as part of Austurland. It serves as a guide for positioning Austurland, and for developing all of our content.

From our Brand Platform, a visual identity has been developed for Austurland. We have also set up tools for our communication, the tone of voice, photo language and design program for signs. Furthermore, we have formed a service agenda that is helping us to improve our hostmanship, we have developed a destination web page, produced promotion and communication material and more.



Our Brand Platform



Austurland toolboxes and guidelines are available through the Destination Mangement Organization and austurland.is

EMPHASES REGARDING MARKET ASSESSMENT:

- *We need to build a stronger sense of a place. Although great efforts have been done in improving our Destination Brand and attractiveness, we need to step up to build a stronger sense of a place and recognition of Austurland. This must be done in close connection to our DMP and Austurland DMO.*
- *We need to enhance the strategic collaboration locally, regionally and nationally within the framework that we have set up. We need to work more efficient and professional at all levels; strategic, tactical and operational.*
- *We need to produce content and promotion that is stronger and of higher quality. There is today a gap between the national branding and the regional branding. Iceland nationally makes significant and highly professional marketing efforts for nation branding, putting Iceland on the world map. However, there is a gap in quality down to the regional level. We have become better in Austurland, but we need more resources to make further amendments. We need to be able to use the existing marketing channels and frameworks on the national level. As we see it, the local destinations and companies within our destination are promoted through Austurland, as Austurland should be promoted through Iceland.*

Destination Performance

One of the priorities in professional and strategic Destination Management is the assessment and evaluation of our Destination Performance.

To assess our Destination Performance, first of all we need to decide what to monitor and measure, and set quantifiable targets.

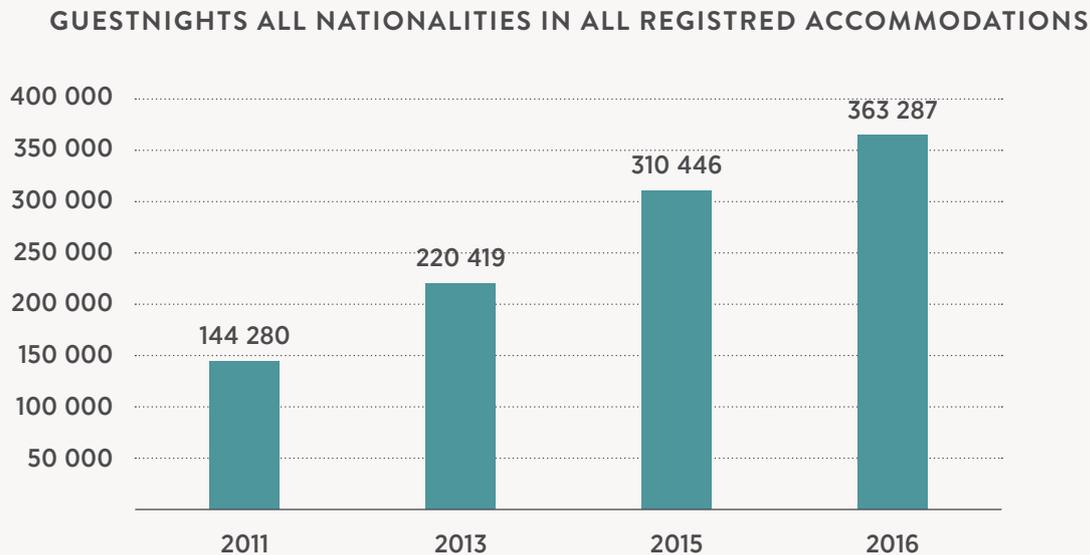
Information on number of staff is lacking, therefore it is hard to conclude development of manpower and salaries.³³

We are also lacking numbers on revenue from tourism, divided into different sub-categories. This information would enable us to better understand and evaluate efforts for growing the revenue from tourism.

The estimated contribution of tourism to the whole economy of Austurland is around 1,2 billion ISK. This is much lower than other industries such as fisheries and aluminium which is around 14 billion ISK together.³⁴

GUEST NIGHTS

Following graph shows numbers of guest nights of all nationalities in all registered accommodation types since 2011. Take notice that there are many unregistered accommodations that are not visible in the statistics.



OCCUPANCY

Following graph shows that the occupancy rate for Austurland is highest during July and August. Then it falls again in October and does not start increasing until May. The occupancy rate is also significantly lower in Austurland compared to other regions in Iceland. ³⁵

| | Capital Region | | Reykjanes Peninsula | | West Iceland Westfjords | | North Iceland | | Austurland East Iceland | | South Iceland | |
|-------|----------------|------|---------------------|------|-------------------------|------|---------------|------|-------------------------|------|---------------|------|
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 |
| J | 73 | 72 | 37 | 40 | 25 | 16 | 18 | 17 | 6 | 7 | 20 | 24 |
| F | 88 | 92 | 60 | 59 | 32 | 31 | 26 | 27 | 12 | 13 | 39 | 49 |
| M | 85 | 89 | 62 | 67 | 32 | 37 | 25 | 35 | 20 | 16 | 45 | 56 |
| A | 70 | 73 | 55 | 55 | 26 | 34 | 30 | 49 | 20 | 26 | 33 | 43 |
| M | 75 | 79 | 72 | 51 | 43 | 45 | 41 | 45 | 37 | 40 | 45 | 53 |
| J | 81 | 88 | 84 | 86 | 72 | 74 | 64 | 70 | 70 | 73 | 72 | 74 |
| J | 90 | 94 | 88 | 98 | 87 | 87 | 79 | 88 | 90 | 84 | 90 | 89 |
| A | 86 | 93 | 82 | 97 | 76 | 82 | 76 | 89 | 87 | 84 | 82 | 87 |
| S | 74 | 85 | 70 | 93 | 55 | 61 | 55 | 72 | 51 | 58 | 59 | 66 |
| O | 77 | 86 | 61 | 87 | 34 | 36 | 32 | 47 | 26 | 26 | 48 | 62 |
| N | 76 | 91 | 44 | 74 | 24 | 35 | 24 | 27 | 12 | 14 | 32 | 48 |
| D | 66 | 85 | 39 | 66 | 13 | 22 | 14 | 16 | 7 | 8 | 26 | 50 |
| TOTAL | 78 | 86 | 63 | 73 | 43 | 47 | 40 | 49 | 37 | 38 | 49 | 59 |

| | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| >75% utilisation | 50-74% utilisation | 25-49% utilisation | <24% utilisation |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|

EXPENDITURE

In a recent research made by Rannsóknarmiðstöð Ferðamála and Háskóli Íslands numbers are showing following average expenditure per day:

4.334 kr for Seyðisfjörður ³⁶

8.311 kr for Egilsstaðir ³⁷

Tourism Impact Assessment

Attitude surveys

Attitude surveys were conducted in 2015 and 2017 among the inhabitants of Austurland, where the views on tourism and the destination were being monitored. Around 900 answers were acquired in each survey, distributed equally by towns in the area.

In general, the answers showed that residents feel that tourism has a positive impact on their lives. Although, there are indications of an indifferent attitude towards tourism in communities where other industries, as fisheries and aluminium, are dominating.

Following are some of the questions and answers from the surveys:

Is tourism an important business sector in Austurland?

The smaller towns seem to feel tourism is a very important business sector for the area while the bigger towns with strong dominating industries feel it is less important.

Is tourism a profitable business sector for Austurland?

There is quite a large percent of the respondents that do not agree that tourism is a profitable sector in the communities where fisheries and aluminium are dominant.

Has tourism a positive effect on Austurland in general?

The interesting data here is that in general all communities agree on that tourism increase the life quality for the area. As well in the areas where the strong industries are dominant. Therefore, even though they do not consider tourism an important business sector they still feel it increases the life quality in the region.

Has tourism a positive effect on my life as a resident in Austurland?

The numbers here are interesting since only the respondents from one community is stating that it has a positive effect on their lives. Respondents from other communities mention that it has a negative impact for themselves.

Impacts on municipalities

In an interview with all municipalities following topics and discussions came up.

Positive impacts from tourism

- More restaurant options and services.
- Opening hours have increased.
- Increased awareness of the importance of building up good facilities.
- Increase in job opportunities.
- Start up opportunities.
- More diversity in daily life.
- With increasing projects in the area the self-esteem and local identity strengthens.

Negative impacts from tourism

- Pressure on nature and hygienity of the area.
- Increased traffic, not enough rest stops.
- Guests stopping around farms to feed horses.
- Guests have sometimes been “caught” camping or parking their camper-vans outside marked areas for camping.
- Locals discontent with some aspects of this rising industry.
- Decreased road-safety where ring road 1 is crossing towns.
- Cruise ships passengers that come in bus-loads in short time change the atmosphere.
- Roads are being damaged by increased traffic to small towns and it takes long time for government to react.

Tourism has in general had positive impacts on the region, with variety of new jobs and opportunities for the locals to explore the area. The negative impacts are more connected to the infrastructure not coping with the amount of visitors at certain areas. Mostly it is connected to smaller towns where traffic of busses is heavy over the high season.

There is a link between all towns, that people complain over trash and auto campers parking in non camping areas ruining the soil and ground. There is lack of national law regarding auto campers in Iceland.



POSITIVE IMPACTS FROM TOURISM

More restaurant options and services.

Opening hours have increased.

Increased awareness of the importance of building up good facilities.

Increase in job opportunities.

Start up opportunities.

More diversity in daily life.

With increasing projects in the area the self-esteem and local identity strengthens.



NEGATIVE IMPACTS FROM TOURISM

Pressure on nature and hygiene of the area.

Increased traffic, not enough rest stops.

Guests stopping around farms to feed horses.

Guests have sometimes been “caught” camping or parking their camper-vans outside marked areas for camping.

Locals discontent with some aspects of this rising industry.

Decreased road-safety where ring road 1 is crossing towns.

Cruise ships passengers that come in bus-loads in short time change the atmosphere.

Roads are being damaged by increased traffic to small towns and it takes long time for government to react.

Policy & Market Context

National and Regional perspective

Austurland DMO will ensure, not only further development but also a long-term sustainable approach in connection to regional and national aspects. Austurland DMO fully supports the national strategy set in Road Map for Tourism in Iceland from 2015 and as well the regional strategy plan for Austurland 2015-2019 (Sóknaráætlun).

Alignment to other strategies

In all framework of Austurland DMO, it is crucial to have a clear goal to strive to be responsible for all actions and plans.

The key to aligning strategies between stakeholders is having a robust organizational framework such as DMO where strategy is clear and where the external environment easily can adapt.

Austurland DMO is connecting to various strategies and plans worldwide, national, regional and local. By having strong communication and to follow up with annual reports, the linkage to different platforms will be more agile and sustainable.

National perspective

Austurland is fully supporting the seven focal points for 2015-2020, set in the Road Map for Tourism in Iceland. That is to build up a firm foundation for Destination Management emphasizing on the following objectives:

- A better coordinated management of tourism with a holistic approach
- Enhance positive visitor experiences from hospitality, quality, service and more
- Provide more reliable data from intense research of the tourist sector
- Ensure an efficient nature conservation in synergy with tourism
- Enhance skills and quality awareness within the tourism industry
- Increase profitability from tourism based on realistic targets
- Increase distribution of tourists season-wise and geographically

Regional development

The Strategy for Austurland 2015-2019 defines the objectives and the action plan for the regional development. Following visions has been set up for the future Austurland:

- Innovations, entrepreneurs and existing companies should be supported.
- Austurland will have a vigorous and diverse culture life, that enriches people's life quality.
- Education level in Austurland will be comparable to other regions, and educational offerings and services will increase. Active cooperation between education, culture and innovation that strengthens entrepreneurship and creative industries.
- Austurland is an interesting option for young people to live and work.
- The quality of life has been further reinforced.
- We are taking care of our children and young people, and ensure that they have good memories from their childhood in their town.
- Transportation will be better between towns, within the region, and to the region by air, road and boat.
- Growth, innovation, quality and cooperation will be characteristic elements of the cultural sectors in the region.
- Regional cultural centers will be developed and strengthened.
- Art education of children and youth will be strengthened as part of both formal and non-formal education.
- There will be more artists active in the region.
- Art and design will be regional core values. Building on economic and cultural policies.
- Austurland will be known as a tourist destination with a strong infrastructure and quality of service closely connected to human life, nature, culture and products of the region.
- It will be important to use resources locally. Quality conscious, knowledge in sustainability, environmental awareness and service are key factors for supporting the community development.
- We will work with innovation centers in the region to in order to increase effectiveness and promote progress.
- The marketing will be strong, and tell about the many available opportunities in Austurland
- Research will be increased on diverse fields.

Transport

Austurland like other regions in Iceland is highly affected by the offer of air travel to and from Iceland. New destinations offered by the two Icelandic airlines Icelandair and Wow can change the composition of nationalities coming to Iceland as well as increase interest in the destination from airlines from other countries.

World Tourism Organization predicts a steady increase in tourism worldwide and in that prediction Asia and the Pacific markets are expected to be the fastest growing market in coming years in addition to further growth of the European market. Wow air is aiming to start direct flights to Asia during 2018.

Austurland is far away from the main airport in Iceland, Keflavík, and the change in the type of travellers visiting Iceland can greatly affect the number of travellers to Austurland. Travellers on short holiday in Iceland are less

likely to travel to our region because of distance and associated cost and the exchange rate of the Icelandic Krona is a contributing factor in that regard. Also the accessibility to the domestic airport and the connection to Austurland through domestic flights, is of crucial importance.

The global trend of travellers managing their own bookings instead of using agents can also impact our region and gives importance to online visibility of Austurland. The image that Iceland is battling over tourism can greatly affect a region like Austurland which is still a very seasonal destination.

If direct flights would develop to Egilsstaðir international airport that could change the tourism environment in Austurland significantly by reducing the time for travellers to reach our region.



Photo: Þórnállur Pálsson

SWOT Analysis

The following SWOT-analysis is made from workshops with stakeholders in Austurland. The SWOT-analysis provide a deeper insight of the total image of the destination, and a hint of strengths and opportunities for development. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Since we are focusing on both visitors and residents we chose to make one SWOT-analysis from the visitor perspective, and one from the everyday life of the people who live and work in the region.

Job opportunities are one important trigger for attracting new residents to Austurland, and the tourism sector is offering new and more job vacancies. The ability to get new friends and feeling welcomed in the community is highlighted as important for a positive feeling for new residents.

From the residential perspective, the quality of life is being mentioned as one of the strengths. The bonds to Austurland are in general very strong among the locals; living in close relation to the nature and appreciating time together with their families.

SWOT ANALYSIS RESIDENT PERSPECTIVE

Time for family

Simple life

Affordable living

Living close to beautiful nature

Quiet

Small communities

Supply of service low

Opening hours

Isolation during winter

Travel expenses

S

W

O

T



Create job opportunities within creative industries and tourism

Be more open minded towards new residents

Encourage Austurland to stand together

Ability to combine work and leisure

Narrow variety of job opportunities

The industry is single-minded and is underestimating the potential of tourism

Unsustainable tourism

Tearing on landscape

The contact with people and nature based experiences are highlighted as best memories for visitors to Austurland. Austurland is for many visitors to Iceland a less known region, furthest away from the capital area. The isolated and rural areas of Austurland are unique. We can offer real untouched nature and wildlife, genuine cultural heritage and the less travelled roads. In Austurland it is easy to be alone in nature and get access to tranquil and soulful experiences.

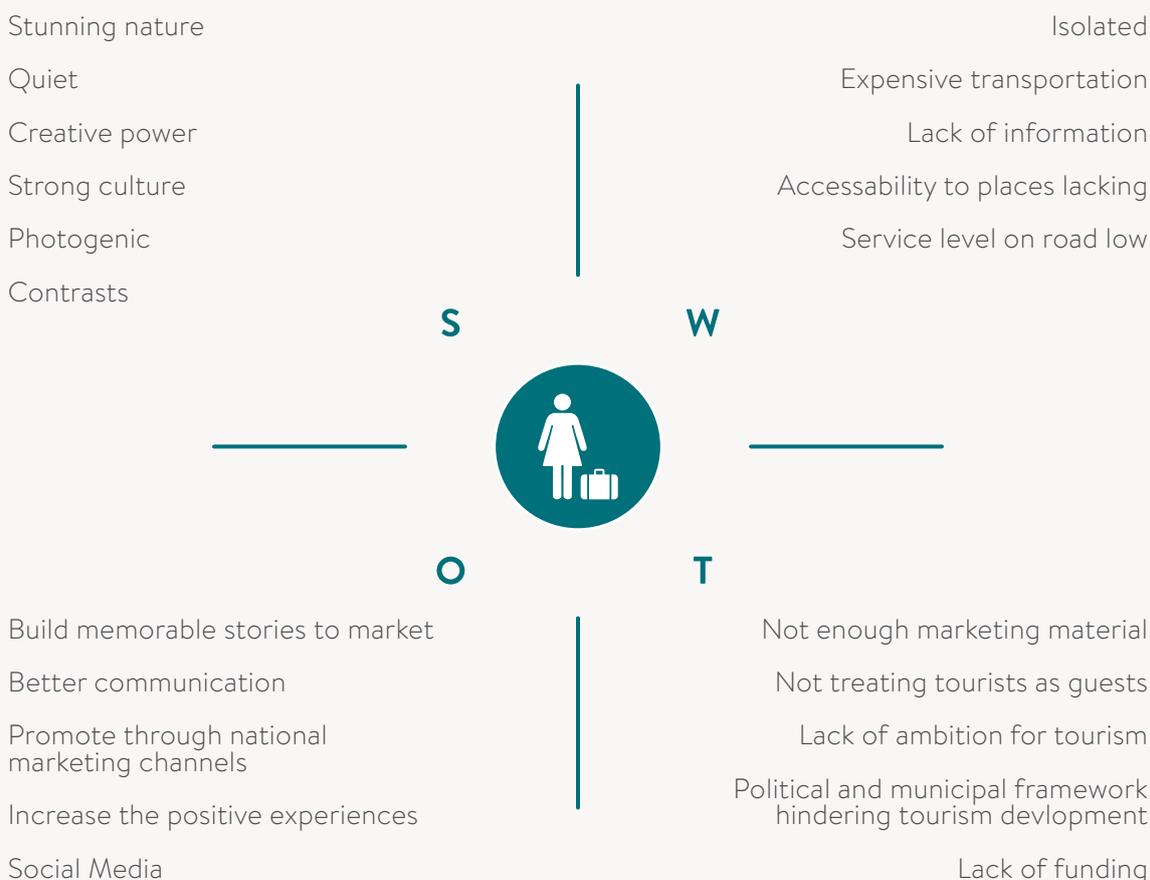
Austurland has big opportunities to attract more visitors. In order to do so we need to develop our destination more to be able to create the kind of tourism we want. At the same time we can do it in the right way, to find ways forward in line with a sustainable development taking into account natural and cultural preservation.

We also need to improve the communication about Austurland. Both how we market ourselves in a more professional way, but also ensure that we are being told about through the national and international communication platforms.

However, we can not only work with marketing without being able to stand up to deliver on the stories we are building. The service factor can sometimes be lacking, and needs attention during the development of our destination.

Most important is also to improve the travelling for our guests. The transportation is today expensive, both for our residents and for our guests. We must make Austurland more accessible.

SWOT ANALYSIS VISITOR PERSPECTIVE



Gap Analysis

We need to become better in monitoring the impact from tourism and making assessments of our destination performance. As it is now, we are lacking in measuring our progress, and do not have the full understanding of how the visitor economy within our region is doing.

We need to systematically collect data and make situation assessments. We need to organize the monitoring and follow the development over time. This will also help us to understand, where and what kind of efforts is needed within our Destination Development.

In general we need to monitor visitor numbers, revenue and satisfaction. From this we will be able to get market insights, and enhance our products, services and destination to attract the visitors, and the kind of tourism, that we want to have.

Plan for data collection

Following data collection is important to the regional development. It is not necessary to collect everything annually but it is important to keep with the plan and produce annual reports with results pinpointing interesting factors. The one marked is currently not available.

| DATA | DATA AVAILABILITY | WHEN TO COLLECT | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Guest numbers | Hagstofa | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Attitude survey locals | Austurbrú | | X | | X | | X |
| Attitude survey guests | Austurbrú | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Number of businesses | Austurbrú | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Accommodations | | X | | | X | | |
| Restaurants | | | X | | X | | X |
| Transport | | X | | | X | | |
| Activites | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Quality of businesses | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Employee numbers | Fyrirtækin/RSK/VMST | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Local activities businesses turnover | | | | | | | |
| Local businesses turnover | | | | | | | |
| Traffic numbers | Vegagerðin | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Card turnover | Valitor | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Visitor numbers at popular tourist attractions | Municipalities | X | X | X | X | X | X |

Challenges

Our challenges

In spite of recent tourism boom in Iceland, the visitor economy of Austurland is highly seasonal, with the summer period from July to September accounting for 85.3% of total guest nights in Iceland in the summer 2016.³⁸ This is leading to cash flow problems for businesses and difficulties in attracting new investments, such as new hotels and accommodation compared to elsewhere in Iceland.

External factors such as strong currency, and Brexit will affect Austurland since there is a trend in travellers

shortening their tours to Iceland resulting in them not being able to come to the regions furthest away from the capital area.

Main challenges

Following challenges were gathered via quantitative analysis with stakeholders.

Those reflect on negative impacts from tourism and as well challenges. There is still too much changes between seasons in the region in terms of overnight stays.

| MUNICIPALITIES | BUSINESSES IN TOURISM |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general lack of insight into tourism • Funding for ongoing projects • Lack of housing for residents • Damaged infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roads such as to Borgarfjörður Eystri where traffic has increased a lot every year with an average of 130 car per day all year around.³⁹ • Money not coming in from government in connection to hotel stays | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much changes between seasonality • Staffing • Housing for staff • Considered to be a cold area in connection to funding • Many small companies • Airbnb under the radar • Too much pressure on days when cruise ships are in town. That has an impact on other guests that feel it does not feel authentic • Lack of international flights via Egilsstaðir airport • Lack of drive to get international flights to the area when the airport is run by the government |

EMPHASES REGARDING CHALLENGES:

- *Austurland has all the right natural assets, but needs to take full advantage of them and become a sustainable all year around destination. In order to achieve this we need to work more professional with strategic Destination Management and development.*

Our Vision

Our vision for Austurland is to continue develop the destination from the strategy that we have set within the initiative Áfangastaðurinn Austurland.

We need to refine our range of tourism offerings and create new experience concepts all year around. We also need to emphasize on increasing the quality and ensure a strong value chain in every detail, following our aims that we have set up for our focus areas.

It has always been a central matter for the initiative, to achieve a Destination Development as widely based as possible among the people in Austurland. The aim is to establish an ongoing Destination Development owned by all stakeholders together. A key for this to happen is to run the Destination Development as an involving process, with the ambition to reach out to everyone in Austurland. The more ambassadors we are, the stronger we become. We share the same vision, and we move together in the same direction.

We need to continue on our path. With open meetings where we invite all stakeholders to take part in the Destination Development. With this DMP we also obtain enhanced understanding where we are, and where to we aim to. We will set up measurable targets and evaluate how we are doing as a destination.

In order to work more professional, we need to establish and secure the function of our Destination Management Organization. In three years time, our vision is that Austurland DMO has grown strong. We will be better equipped to support companies who are operating within tourism in the region, to monitor the progress and to set new strategic aims for development of our destination.

Local, Regional & National Plans

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland fully supports the national strategy set in *Vegvísir í ferðaþjónustu (Road Map for Tourism in Iceland 2015-2020)* from 2015. Our aim is the same; to build up a firm foundation for our Destination Management. ⁴⁰

Áfangastaðurinn Austurland is also also built upon the regional strategy for Austurland 2015-2019. The vision for the region is to be an exemplary society with a robust and diverse economy and cultural sector. A community, built on a strong welfare and characterized by solidarity, trust and a strong network within and outside the region.

It is good to live in Austurland, and people experience a balance between professional and personal life. The vision describes Austurland to be a known tourist destination that has a strong infrastructure and quality of service closely connected to human life, nature, culture and products of the region. ⁴¹

This is in line with the core of our Áfangastaðurinn Austurland initiative, focusing on well-being of communities and residents and developing the region to attract visitors, residents, companies and investments.

Strategic Aims



COLLABORATION BEYOND BORDERS

Throughout the initiative Áfangastaðurinn Austurland it has been an involving process where all stakeholders together have set the strategic aims for our destination. Among the topics, the collaboration between towns and municipalities has been a central point. Keywords that has come up is trust and willingness to work together. We need to have a shared vision where we see the shared benefits for the whole of Austurland, and not only within our own borders. We need to think about the whole of Austurland, no matter if we are a municipality, a company or an individual active in the region. Our guests don't care about the borders, so why should we?

Within the concept of collaboration beyond borders, there is a need for openness,

understanding and connection to the whole picture. We can not only look at our own turf, but must see our connection to the value chain that we are all part of. And we need to help each other to improve. As said before, the value chain is not stronger than its' weakest link. We need to share knowledge and when we are making progress, we should cheer on each other. If one part of our destination is improving, so is the whole of Austurland. The same goes with the whole of Iceland, and the collaboration between regions.

It has been discussed that a joint platform is needed to encourage and implement successful cooperation, with a realistic approach to community building and collaboration between stakeholders. This is becoming true with Austurland DMO.



KEEP TO OUR ROOTS

At the same time as we talk about the vision for developing our destination, strong voices have been heard throughout the process to keep on to who we are and our own values of Austurland. A central word is to be sustainable. This must not be confused as being conservative or stagnated. In contrast, it is about Destination Development where we focus on, not only the prosperity of tourism, but also about improving the life quality of residents and accentuate, remain and refine the character of our Austurland culture and lifestyle.

We also welcome new technologies as digitalization. We need to be in the frontline and adapt to new needs, travel patterns and lifestyles.

Keywords that has come up is authentic and personal tourism. It has also been discussed that the term of 'tourists' should be more thought of

as our guests or temporary locals. This means that people who choose to come to Austurland should be treated with respect and get the feeling of being included into our community. Our aim is to get people to feel part of Austurland, and inspire them to tell good and unique stories about our destination.

By keeping to our roots we want to emphasize on what we are and what we have. Austurland is spacious. Some locations are remote. We have beautiful, dramatic and untouched natural surroundings. Austurland is also associated with a mystery that we want to preserve, strongly connected to our fabulous nature, peculiar stories, strong characters, myths and fairytales. The feeling of being in Austurland is often described as peaceful and almost timeless. As someone expressed "Where the days have no numbers".



ALL SEASONS

Our high season is from mid June to mid August. Our shoulder months are from six weeks before and after the high season. The low season is considered to be from October to April.

We can see a trend of growing tourism throughout all seasons, especially during the shoulder months. By strategic development and management we do have big potential to grow.

We have the opportunity to attract visitors all year around. By developing year around tourism, we can keep services open and have more staff working within tourism permanently. This would also mean that we can attract more people to move to Austurland, since we would be able to offer more full time job opportunities within tourism.

We need to develop our destination and activities with a year around perspective. Think about all the opportunities that exist to attract visitors during all seasons. Austurland is a destination with many faces, and all of them are fantastic, in its' own way. We, who live in Austurland know this. But we need to become better in telling the story about Austurland during all seasons.

Winter

During winter we can offer a wide range of winter activities. Everything from skiing, to snowshoeing and snowmobiling. We also have the northern lights, wellness and spas. We have the local festivities; except of our traditional Icelandic christmas and new years celebration, we also have our mid winter festival Þorrablót. We have a lighting festival, a good example on a new concept attracting visitors and spreading joy within the community. There are so many opportunities that we have not yet developed.

Spring

The spring starts before and around easter time. On this time of the year we can offer fantastic spring-winter experiences, with unforgettable days spent in the snow in sunny spring weather. It is also the time when we say goodbye to the winter and are welcoming the upcoming summer. When the snow melts away the nature starts to flourish again, and the lambing season begins. We can offer activities in the nature as hiking tours, biking, jeep tours and much more.

Summer

The summer season is our strongest tourist season. This is the time on the year when most of the events are happening. We need to improve our communication of all our events, bilingual in Icelandic and English. We need a more visible event calendar that is being maintained and updated continuously. Austurland is known for the many town festivals with music, art, culture and food. Thanks to the midnight sun the days are long which means that we have more time to experience everything that Austurland has to offer. Outdoor experiences and activities in nature, which can be among other things hiking, biking, kayaking, fishing, riding and yoga. The opportunities are endless.

Autumn

Late summer and fall is the hunting and fishing season. Austurland is especially known for the reindeer hunting. The natural habitat of the Icelandic reindeer is only in the eastern parts of the country, why it is very unique part of the Austurland fauna. It is quite common to see wild reindeers when touring through the landscape in Austurland, which is to consider a truly exotic experience. As the night skies get darker the northern lights appear again. The fall is also the round up season when the sheeps are collected from the mountain sides. It is a good time for hiking and jeep tours, and for enjoying local food. When the days are as darkest in the late fall the days of darkness, "Dagar myrkurs", is celebrated with local events for young and old.



INFRASTRUCTURE, INFORMATION & FACILITIES ALONG THE ROADS

During the latest years the traffic has increased heavily on the Icelandic roads. Also in Austurland. Our guests are amazed by the scenic landscape and want to stop along the road to explore, take pictures and use service facilities. It is a great opportunity for us to get them to Austurland and invite them as our guests. At the same time it puts demand on us to give them what they need and keep them satisfied.

In connection to information, we need to focus more on providing functional and good information. At the same time this gives us the opportunity to build a strong sense of a place for Austurland. We want our visitors to feel that they are in Austurland. One important piece for building the recognition to our destination is through our information and our signs. A sign language has been developed

for Austurland that we want to use strategically as a layer for information when travelling through Austurland.

Regarding infrastructure and facilities along the road, we want our visitors to get a positive and memorable experience. When people stop on resting places, service areas and lookout spots, this is an opportunity to give them something extra. It can be considered as good enough to provide the expected service, as information, toilet, waste bins, fences, paths, maybe a seat and sometimes a shelter or a roof. But, we should also take the opportunity to increase the experience through design and architecture. We should always consider how we are building to align with the nature and the surroundings of the place and try to make it something extra. We should be not only ordinary, but extraordinary.



TRANSPORT & ACCESS

Austurland is located furthest away from Reykjavík and the international airport Keflavík. Many places in the east are often considered as remote and rural. Still, there are good alternatives for travelling to Austurland. However, it can become better and we need to keep working for good transport opportunities to the region, not only for our visitors, but also for our residents and companies. It must be affordable to travel to Austurland. It must feel accessible and we need modern transports. We also need to improve the information towards potential visitors, and tell them how to travel to Austurland. It is not obvious today. The access between Keflavík with flybus to Reykjavík, and the connection to the domestic airport is today poor. This must be improved.

The regional strategy of Austurland emphasizes on cheaper flights to Egilsstaðir from Reykjavík, and to establish international flights directly to Egilsstaðir airport.⁴² It is also a declared goal of the Icelandic government that Egilsstaðir airport will have scheduled international flights in the near future.⁴³

Our infrastructure is in general good, and it is continuously getting improved. However, some routes to remote places need to be restored. New tunnel projects have enhanced the access and travel time between some of the fjords, and more infrastructure projects are being discussed.



INFRASTRUCTURE, INFORMATION & FACILITIES ALONG THE ROADS

Increased number of tourists does not by itself mean increased revenue from tourism. In order to earn money from tourism, we need to sell. In order to keep sustainable and earn money from tourism over the years, we need to sell and provide value.

We need to ask ourselves what kind of products and activities we are selling, and how we are generating both revenue and good stories. Instead of selling products and activities, we need to think about what experiences we are selling. This also gives us the opportunity to refine our products and activities, to provide increased value.

The value for the customer, and for the supplier, increases with a developed and diversified experience. The product will bring a greater value and price, with the degree of refinement and packaging of the experience. ⁴⁴

We need to refine our products and activities, together with our destination, to become more attractive for our best customer. The best customers are those who value the experience we have to offer, who fit to our aim and definition of being a sustainable destination and who are telling good stories about us.

We need to dig where we stand and take better advantage of our unique tourist resources. By mapping and analyzing our range of products and activities, and other offerings, we are able to support companies in their product development. This will raise the value of their existing products and encourage creativity and innovation. We also need to strengthen the brand of our products, and connect them stronger to Austurland.

THE PROGRESSION OF ECONOMIC VALUE ⁴⁵

Experiences incorporate commodities, goods and services and use these as elements in developing tourism offers that are designed to create lasting memories. Not all businesses deliver experiences, but they represent a choice for tourism businesses to move up the ladder of economic opportunity, differentiate their businesses and provide a new level of visitor experience to their guests.

Developing experiences starts with knowing more about our visitors. The more detailed customer information we got, the deeper will our understanding be of our visitors' travel values, social values and travel behaviors. This information becomes useful when designing experiences, and developing products and packages.





FOLLOW OUR BRAND PLATFORM TO THE CORE

Our Brand Platform is always the starting-point when communicating as part of Austurland. The Brand Platform serves as a guide for the positioning Austurland, and for developing all of our content.

Use the Brand Platform as a filter for the formation of creative concepts and implementation initiatives. Use it as an inspirational tool.

From the Brand Platform creative concepts are born; concepts that align creative treatments of the brand in a variety of communication mediums and actions.

Our Brand Platform for Austurland also provides a base for companies and municipalities within our destination, from which we can customize and incorporate our own brands. The way in which our individual brands are presented differ, but our core values for Austurland are essentially always the same. Think like a choir - all singing the same song but with a different musical range. Sopranos and altos singing together to make harmony.

Our destination brand of Austurland exists as a message, that is seen and heard through multiple touch points in our communication. The message is being transmitted through all senses.

Touch points can be situations connected to people, services, places and environments. These touch points affect the experience from Austurland, throughout the whole journey. The essence from the experiences is remembered over time, preferably in line with our Brand Platform.

Our Brand Platform catches the soul of Austurland. The purpose of the Brand Platform is to define who we are, and how we want Austurland to be experienced. Our brand defines us. It is what differentiates us from others, and makes our destination distinctive and memorable.

Our brand is our identity. It is what we think about ourselves, but also what our guests think about us. With this kept in mind, our brand is not only depending on what is seen. It is not a campaign theme, tagline or slogan. It is an expression of the compelling, unique experience of Austurland.

The experience from Austurland depends on our joint ability to deliver on our Brand Platform. An experience is never stronger than its weakest link.



**OUR
BRAND
VISION**



**OUR
MISSION**



**OUR
VALUES**



**OUR
RATIONAL
PROMISES**



**OUR
BRAND
TRIGGER**



**OUR
AUDIENCE**



**OUR
PERSONALITY**



**OUR
EMOTIONAL
PROMISES**

Follow our Brand Platform in our Destination Development

High-Level Objectives

In order to establish a strong visitor economy in Austurland, and to achieve our strategic aims, we need to develop our destination professionally and systematically. The development process must be confident and action based.

Austurland DMO need to become a solid function for the Destination Development, working in close connection to decision makers, facilitators and operatives.

Our High-Level objectives focus on developing our destination in a long-term sustainable direction. By focusing on our High-Level objectives we will achieve our strategic aims.

Austurland has in many ways already started to work from the following High-level objectives. For example we have developed a toolbox with helpful guidelines in branding, communication and hospitality. Furthermore, we have completed training programs for companies, such as Ratsjárn - Austurland through a collaboration between Austurbrú, Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands and Íslenski Ferðaklasinn. We have developed a sign program that is being implemented, and more.

However, we need to engage much more and increase our efforts to reach our High-level objectives.

ESTABLISH AUSTURLAND TO BECOME A STRONG & SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION

Build stronger bonds between the stakeholders and collaborate more beyond borders. Together we are stronger, and we can make more. Establish a strong, progressive, result oriented and long term Destination Management.

SUPPORT OUR CLUSTERS

Through gathering actors within the same fields and disciplines they will cooperate more and develop their products and innovate together. Austurland DMO should connect to, encourage and support clusters and networks.

GROW COMPETENCE

We need to increase our competence within the tourism industry, both by educating ourselves and by hiring skilled staff. By increasing the competence we will get more professional businesses, enhanced knowledge about sustainable tourism, planning and process management. Austurland DMO must be in continuous dialogue with the tourism companies and provide support.

URBAN PLANNING & COMMUNITY PLANNING

We need to emphasize more on our physical environment. It must be designed to be attractive and functional taking to account the user needs and to build a sense of a place connecting to the desired image of the destination. We need to consider Destination Design thinking more within the local and regional planning process, as well as participating in the national contexts. This also include our infrastructure when planning, building and restoring roads, walk and bike paths, squares, signs, lighting design and more. Austurland DMO should always be included in urban planning and community planning.

Type of Tourism Desired

Austurland DMP aims to increase the income from tourism, and at the same time benefit the well-being of our communities and residents. We want our visitor economy to be strong and sustainable in a long-term perspective.

“A destination where human relations are the focal point, where the differentiation between destination and home of locals is one and the same. A destination, where locals and visitors not only co-exist, but interact around shared experiences of localhood.” ⁴⁶

So says the vision for Copenhagen. Words that can easily be transferred also to Austurland, where we are developing our destination focusing on both the locals and the guests.

We prefer to talk about our visitors as guests, instead of tourists. Another way to put it, is to talk about temporary locals. Since we want our guests to become part of Austurland, we are also inviting them to feel like home. We want them to share our values, and appreciate Austurland as we do it. The aim is that our guests will become good ambassadors for our destination, to respect and care about our nature and environment, and to tell good stories about Austurland.

We believe in experience based tourism, attracting visitors who want something extra and personal. We want to attract target audiences who are valuing local food, who want to interact with locals and who are looking for authentic and real experiences.

The type of visitors we want to attract appreciate adventure, they are curious and excited to explore our natural surroundings. They want the nature to be untouched and unexploited.

Adventure tourism is attracting attention for its emphasis on rural areas, local culture, and because it can often be developed within existing infrastructure. Often, it's the presence of visitors that makes it a destination, rather than destinations seeking to create a tourism activity. However, even with these obvious benefits, there are certain conditions that must be present for market development. ⁴⁷



Market Priorities

Our guests

When we talk about our audience, we include our guests and ourselves. We also consider potentially new residents as part of the audience we want to attract.

The term “guests” is crucial for how we think about each other. Everyone who visit Austurland is our guest, and can potentially become our friend. We avoid to talk about our visitors as consumers or tourists. It may also influence our attitude towards people who decide to visit us in Austurland, and also towards each other. We are all each other’s guests in different contexts, also between locals. When inviting people to our home, we treat them as our guests. And the guests pay respect to the host. As simple as that.

Target groups

Our target audience has been segmented into social profiles. The focus for our guests’ profiles is based on their motivations for travel and how they travel, rather than demographics. The suggested target tourist segments for Iceland has been considered, and combined with regional patterns of tourism and daily life. The social profiles are developed also on basis of the significant shift in consumer behaviours.

When Íslandsstofa was defining the target groups for Iceland during 2017, they found close similarities to the ones that Austurland already had pointed out. We admitted to share our target group strategy, and merged our joint efforts together with Íslandsstofa. From the strategic perspective we believe that we are benefitting the most from using the same target audiences regionally, as Inspired by Iceland is trying to attract nationally.⁴⁸

By knowing the social profiles of our target groups, we are provided with richer insights on their behaviours and preferences, expectations and needs. It also gives us a better understanding of the experiences of our guests, and how to communicate with them.

At the same time, considering our target groups described, we need to be able to customize, and specialize, and also be flexible. One individual must not necessary belong to only one of the listed segments, but can search for different kind of experiences from different trips, or even from day to day.



OUR GUESTS AND THEIR NEEDS

SELECTIVE EXPLORER (INDEPENDENT EXPLORER)*

- Passionate about travelling and adventure
- Prefer to go off the beaten track
- Like to be surrounded by different people and environments
- Want to know where the food comes from
- Willing to pay for quality
- Well-informed with a curious mind
- Have a responsible side

NOTES:

Tend to be well educated and seasoned travellers. Main motivation for travelling is to explore new territories; nature, culture, local life, food and traditions. Want to go deeper into the core of the destination, and search for unique experiences that deliver a combination of physical and emotional value. Love to listen to stories, and appreciate the connection to people and places.

GENTLE ADVENTURER (THE FUN LOVING GLOBETROTTER)*

- Want to have the unexpected but reasonable
- Impressed by local food, culture and people
- Request organized freedom; prefer marked trails and not to rush into any nonsense
- Request experience guiding and planning; like to manage things by themselves, but appreciate good service and the help to do so
- Collect stories to tell friends about their trips; very active on social media, post a lot before, during and after the travel
- Admire nature and people; show respect towards environment and cultural heritage

NOTES:

Looking for experiences with the best value for money. Appreciate good service and the unexpected little extra. Situations providing time together are important, offering experiences for all to enjoy. Family friendly environments and tailored experience packages are attractive. Enjoy to experience through participation. Shared joy is twice the joy!

ACTIVE RELAXER (THE CULTURAL COMFORT SEEKER)*

- Are careful adventure seekers
- Like lazy mornings but have nothing against a good hike in the afternoon
- Like to watch the volcano but don't need to understand how it works
- A coastal tour with picnic - a perfect day
- Value well organized travel packages that take care of all the details
- Appreciate comfort with good food, good service and good company

NOTES:

Looking for a quiet place, with an atmosphere helping to rest the mind and soul, and to recharge at. Often choose the extra comfort when offered. Like to bring some extra flavour to life, and to get the additional luxury, but are not demanding. Like to join and follow. Enjoy to participate in local events. Fill their life with self-fulfilling experiences, including time for contemplation and a good laugh.

NATURE NERDS

- Like to watch the mountain and understand how it was created
- Visit the museum for lunch and hike in the afternoon
- Geology is their passion - the mountain is not just a mountain!
- Request guiding by nature specialists
- Request good planning
- Well prepared and equipped
- Value good information and service

NOTES:

Thirsty for knowledge. Want to come close and get deep understanding. Fascinated by nature. Are environmental conscious and show respect. Often well equipped and prepared. May have a specific agenda and purpose for the trip. Appreciate to get the extra information, as direction on how to get to special places, or help to find the best guiding provided.

ODD CREATIVES

- Charge the batteries in the East
- Take a lot of pictures
- Feel inspired
- I am a bohemian – I love the rural lifestyle!
- Looking for unique and fulfilling experiences
- Network with creative people
- Engage in cultural events
- Well-travelled and urbane

NOTES:

Active within creative sector. Looking for cultural activities, places and events. Like to participate in unique contexts, providing opportunities for interaction with other creatives. Find inspiration in the surroundings; from the meeting with people and in the environments. Appreciate the feeling of getting connection to the place, and to feel part of the local creative community.

** The three visitor types, the Fun Loving Globetrotter, Independent Explorer and Cultural Comfort seeker have been analysed further by Íslandsstofa.*

KEY MARKETS

Íslandsstofa has mapped the target audiences within each market.⁴⁹ This give us the opportunity to further fine tune and adapt our communication towards the specific markets.

From our visitor numbers we can see that Germany, USA and France are our biggest foreign markets. Following information provides us with more insights of their visitor profiles.

GERMANY

Population: 82,7 million

Amount of travellers each year: 60 million

Amount of paid vacation days: 33 days

Main Target Audiences

GENTLE ADVENTURER

(THE FUN LOVING GLOBETROTTER)

18,6 million tourists

THE PERSON:

- I live in a big city and I have above average in wages and I am well educated
- I have children in school or kindergarten
- Travelling is a lifestyle for me
- I show respect towards environment and cultural heritage

SELECTIVE EXPLORER

(INDEPENDENT EXPLORER)*

12,6 million tourists

THE PERSON:

- I live in a small city or just outside of a big city
- I am above average with wages and I am well educated
- My kids are grown up and can take care of themselves
- I am a passionated traveller and I love new adventure

ACTIVE RELAXER

(THE CULTURAL COMFORT SEEKER)*

6 million tourist

THE PERSON:

- I live in a small city or towns close to big cities
- My kids are teenagers and can take care of themselves
- I respect nature
- I am a careful adventure seeker

THE CONSUMER:

- I am very active on social media and I post before, during and after my travel
- I use new services like Airbnb, Uber and Tripadvisor
- I book my travel online but sometimes I use travel agencies
- I am ready to pay for quality and I like having options about prices and services

THE CONSUMER:

- I use the internet but mostly for reading news and using facebook
- I book equally from airlines and tour operators
- I can be impulsive and I am not that price sensitive, although I like good offers

THE CONSUMER:

- I am active on social media and I use Facebook, Youtube and Whatsapp
- I might use tripadvisor for taking decisions
- I like shopping and I can be a bit impulsive.
- I am price sentive but I like good offers

TOURISM:

- Eco tourism and nature travel
- Museum and historical tours
- Northern lights
- Museums, historical places

TOURISM:

- Outdoor activity in the nature
- Smaller communities
- Restaurants with local food
- Spa and nature bath

TOURISM:

- I love going to restaurants which have local food
- Northern light tours
- City breaks, where I experience culture that are unique
- Spa, swim and nature baths is something I like

Population: 320 million

Amount of travellers each year: 68 million

Amount of paid vacation days: 24 days

Main Target Audiences

GENTLE ADVENTURER

(THE FUN LOVING GLOBETROTTER)

34 million tourists

THE PERSON:

- Lives in big cities age 25-44 years.
- Wants a change to the daily routine.
- Active, open and wants to meet new people.
- Respects the nature.

SELECTIVE EXPLORER

(INDEPENDENT EXPLORER)*

9,5 million tourists

THE PERSON:

- Lives in a smaller city or town.
- My kids are grown up and can take care of themselves.
- I take good care of my health and I respect nature.

ACTIVE RELAXER

(THE CULTURAL COMFORT SEEKER)*

14 million tourist

THE PERSON:

- I have high education, I live in a smaller city or town.
- My kids take care of themselves.
- I want to enjoy good food and I am a very healthy person.
- I do not take any unnecessary risks but I like doing something out of the ordinary.

THE CONSUMER:

- Very active on all media platform.
- I love shopping fashionable clothes and things.
- I book mostly online without using tour operator.
- I am willing to pay more for quality.
- I follow trip advisor to get advices.
- I like approaching companies online.

THE CONSUMER:

- I am active on all media.
- I use facebook to track what my family and friends are doing.
- I use tripadvisor.
- I am a bit price sensitive.
- I do not buy things unless they have a special meaning for me.
- I try booking my travels online instead of using tour operators.

THE CONSUMER:

- I am active on all media.
- I use facebook to follow my family.
- It's unlikely that I would use Uber and Airbnb.
- I book my own travel.
- I am not that excited about shopping.

TOURISM:

- To travel is a lifestyle for me.
- I want adventure and high quality in accommodation choices.
- I go after smaller towns and eco tourism.
- I enjoy spa and family travel.
- I shop Icelandic design.
- I avoid tourism that is not qualified and quality based.

TOURISM:

- Want to travel in a smaller group and experience something authentic.
- I'd rather stay at smaller guesthouses that have history instead of hotels or more expensive accommodation.
- I look for local food, I love taking photos and to go swimming.

TOURISM:

- I am willing to pay for quality and good comfort.
- I love seeing beautiful and different type of landscape.
- I am curious about locals.
- I'd like to experience something that is safe and it should not be trouble some for me to find way.
- I go for city breaks and enjoy spa.
- I go as well for smaller towns to experience culture.

Population: 65 million

Amount of travellers each year: 39,5 million

Amount of paid vacation days: 36 days

Main Target Audiences

GENTLE ADVENTURER

(THE FUN LOVING GLOBETROTTER)

14,2 million tourists

THE PERSON:

- I live in a big city and have high income.
- My kids are still in school.
- I am in my early job life.
- I'd love to go and change from daily routine.
- I enjoy good food in good company.

SELECTIVE EXPLORER

(INDEPENDENT EXPLORER)*

5,9 million tourists

THE PERSON:

- I am highly educated and I live in a smaller city town. My kids are grown up.
- I love to spice up my life and enjoy good food and to nurture my health.

ACTIVE RELAXER

(THE CULTURAL COMFORT SEEKER)*

4 million tourist

THE PERSON:

- I am more likely to be a woman, with income above average.
- My kids are grown up.
- I love shopping, and eating healthy food.
- I can afford to travel and enjoy myself.

THE CONSUMER:

- I am very active on social media and I am as well socializing a lot on all media with people.
- I am fashion drive.
- I use tripadvisor for advices.
- I mostly book my own travel but occasionally with a tour operator.
- I am willing to pay for quality and I find it good to have choices and a direct contact with the persons I am buying service from.

THE CONSUMER:

- I use social media but I am not very active.
- I want to organize my own travel but sometimes I use tour operators from my home country.
- I could very well use Airbnb and Uber.

THE CONSUMER:

- I am only avarege active on social media.
- I follow what is new and upcoming in the fashion industry.
- I do not neccessary follow other people on social media.
- I am open to use Airbnb and Uber and I use tripadvisor to take decisions.
- I can be a bit impulsive and I like good offers.

TOURISM:

- I love travelling and I want to be challenged. To travel is a lifestyle for me.
- I love exploring untouched areas.
- I want to stay for a long time at one place. I do not want to take unnecessary chances and I appreciate good guiding.
- Quality and certificates are important to me.
- I visit museums and I often take photos to share on social media of special places.
- I choose quality and special accommodation spaces.
- I love to meet other travellers when I'm visiting a destination.

TOURISM:

- I want to travel in smaller groups and not in crowded places.
- I don't want to be stuck in a group with a guide.
- I am ready to pay for products and service that meet my qualification and that have some meaning to me.
- I am willing to go off the beaten path and travel on my own.
- I am open to talk to locals and learn about the culture.
- I will not use unnecessary money on hotels. Smaller guesthouses attract me more.
- I want to see museums, to speak with locals and visit smaller places.
- Festivals and cultural events are exciting to me.

TOURISM:

- I want to travel to see beautiful landscape and I like as well to see well known places without having too much trouble getting there.
- I buy design products and I enjoy good hotels and service.
- I often go for city breaks but I as well enjoy smaller towns.

The Destination Offer

Our guests

Through our studies we can see that both visitors and residents highlight nature, wildlife and

outdoor activities as the best experiences of Austurland. Among visitors, the words to describe Austurland are beautiful nature, tranquil, wonderful and hospitable. The residents mention beautiful nature, relatively good summer weather, hiking, events, family and tranquillity.

When we ask for special locations of interest around Austurland, many places are mentioned, both among visitors and residents. Notable is that not only a few places stand out, but many various places all over Austurland.

Developing experience concepts

We are not marketing a product, but communicating experiences. A strong destination brand isn't built through advertising alone. In essence, a brand is made of two things: the experiences people have with your product, and the stories they hear about that experience from others. What is important is to have an organisation that can lead the management of developing experiences that create good stories. Tourism is about passionate experiences and not commodities.

With inspiration from, and on the basis of our Austurland Destination Brand platform our defined Focus Areas, we need to develop and refine experience concepts, products and packages.

When developing new, or existing concepts, we always need to consider the user needs. For whom will the product be designed? We should always aim for developing customized and sustainable solutions from the specific and future needs of the users.

We also need to look into the interactions with our guests. We need to coordinate and develop the touch points to optimize the flow, and increase the holistic experience of our destination. We need to work with the available resources, and use what we have.

We must collaborate, since it is always the combination of actors who creates the product and its experience. We need to connect to the actors involved throughout the experience chain. The experience is never stronger than its weakest link.

We need to evaluate the experience of our guest. In what ways does the product communicate the wanted experience? What parts of the total experience are unwanted?



Photo: Rhombie Sandvåg

DESTINATION OFFER MATRIX

The following matrix helps us to evaluate the existing destination offers, and to develop new. Use it to develop experience concepts for all seasons. Compare and evaluate towards our three main target audiences and how they act as tourists. ⁵⁰

| | OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES | EXPLORE | FOOD | CULTURE & CREATIVITY |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| GENTLE ADVENTURER | <i>Meet the local tours, hiking to Stóruð, Jeptours, guided hikes to Hafravammagljufur</i> | <i>Organic farm, luxury food, Nordic food</i> | <i>Lagarfjot lake circle, Mjoifjordur, hiking to spar mine, strolling in Djupivogur citta slow, road from Egilsstadir over Hellisheidi</i> | <i>Technical museum, Sænautasel, Randulfseahouse, Skriduklaustur, Busterfell museum</i> |
| SELECTIVE EXPLORER | <i>Kayaking, Puffin view, Skiing, Meet the local tours</i> | <i>Lagarfjot lake circle, Vöðlavik, Hellisheidi Eystri, Boattrips to Mjoifjordur, Meleyri beach, Djupivogur beach</i> | <i>Local restaurants serving food from Austurland</i> | <i>Light festival, French museum, wilderness center, jazz festival</i> |
| ACTIVE RELAXER | <i>Highland circle tours – Jeep, atv tours, boat ride, off the beaten path tours</i> | <i>Fljotsdalur valley circle, Drive from sothern fjords from Eskifjordur-Djupivogur, Öxi mountain road, Lodmundarfjordur 4x4</i> | <i>Bistro, hotel restaurants, cafes</i> | <i>French museum, Wildness museum, Concerts in Blue church, visiting abandoned farms</i> |

GAPS TO MEET DEMANDS

| | OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES | EXPLORE | FOOD | CULTURE & CREATIVITY |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| GENTLE ADVENTURER | <i>Increased Variety of day drips, products with a story behind it, guided activities</i> | <i>Good information and signs and online presence of places (google maps, TripAdvisor etc)</i> | <i>Local cuisine visible in restaurants</i> | <i>Museums that connect to the heritage of the places, better access to information on museums</i> |
| SELECTIVE EXPLORER | <i>Better authentic experiences, bike tours, easier access to products, practical information about experiences</i> | <i>Better signs, the concept around routes of Austurland, better access to Austurland during wintertime</i> | <i>More healthy options on menus, cheaper options with good quality, local food at more places</i> | <i>Museums with useful information in English or german, access to areas of historical interest, knowledge about festivals</i> |
| ACTIVE RELAXER | <i>Well organized packages with multi-day program. Transport directly to bucket list destination, lifts or easy hiking trails to enable better access, spa tours</i> | <i>Well known places (bucket list) Minibuses that take care of everything, no plan B's. Custom made</i> | <i>Locally sourced food, food treats with good quality</i> | <i>Access to culture and happenings a few times a week, more design shops that sell Icelandic design.</i> |

When going through what each target audience is seeking it is clear that a guest that wants to go off the beaten path is the most suitable for our region.

The destination wants to embrace the natural resources, peace and atmosphere. The aim for Austurland is to develop high quality unique products and experiences that brings extra value for visitors and residents, and generate positive and exciting stories to tell about Austurland.

The Seasonal Wheel

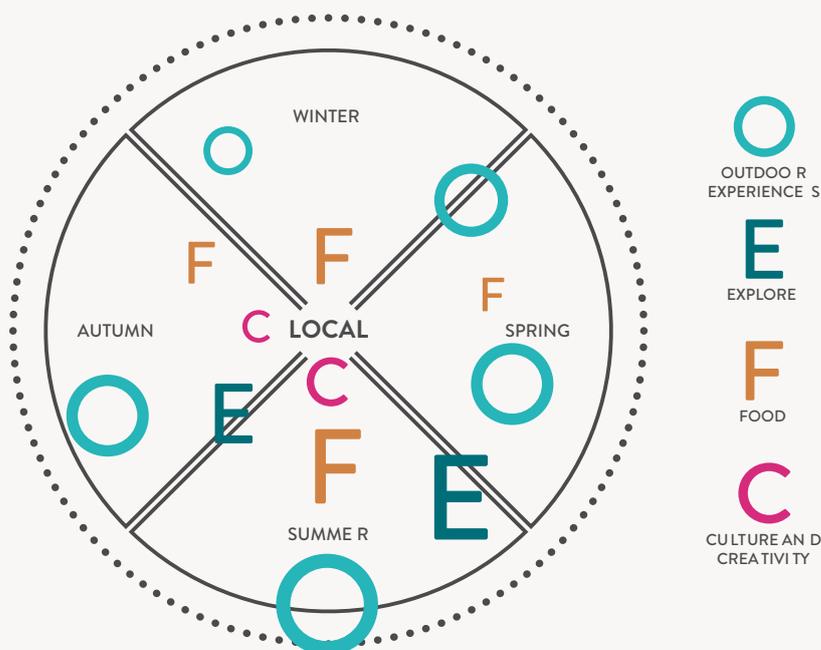
The Seasonal Wheel can be used to evaluate what the destination has to offer throughout the year. Use the destination offer matrix to come up with new concepts.

When looking into events, list all events, both the large ones and the small local events. Evaluate how we can more efficiently communicate and develop existing events.

During summer there are seven companies operating tours in Austurland. Although most of them are active during July-September. There is therefore a lot of potential for early summer; May-June.

In spring and autumn there are currently around three companies operating tours although many can be open on demand with customized tours (not guaranteed though). During winter there are five companies operating tours most of them jeeptours and variety is lacking.

Each season has something to offer. The early summer is filled with local events that could be connected better to our guests. The winter has many local activities that involves skiing which has big potential to reach out to guests. Autumn has a big potential since the guestnights are increasing in that period specifically.



The Seasonal Wheel. Content marked closer to the center of the circle are more local.

EMPHASES:

Develop more products for shoulder season and throughout the year in general.

Connect the seasons better with the products that are offered. Northern light tours and mountain skiing in winter, hiking tours during autumn where all the wonderful contrasts can be enjoyed, more ocean activities during summer and then connect events that are happening all year around to guests in the area. development.

EXPORT MATURITY

Export maturity is characterised by the knowledge of needs and incentives of the international target audience, in order to be able to adjust our own destination and to offer products and services matching the request.⁵¹

The demands and the needs from the market and the target audience can vary between different nationalities, seasons and from various reasons. Following criterias can be seen as a starting point for building relations toward specific markets and target audiences. Be sure to analyse carefully and evaluate areas to develop towards the actual markets.

CHECKLIST FOR A DESTINATIONS EXPORT MATURITY:

- *Our destination can offer 2-5 days of full experience (stay, eat, travel, activate, shop)*
- *The offer from our destination is put together, packaged and buyable.*
- *The communication from our destination has the right tone of voice.*
- *We can offer a good alternative for travelling to our destination.*
- *Our destination have a business plan and a strategy providing knowledge about markets, target audiences, offerings, resources and hospitality.*
- *There is a priority of markets and market segments, and we have a Brand Platform with a sustainable and long-term approach.*

EMPHASES:

Austurland has work to do regarding developing whole packages with full experience. The experiences need to be buyable and communicated in the right town of voice. There are too few alternatives to come to Austurland and Austurland is lacking a business plan that partners follow.

Minimising Negative Impacts

Our tourism sector must work with our communities while planning for and managing tourism, so that we can maximise the benefits and minimise any negative impacts.

When analysing negative impacts from tourism, the following things can be listed.

- Unsustainable tourism is tearing on the landscape, and affects the environment negatively.
- Negative impact from cruise ship tourism appears when towns are getting too crowded from cruise ship tourists and the income from cruise ships does not benefit the local community. The locals can feel like cruise ship tourism is more of a show off for tourists, and does not create a positive feeling among the locals.
- Cruise ships are not environmental friendly, and also cause pollution in the air in the fjords.
- Tourism leads to increased traffic on the roads, affecting the safety.
- Tourism has led to lack of housing for staff and residents, since recent increase of Airbnbs in smaller communities.

In order to prevent negative impacts from tourism, we need to work with Destination Management Planning and attract the tourism we want. We need to manage our region and use of our landscape, and direct tourism to sites that are planned for tourism. This also means that we need to manage and restrict access to threatened sites.

Consequently, sound Destination Management Planning provides an effective way to maximise the benefit tourism brings to an area while minimising its negative impact, thereby ensuring the area's visitor economy is developed as responsibly and sustainably as possible.

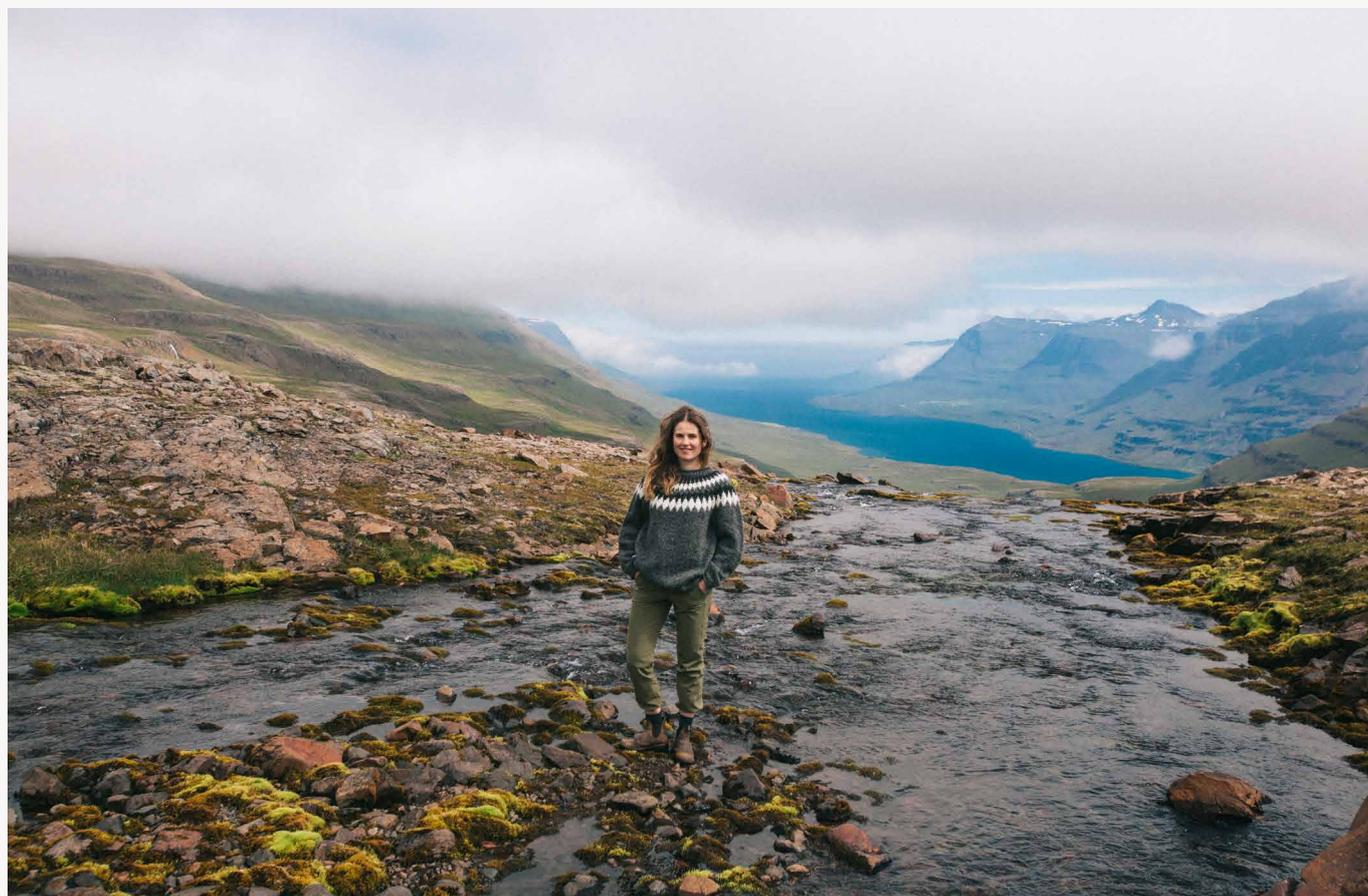


Photo: Rhombie Sandoval

Action Plan

A DMP is a dynamic concept, with a long term vision, and should always be seen as live. It requires regular monitoring and reporting on action, with revision and renewal on a cyclical basis. ⁵²

The following action plan is formed to support our High-level objectives that we have set up for 2018-2021. This will ultimately help us to achieve our strategic aims.

The actions have been developed from the SMART-concept (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Timed).

For growing a strong destination, it is crucial to build stronger bonds between stakeholders, and to collaborate more beyond borders.

Time allocated in resources are estimate on time that all responsible use for each task. It is important to stress that resources are based on a rough estimate.

PRIORITY 1 : ESTABLISH AUSTURLAND TO BECOME A STRONG DESTINATION

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBLE | TASKS | MEASUREMENT | ESTIMATED TIME | RESOURCES |
|---|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Formal establishment of Austurland DMO | Austurbrú | Official agreement | Signed agreement | Start: October 2018 | 80 hours |
| | SSA - Samband Sveitarfélaga á Austurlandi | | | | |
| | Municipalities | Funding model | Proposal | Start: October 2018 | 80 hours |
| | Ferðamálastofa | | | | |
| | | Membership framework | Responsible employee (Contact person) | Start: October 2018 | 40 hours |
| | | Regular meetings | <u>Project team:</u> Weekly <u>Municipalities:</u> 10 times per year <u>Steering group:</u> Two times a year <u>Clusters & other stakeholders:</u> On Demand | Ongoing | Other meetings than project meetings to be held at different places to reduce cost. |
| Monitor progress on objectives and priorities | Austurbrú | Develop data framework for collecting data | Visitor experience | Once a year | 40 hours |
| | Austurland DMO | | Visitor numbers | Autumn | Austurbru develops framework |
| | Municipalities | | Visitor economy | | Municipalities collects data and are responsible for those |
| | Tourism Companies | | | | |
| | | Produce annual report | One annual report yearly | Published by the end of each year | 120 hours Austurbru takes data from tourism, municipalities and other stakeholders |
| | | Present annual report | Publish Reach out recognition | January yearly | 30 hours |

PRIORITY 1 : ESTABLISH AUSTURLAND TO BECOME A STRONG DESTINATION

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBLE | TASKS | MEASUREMENT | ESTIMATED TIME | RESOURCES |
|--|---|--|---|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Support product development and innovation | Austurbrú Austurland DMO Nýsköpunar- miðstöð Íslenski ferðaklasinn Íslandsstofa | Arrange workshops | One big workshop yearly | Fall | 120 hours |
| | | Educate in tools | Seminars two times a year with outside experts. March & November Dialogue with Íslenski Ferðaklasinn and Íslandsstofa to get specialists to Austurland in connection to bigger meetings in Reykjavik | Winter & Spring | 40 hours Administration |
| | | Develop & update tools | Ongoing between seminars on a to do list | Ongoing | 50 hours |
| Telling stories about Austurland | Austurbrú Austurland DMO Íslandsstofa Municipalities | Make annual storytelling plan & meeting | Marketing plan made each autumn with project team and Íslandsstofa and a meeting to introduce partners to accept | Autumn | 120 hours |
| | | Produce stories | Teamwork - work on material from meeting | Ongoing | 80 hours |
| | | Spread stories | Connect to distribution channels | Ongoing | 30 hours |
| | | Publish Austurland Lifestyle Magazine and online stories | Yearly magazine connected to themes and places/ also continuously online | Ongoing | 80 hours 300.000 isk |

PRIORITY 1 : ESTABLISH AUSTURLAND TO BECOME A STRONG DESTINATION

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBLE | TASKS | MEASUREMENT | ESTIMATED TIME | RESOURCES |
|---|---|---|---|----------------|---------------|
| Communicate events | Austurland | Scan for events and publish in event calendar. Bilingual, Icelandic and English | Once per week | Ongoing | 10-20 h/month |
| Shift to digital marketing to support word of mouth promotion | Austurland DMO Municipalities Businesses Ferðamálastofa Íslenski Ferðaklasinn | Strengthen online presence and measure | Online presence measured | Ongoing | 100 hours |
| Evaluate the maturity and opportunities of the region | Austurland DMO Nyskopunar- miðstöð Íslandsstofa Municipalities | Mapping products after level (ready, ambition, potential for development) | Collecting data intangible ideas and tangible products Collect ideas to support entrepreneurs and connect them. Network between entrepreneurs | Ongoing | 300 hours |

PRIORITY 2 : SUPPORT THE CLUSTERS

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBLE | TASKS | MEASUREMENT | ESTIMATED TIME | RESOURCES |
|---|---|---|--|----------------|-----------|
| Act as the body for clusters and networks | Austurland DMO Clusters Networks Associations Íslenski Ferðaklasinn | Arrange meetings for clusters and networks connecting to our focus areas, take notes, listen and support activities | Continuous meetings at least 2 times per year connecting to clusters and networks within each of our focus areas | Ongoing | 50 hours |
| Encourage regional clusters to use manifesto of focus areas of Austurland | Austurland DMO Íslenski Ferðaklasinn | Support for funding application and product development | Data from Austurland in one place and access to experts | Ongoing | 80 hours |
| | | Manifesto implementation | Implement manifesto with clusters with a formal meeting | Ongoing | 50 hours |

PRIORITY 3 : GROW COMPETENCE

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBLE | TASKS | MEASUREMENT | ESTIMATED TIME | RESOURCES |
|--|---|---|---|----------------|-----------|
| Objectives to be set to increase quality certified and/or carry a Vakinn quality label | Austurland DMO Ferðamálastofa Fræðslu- miðstöð Atvinnulífsins Íslenski Ferðaklasinn | More companies in the area certified with a quality label | Support companies to qualify for Vakinn or similar certificate system | Ongoing | 120 hours |
| Electronic portal with education courses, toolbox and standards to support quality control | Austurland DMO Ferðamálastofa Nyskopunar- miðstöð Íslandsstofa Fræðslu- miðstöð Atvinnulífsins | Adjust & update the toolbox on austurland.is as needed | Customer survey yearly | Ongoing | 200 hours |
| Evaluating manpower requirements and enhancing the skills of staff in tourism | Austurbrú Austurland DMO Samband Íslenskra Sveitarfélaga Fræðslu- miðstöð Atvinnulífsins | Analyse the number of skilled workers with information from companies | At least 80% of members of Austurland participate in service courses | November | 80 hours |
| Encourage businesses to use professional competences | Austurbrú Austurland DMO | Human assets/ expert knowledge in the area | Special information on austururland.is presenting list of specialists | Quarterly | 40 hours |

PRIORITY 4 : URBAN PLANNING & COMMUNITY PLANNING

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBLE | TASKS | MEASUREMENT | ESTIMATED TIME | RESOURCES |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|----------------|--|
| Tourism strategy for each municipality in line with the DMP | Municipalities Austurland DMO | Meetings between municipalities on ongoing projects and make sure they are in line with DMP | That all municipalities by 2021 have finished a tourism strategy | Before 2021 | Municipalities are in different stages, so the cost varies |
| Encourage design thinking & architecture when building up new destinations or rest stops | Austurland DMO Municipalities | For example, competitions on design by architects or other experts or hiring skilled designers | In line with manifesto and the DMP vision | Ongoing | Varies |
| Implement sign program | Austurland DMO Municipalities | Work with planners and construction workers in municipalities on signs | Two sign projects each year | Ongoing | Varies |
| | | Analyse sign levels | Work with each municipality and how much involvement the sign program can have on each project. | By autumn 2019 | 160 hours |
| | | Present sign program for members of Austurland DMO | Work with members where signs are being produced (hiking, information f.ex) | Ongoing | 50 hours |

PRIORITY 4 : URBAN PLANNING & COMMUNITY PLANNING

| ACTIONS | RESPONSIBLE | TASKS | MEASUREMENT | ESTIMATED TIME | RESOURCES |
|--|--|--|--|----------------|---|
| Set focus on physical environment | Municipalities Austurland DMO Residents Organisations | Use improvement walks as method on prioritizing the environmental surroundings | Activate the improvement walk and work with that with at least two municipalities per year | Ongoing | Austurland DMO provides a framework model to use Resources varies, tool for municipalities |
| Ensure quality and safety of hiking trails | Municipalities Hiking organisation Austurland DMO | Work on hiking trails that are marketed on maps | Trails should be evaluated yearly in connection marketing material One area at a time | April | Varies |
| Threshold evaluation | Municipalities Austurland DMO | Evaluate the capacity in the area in connection to cruise ships | | | |

Progress

It is very essential to be able to measure when we are successful. The indicators for success can be difficult to set. For a young destination which is growing in a sustainable way the most important metric is the engagement of stakeholders within the DMP.

Overnight visitor spend and visitor satisfaction will be key measures for the future of the destination but when looking at the data which is available for tourism in Iceland down to the regions some of those are not possible to measure.

Destination Austurland has had destination surveys measure visitor satisfaction and that is a good metric and especially if they would recommend the place for other potential visitors.

Therefore it is in our hands to develop a mechanism to ensure we gather information in a consistent way connecting to the visitor experience and customer journey.

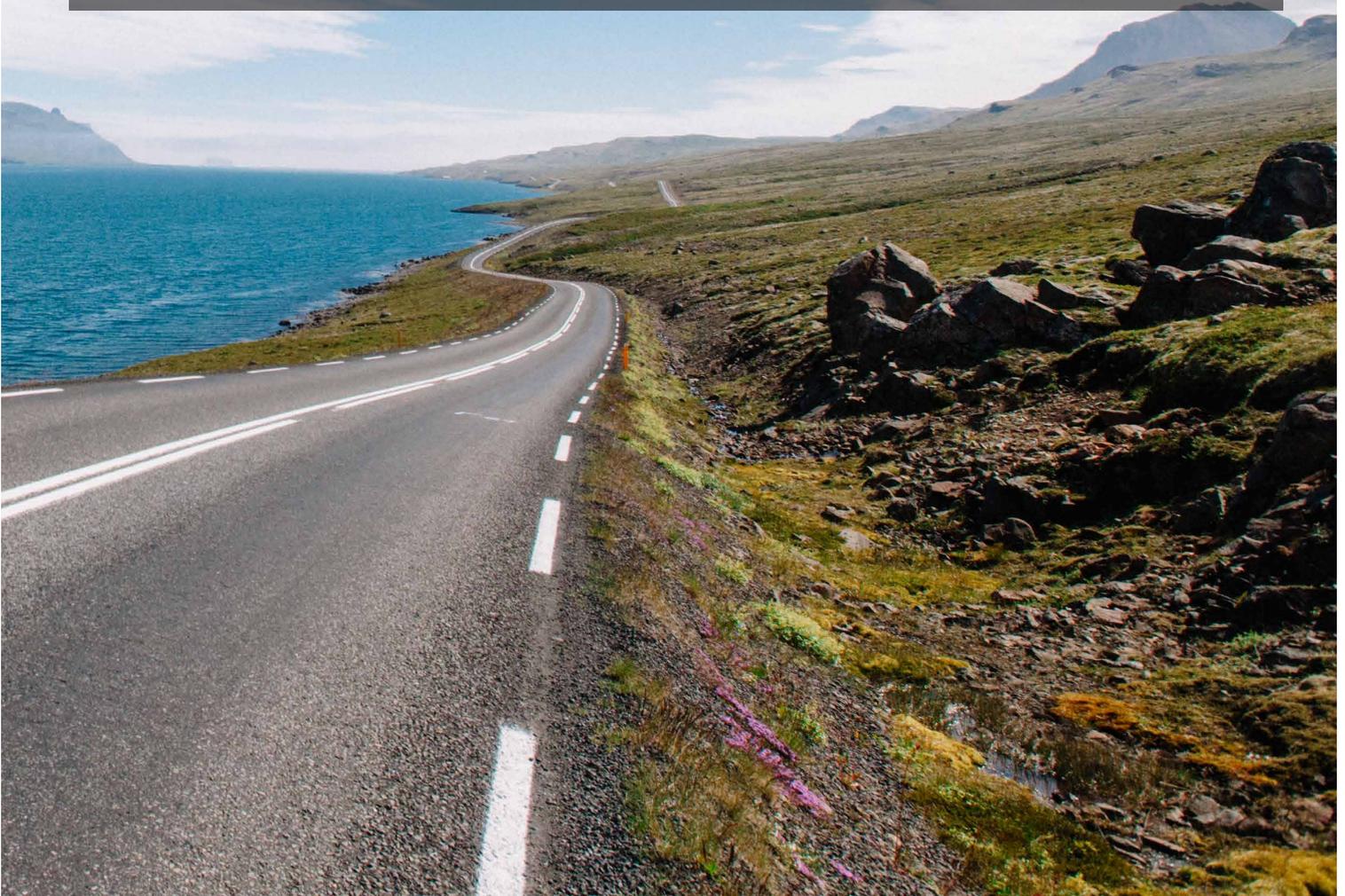
All measurements mentioned in the action plans are connecting to deeper engagement with stakeholders and amount of new acquired activities within the focus areas.

In order to maintain belief in the project and the development it is important to monitor, report and act on the measurements. Therefore annual report will be produced every year with progress for partners and other interested to review and work from. In line with an annual report it is important to as well look into future strategies in line with what has been done.

Resources

This strategic DMP plan has to be integrated to the stakeholders - public & private. With establishment of DMO it will be easier to integrate and implement the strategies.

It is crucial that even though the DMP is not a legal document it is taken as a serious initiative to partners to use. It will require a person responsible for the implementation which is acting as a coordinator & consultant for both national and regional strategies being developed.



References:

- ¹ See previous reports from Áfangastaðurinn Austurland
- ² Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook, First edition (UNWTO - World Tourism Organization, 2013)
- ³ Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030 (UNWTO - World Tourism Organization, 2017)
- ⁴ <https://festasamfelagsabyrgd.is/abyrg-ferdathjonusta/>
- ⁵ Vegvísir í ferðaþjónustu / Road Map for Tourism in Iceland, page 2 (Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneytið / SAF - Samtök ferðaþjónustunnar, October 2015)
- ⁶ Vegvísir í ferðaþjónustu / Road Map for Tourism in Iceland, page 9
- ⁷ Vegvísir í ferðaþjónustu / Road Map for Tourism in Iceland, page 19
- ⁸ <https://www.ferdamalastofa.is/en/development/destination-management-plans-dmps>
- ⁹ Áfangastaðurinn Austurland - Creation Report (January 2017)
- ¹⁰ Áfangastaðurinn Austurland - Creation Report
- ¹¹ Áfangastaðurinn Austurland - Strategy Report, page 26 / Principles for developing Destination Management Plans (Visit England, 2012)
- ¹² DMP main presentation slides (Visit England, 2014)
- ¹³ Hur utveklar vi hálldara turistdestinationer? - Erfarenheter och slutsatser fráan regeringsuppdraget Hállbar destinationutveckling 2012-2015 (Tillväxtverket, 2014)
- ¹⁴ Áfangastaðurinn Austurland - Strategy Report, page 26 / Principles for developing Destination Management Plans
- ¹⁵ Principles for developing Destination Management Plans, Page 3 (Visit England, 2012)
- ¹⁶ <http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5>
- ¹⁷ <http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5>
- ¹⁸ Tourism in Iceland in figures - April 2015
- ¹⁹ <http://www.vegagerdin.is/upplýsingar-og-utgafa/frettir/aukning-umferdar-a-hringveginum-30-sidan-2007>
- ²⁰ <https://www.isavia.is/fyrirtaekid/um-isavia/utgefif-efni/flugtolur/flugtolur>
- ²¹ Tourism in Iceland in figures - June 2017
- ²² Austurbru statistics (booking.com, airbnb, hotels.com etc.) - *The data is not matching the one in Mælaborð but this is more accurate.*
- ²³ UNWTO - Tourism Highlights 2017 Edition
- ²⁴ Tourism in Iceland in figures - June 2017
- ²⁵ <https://www.ferdamalastofa.is/en/moya/news/22-million-foreign-passengers-2017>
- ²⁶ Vegvísir í ferðaþjónustu / Road Map for Tourism in Iceland
- ²⁷ Tourism in Iceland in figures - June 2017
- ²⁸ www.hagstofan.is
- ²⁹ www.hagstofan.is
- ³⁰ www.hagstofan.is
- ³¹ www.hagstofan.is
- ³² www.hagstofan.is
- ³³ www.rsk.is
- ³⁴ <https://www.byggdastofnun.is/static/files/Skyrslur/Atvinnutekjur/atvinnutekjur-2008-2016.pdf>
- ³⁵ www.hagstofan.is
- ³⁶ <http://www.rm.f.is/static/research/files/2017-07-18175-seydisfjordur-skyrslapdf>
- ³⁷ <http://www.rm.f.is/static/research/files/2017-04-18173-egilsstadir-skyrslapdf>
- ³⁸ <https://www.ferdamalastofa.is/static/files/ferdamalastofa/Frettamyndir/2017/juli/tourism-in-iceland-2017-9.pdf>
- ³⁹ <http://www.vegagerdin.is/upplýsingar-og-utgafa/umferdartolur-a-korti/>
- ⁴⁰ Vegvísir í ferðaþjónustu / Road Map for Tourism in Iceland
- ⁴¹ Sóknaráætlun Austurlands 2015-2019
- ⁴² Sóknaráætlun Austurlands 2015-2019 (Samráðsvettvangur um gerð sóknaráætlunar, September, 2015)
- ⁴³ Fljótsdalshérað Infrastructure report 2018
- ⁴⁴ The Experience Economy (B. Joseph Pine, James H. Gilmore, Harvard Business School Press, 2011)
- ⁴⁵ Experiences - A toolkit for partners of the CTC, 2nd edition (Canadian Tourism Commission, October 2011)
- ⁴⁶ The end of tourism as we know it (Wonderful Copenhagen 2015)
- ⁴⁷ Global Report on Adventure Tourism (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) & The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) 2014)
- ⁴⁸ <https://www.islandsstofa.is/media/1/targetgroups-iceland.pdf>
- ⁴⁹ <https://www.islandsstofa.is/media/1/targetgroups-iceland.pdf>
- ⁵⁰ <https://www.islandsstofa.is/media/1/targetgroups-iceland.pdf>
- ⁵¹ Hur utveklar vi hálldara turistdestinationer? - Erfarenheter och slutsatser fráan regeringsuppdraget Hállbar destinationutveckling 2012-2015
- ⁵² Principles for developing Destination Management Plans

FERÐA
MÁLA
STOFA

ICELANDIC
TOURIST
BOARD



AUSTURLAND

FAUST

FERÐAMÁLASAMTÖK
AUSTURLANDS



AUSTURBRÚ



SÓKNARÁÆTLANIR
LANDSHLUTA