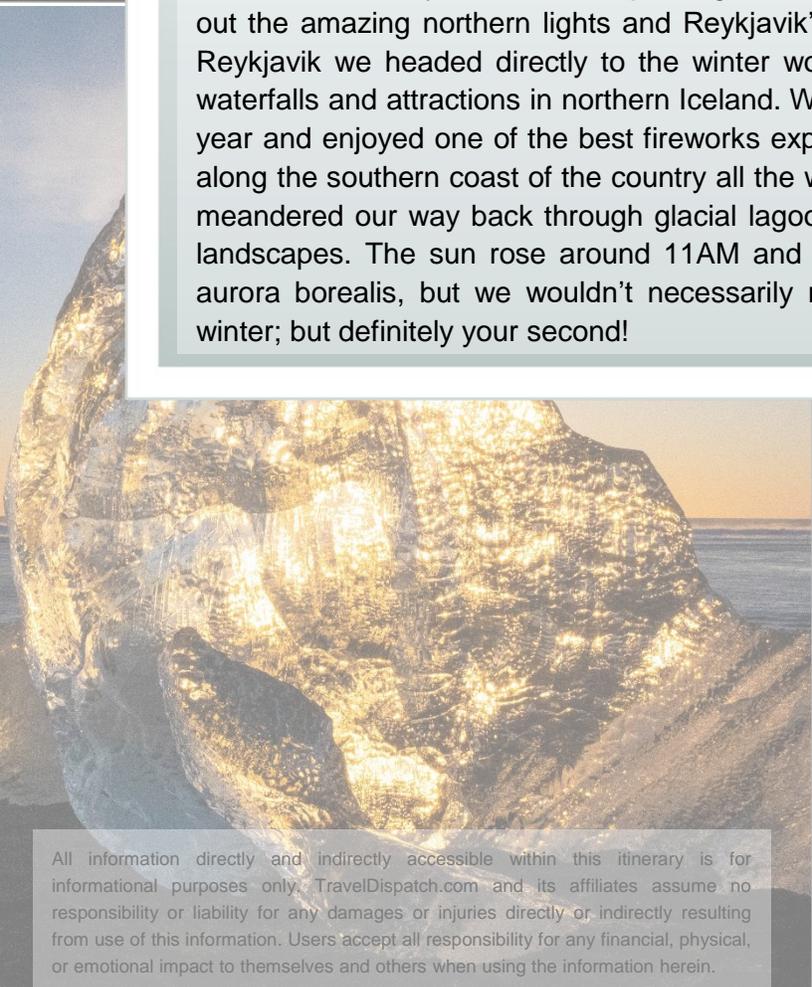




WELCOME TO ICELAND

A 10-day Road Trip (over New Year's Eve)

This was a 10-day winter road trip along the northern and southern coasts of Iceland to check out the amazing northern lights and Reykjavik's New Year's Eve celebration. After arriving in Reykjavik we headed directly to the winter wonderland of Akureyri to explore a few notable waterfalls and attractions in northern Iceland. We then flew back to Reykjavik to ring in the new year and enjoyed one of the best fireworks experiences in the world. From there we traversed along the southern coast of the country all the way to the small eastern town of Djúpvogur and meandered our way back through glacial lagoons, waterfalls, and the ever-impressive coastal landscapes. The sun rose around 11AM and set before 4PM, which is great for seeing the aurora borealis, but we wouldn't necessarily recommend your first trip to Iceland be in the winter; but definitely your second!



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Google Map

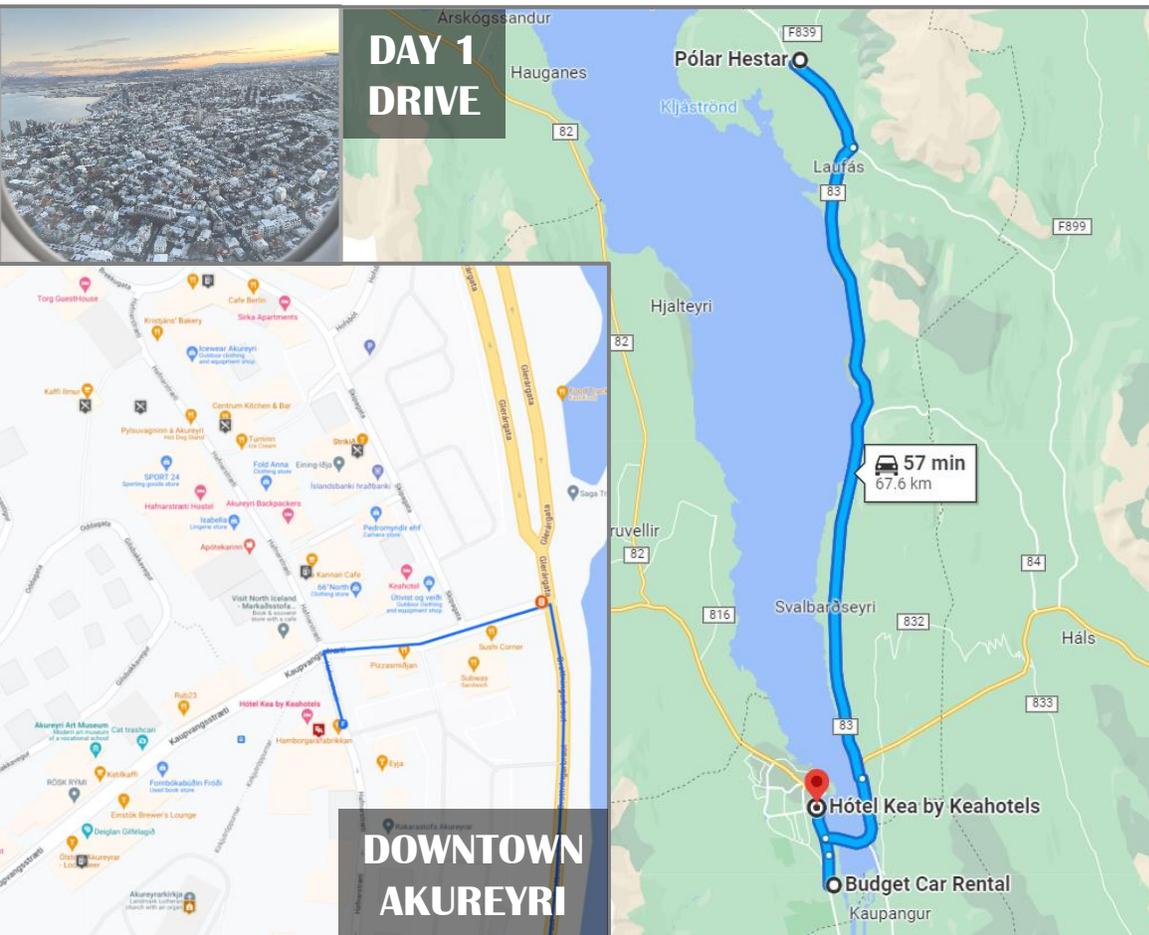


DAY 1

Today we arrived and immediately head to the great white north. Depending on from where you depart, it may be morning or late afternoon when you arrive at Keflavik (KEF). After a red eye flight from the USA, we shuttled into Reykjavik to take yet another flight from the city airport (RKV) to our base of exploration in the north: Akureyri (AEY). Upon arrival, we secured our rental 4x4 SUV (an absolute must in winter!) and enjoyed our first taste of this winter wonderland on horseback. Afterwards, we made our way back to wander the snowy streets of Akureyri for beverages and dinner checking out some local attractions along the way.

- 6:30AM** Arrive @ KEF and take [Airport Direct](#) shuttle to RKV [49km; 45min]
- 8:00AM** Have light breakfast and coffee at [Reykjavik City Airport](#) (RKV).
- 11:45AM** Depart from RKV and admire the city views on takeoff heading to AEY
- 12:30PM** Arrive and pick up 4x4 SUV rental from [Budget](#) (or other company)
- 1:00PM** Drive to horse farm [35km; 30min]
- 1:30PM** Horseback riding with [Pólar Hestar](#) (1.5hr ride followed by tea & snacks)
- 3:30PM** Drive back to Akureyri and check into [Hotel Kea](#) [34km; 30min]
- 4:30PM** Check out the hotel's neighbor: [Akureyrarkirkja](#) (Akureyri Church)
- 5:00PM** Wander over for beverages and dinner at [Strikið](#)
- 6:30PM** Post-dinner craft beers at [R5 Micro Bar](#)

Don't forget to check out the heart-shaped traffic lights on your way home!



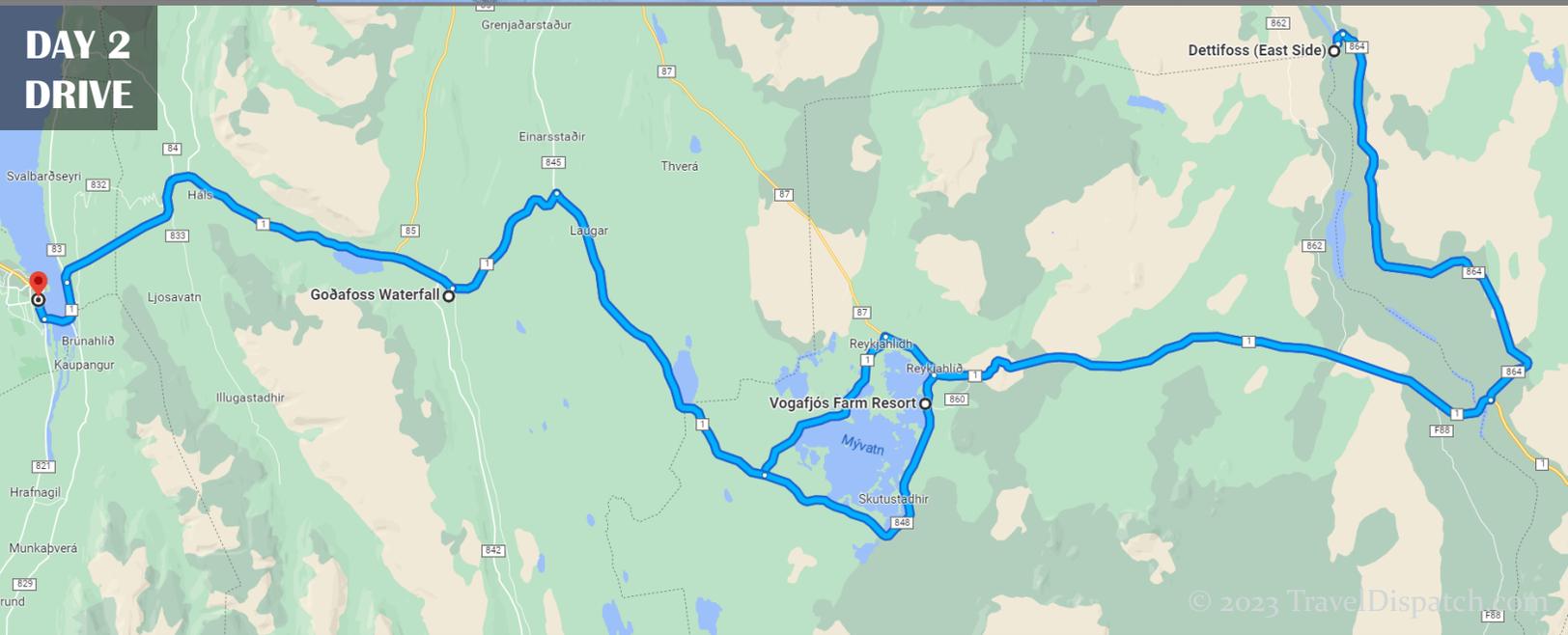
DAY 2

Today we headed further north to experience some of Iceland's best waterfalls. Assuming you don't wake up to over 18in (~46cm) of snow like we did, you should easily be able to depart and make your way to Europe's largest waterfall by volume (Dettifoss) and its equally impressive neighbor (Selfoss). Along our return, we stopped to enjoy a delicious lunch with some heifers at a local dairy farm outside of Mývatn. We then were treated to the picturesque fan favorite of Goðafoss as we continued on our way back to town. We definitely appreciated the relaxing dinner and beverages back in Akureyri at the end of the day.

7:30AM	Breakfast at Hotel Kea (included)
8:00AM	Drive to Dettifoss [151km; 2hr 15min]
10:15AM	Hike around and explore Dettifoss and Selfoss
11:45AM	Drive to Mývatn [70km; 1hr 15min]
1:00PM	Lunch at Vogafjós Farm Resort
1:45PM	Drive to and check out Goðafoss [51km; 45min]
3:30PM	Drive to Akureyri [34km; 30min]
4:00PM	Freshen up and get ready for dinner at the hotel
5:00PM	Wander over for beverages and dinner at Centrum Kitchen & Bar
6:30PM	Post-dinner craft beers at the Einstök Brewer's Lounge



DAY 2 DRIVE



DAY 3

Today we departed the north for Reykjavik and made our way northwest to the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. After a quick flight back to Reykjavik city airport, we taxied over to acquire our rental car and headed northwest to enjoy the landscape, infamous black church, and scenic mountain pass over to Grundarfjörður. After checking in, we replenished our energy with a meal before making our way to catch the infamous silhouette of Kirkjufell and its nearby waterfall blanketed in the northern lights; it was breathtaking.

Breakfast at Hotel Kea (included)

6:45AM Drive to **Akureyri Airport** and return rental [4km; 15min]

8:25AM Depart AKY and fly to Reykjavik

9:10AM Arrive RKV and taxi to [Blue Car Rental](#) city office [3km; 10min]

10:15AM Drive to **Borgarbyggð** [75km; 1hr 10min]

11:30AM Lunch at [Geirabakari Kaffihús](#)

12:15PM Drive to **Hellnar** [122km; 1hr 45min]

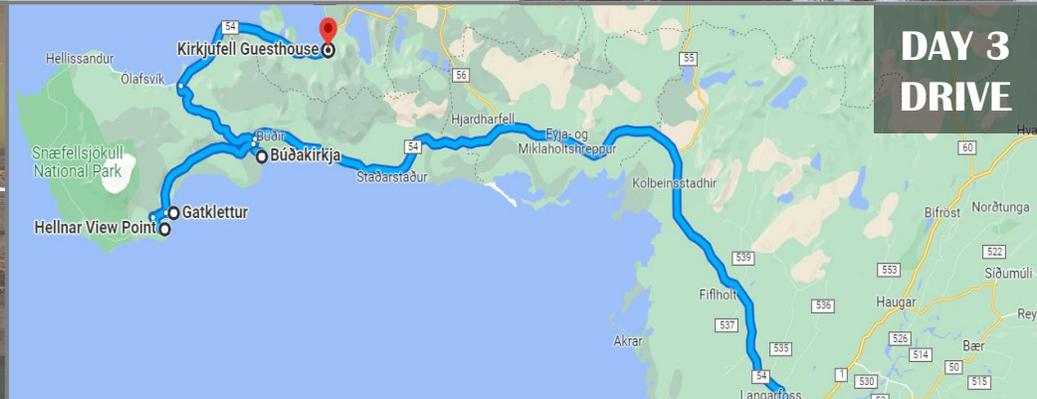
2:00PM Check out [Búðakirkja](#), [Gatklettur](#), and [Hellnar Viewpoint](#)

3:30PM Drive to **Grundarfjörður** [58km; 1hr]

4:30PM Check in at [Kirkjufell Guesthouse](#)

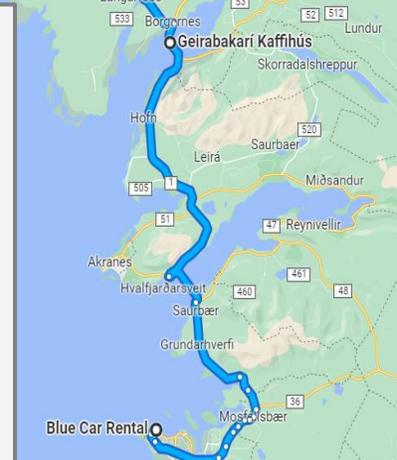
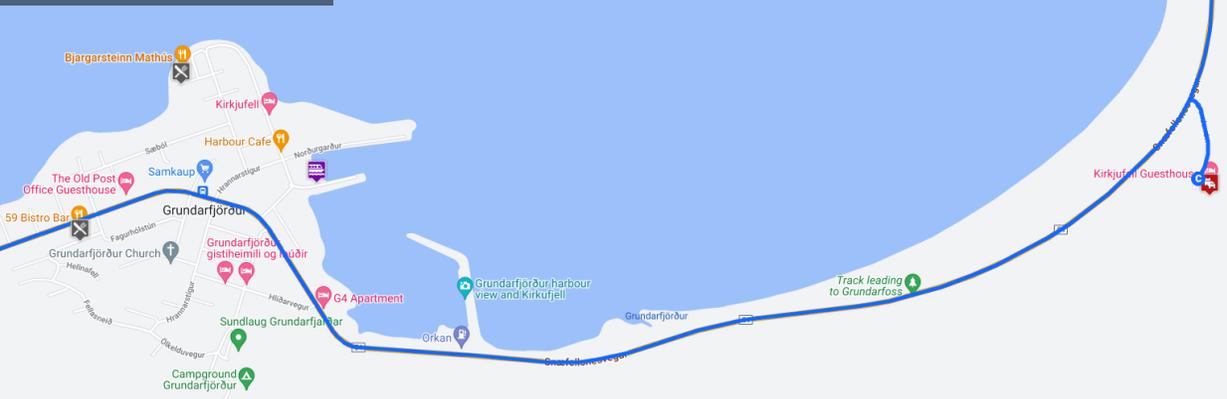
5:30PM Dinner at [Bjargarsteinn Mathús](#) or [59 Bistro Bar](#)

7:00PM Head out in search of the northern lights around Kirkjufell



DAY 3 DRIVE

Grundarfjörður



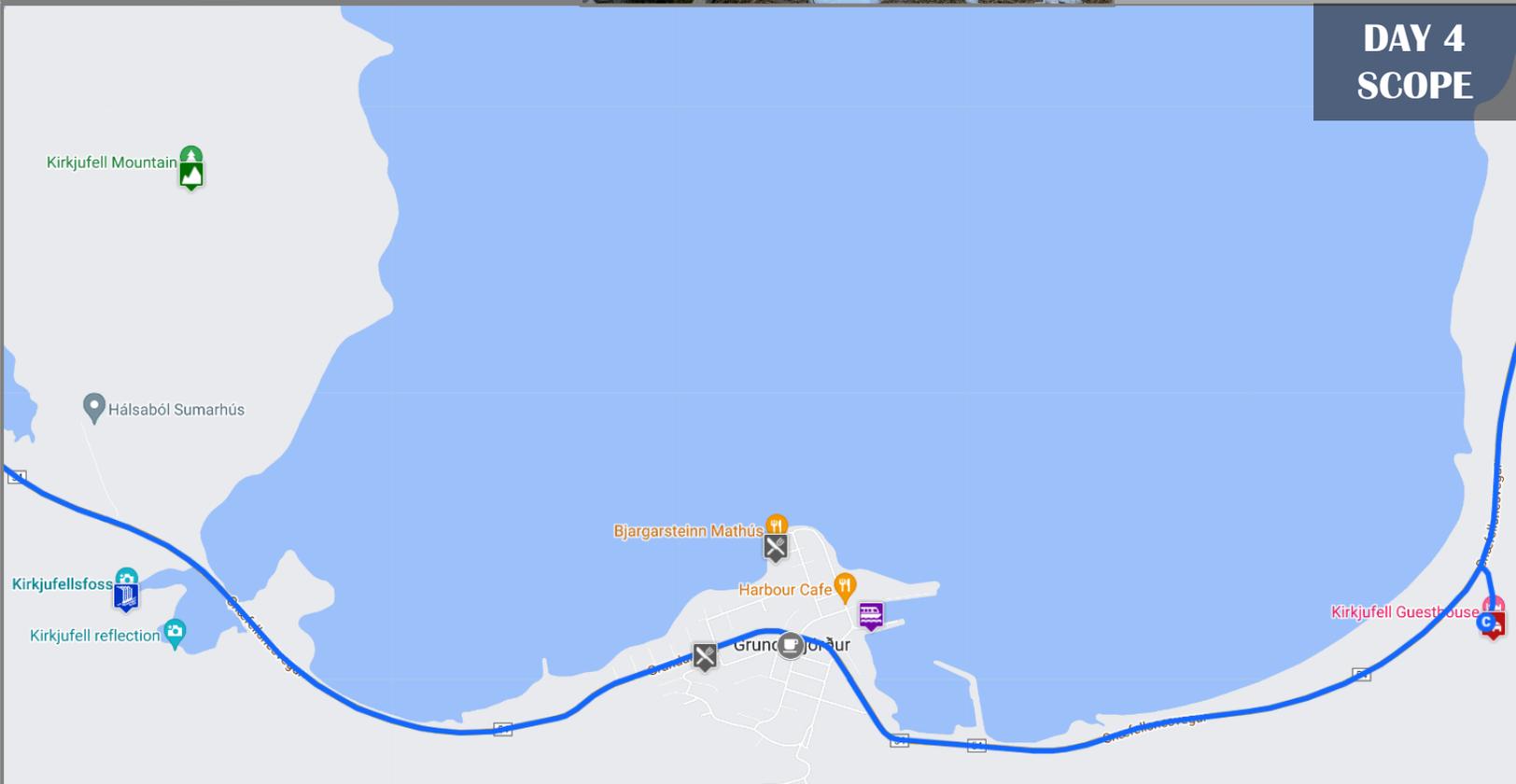
DAY 4

Today we enjoyed whale watching and took a closer look at Kirkjufell and its waterfall. Unfortunately for us, the stormy conditions cancelled our whale watching tour, but hopefully you'll have better luck! Start by fueling up with breakfast before heading to the pier for your whale watching tour. Once you return, feel free to grab lunch and head to the Kirkjufell area to check out the mountain, its waterfall, and the iced over bridge and ropes resulting from the waterfall's mist. Relax and enjoy your evening dinner in town!

- 9:30AM** Have breakfast at Kaffi Emil
 - 10:30AM** Check in for whale watching tour with [Láki Tours](#) (11AM; 2.5-3hr)
 - 2:30PM** Drive to and explore [Kirkjufellsfoss](#)
 - 3:45PM** Drive to **Grundarfjörður**
 - 6:00PM** Dinner at [Bjargarsteinn Mathús](#) or [59 Bistro Bar](#)
- Head out in search of the northern lights around Kirkjufell, if desired



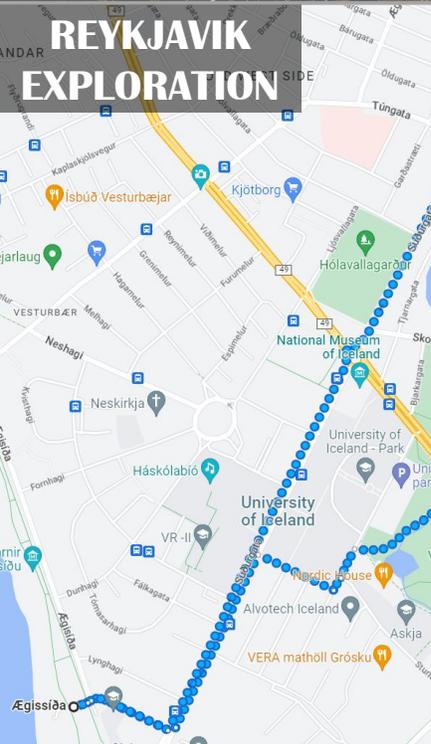
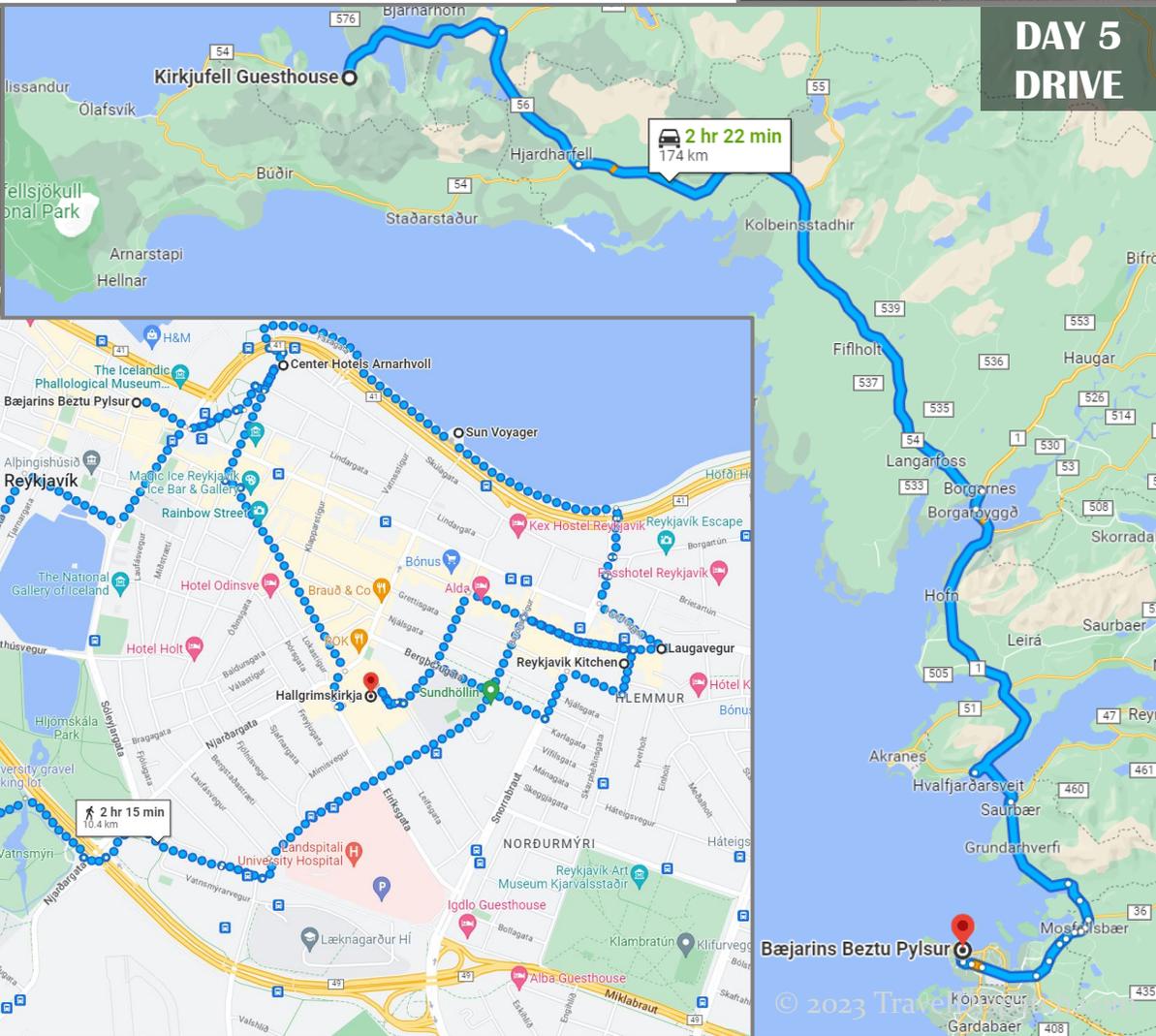
DAY 4 SCOPE



DAY 5

Today was New Year's Eve and we returned to Reykjavik to enjoy the festivities. We departed early to make it back to Reykjavik with an appetite for a delicious lunch of Icelandic hot dogs from our favorite vendor. Although we spent some time catching up with our wedding photographer, we'd recommend you wander the streets and take in the electric atmosphere of the city. It's likely fireworks will have already started going off everywhere and will continue all day and night; make sure you have dinner reservations, as everything will be booked well in advance. Although we missed them, I'd recommend checking the bonfires out. We did catch the traditional comedy show on television before heading to Hallgrímskirkja; which I think is the best place to be immersed in the biggest and most impressive cacophony of light and sound at midnight; it was definitely an amazingly memorable New Year!

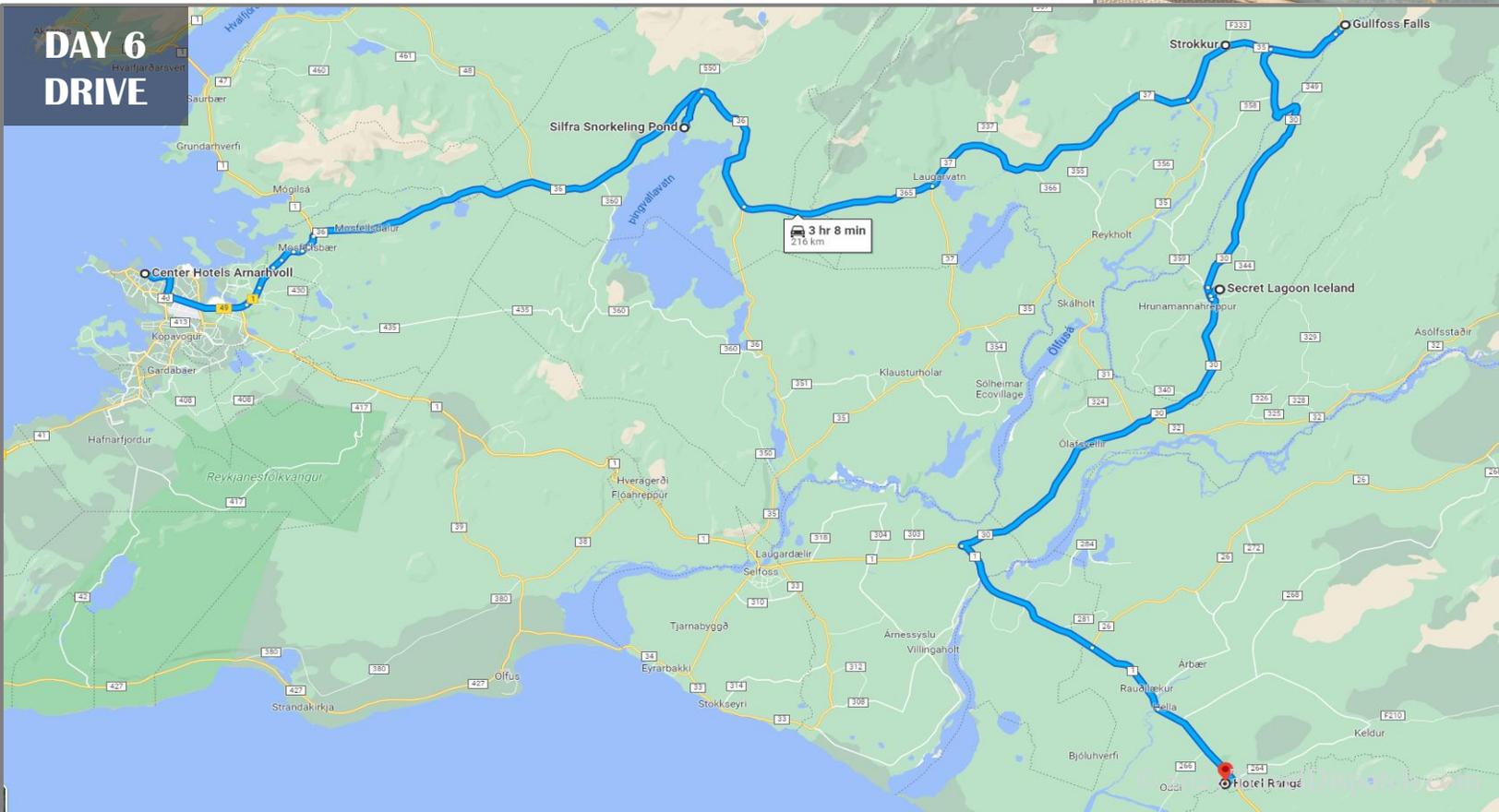
- 8:30AM** Drive back to **Reykjavik** [175km; 2hr 30min]
- 11:00AM** Lunch at [Bæjarins Beztu Pylsur](#) (Tryggvagata)
- 11:45AM** Check in at [Center Hotels Arnarhvoll](#)
- Wander about **Reykjavik** ([Sun Voyager](#); [Laugavegur](#); [Hallgrímskirkja](#))
- 5:00PM** Dinner at [Reykjavik Kitchen](#)
- 8:00PM** Taxi over to check out one of the bonfires (Ægissíða)
- 10:30PM** Watch [Áramótaskaupið](#) ("The New Year's Lampon") at hotel
- 11:00PM** Walk over to [Hallgrímskirkja](#) for New Year's Eve fireworks



DAY 6

Today we checked out some of the notable attractions in the Golden Circle before settling in at Hotel Ranga. If you're able to book a snorkeling tour at the Silfra Snorkeling Pond, you should do so; however, our tour was cancelled due to the New Year's Day holiday. Despite that, we enjoyed the geysers, waterfalls, and thermal pools along our way east to our lodging. Hotel Ranga is not just one of the best luxury lodges in all of Iceland, the hotel and staff helped us sort out our wedding ceremony in front of Seljalandsfoss, southern coast bus tour with our guests, and reception back at the hotel years back; the staff and lodge are absolutely brilliant!

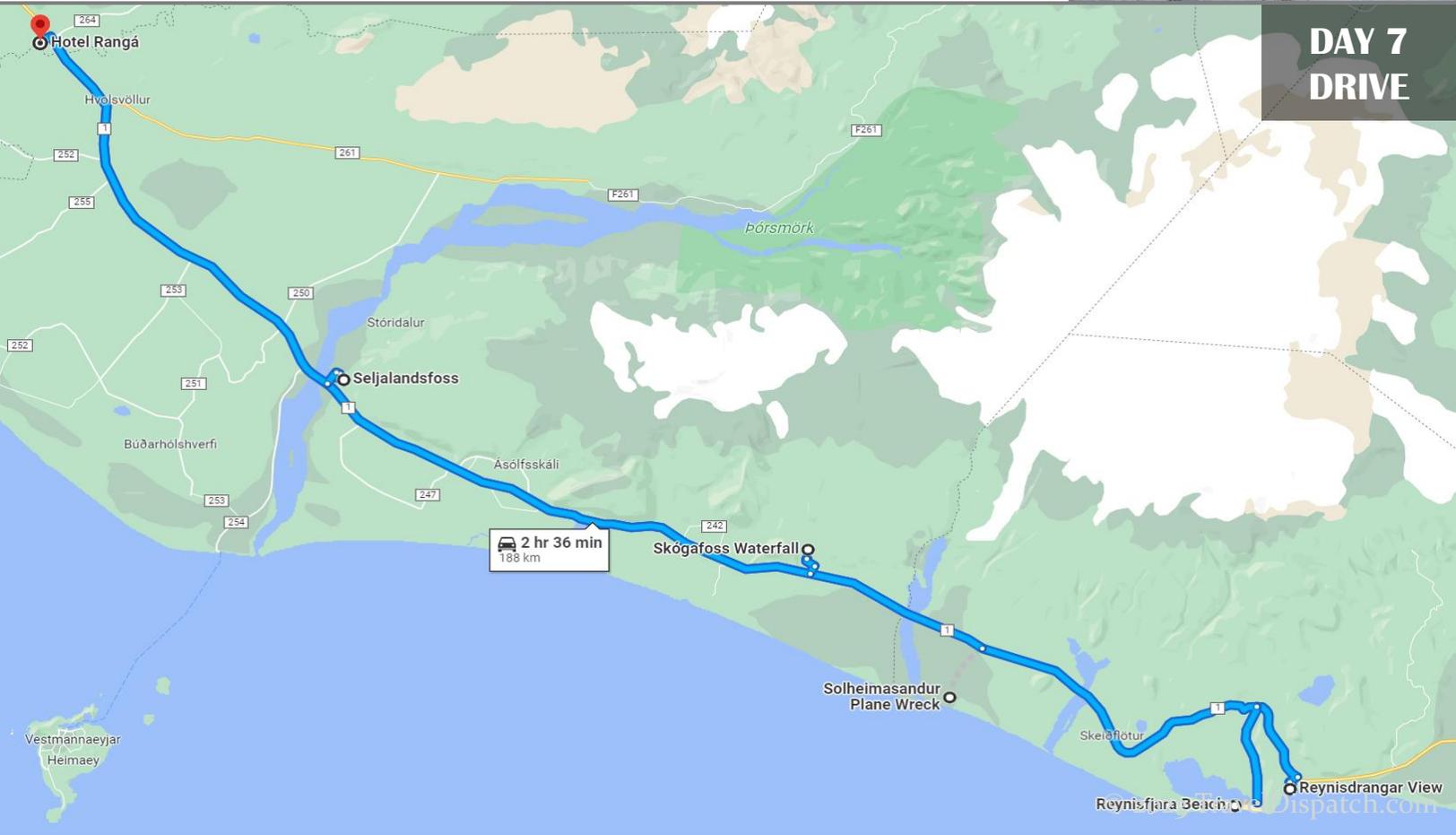
7:30AM	Breakfast at Center Hotels Arnarhvoll
8:15AM	Drive to Thingvellir [113km; 1hr 45min]
10:00AM	Go on Silfra Snorkeling Pond tour , if possible (3hrs)
1:00PM	Check out Strokkur
1:30PM	Drive to Gullfoss [10km; 10min]
1:45PM	Check out Gullfoss
2:30PM	Drive to Flúðir [35km; 30min]
3:00PM	Soak in the Secret Lagoon
5:00PM	Drive to Hella [61km; 45min]
5:45PM	Check into Hotel Ranga , get ready for dinner, and wander around
7:00PM	Drinks and dinner at Hotel Ranga
	Head out in search of the northern lights, if desired



DAY 7

Today we hit some of the most famous sites of southern Iceland. We started the day with a delicious breakfast at Hotel Ranga and then headed east to the town of Vik to wander the black sand beach, sea caves, and marvel at the infamously dangerous surf. From there, we checked out the Solheimasandur Plane Wreck, marveled at the rectangular Skógafoss, and wandered around Seljalandsfoss. Our dinner and drinks that evening were especially tasty and refueled us for the courtesy call from the hotel letting us know the northern lights had started performing. We spent the rest of the evening chasing the surreal northern lights.

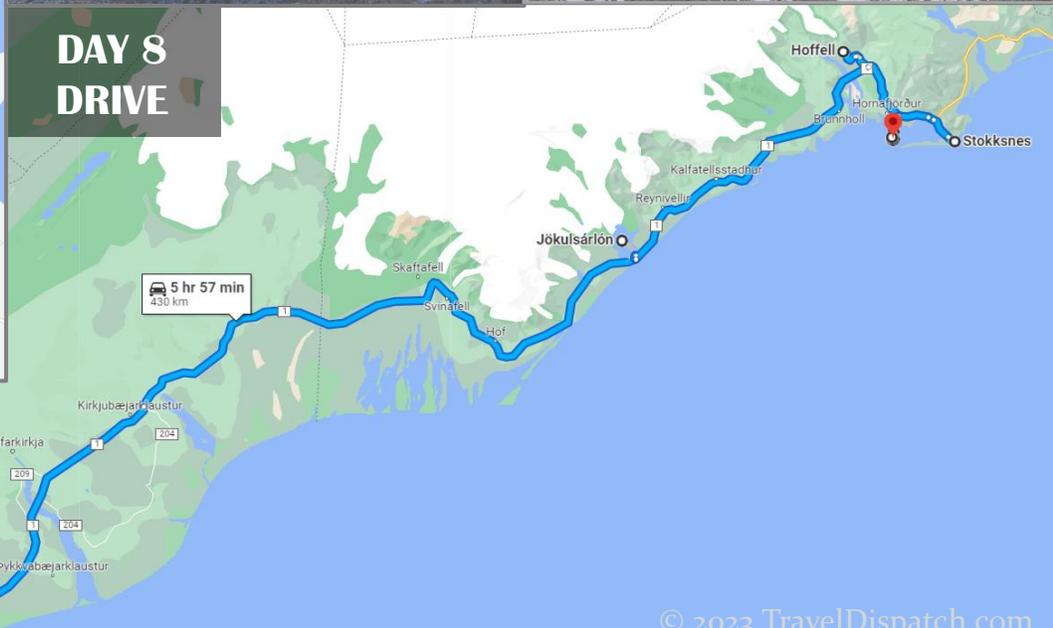
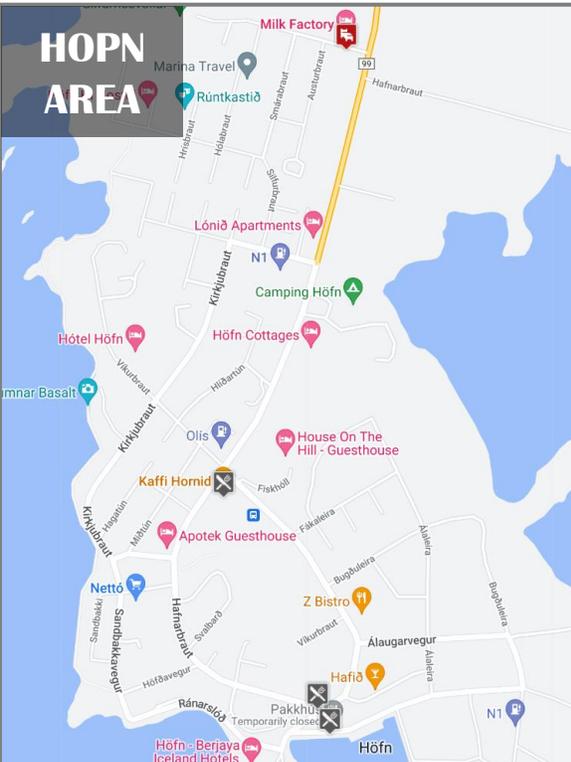
8:30AM	Breakfast at Hotel Ranga
9:30AM	Drive to Reynisdrangar View and Reynisfjara [97km; 1hr 30min]
11:30AM	Wander around Reynisfjara Beach
12:15PM	Drive to Solheimasandur [25km; 20min]
12:45PM	Hike or shuttle to the Solheimasandur Plane Wreck (2.5mi / way)
2:30PM	Drive to and check out Skógafoss [10km; 15min]
3:00PM	Drive to Seljalandsfoss [29km; 30min]
3:30PM	Wander around Seljalandsfoss
4:15PM	Drive to Hella [61km; 45min]
5:30PM	Drinks and dinner at Hotel Ranga
	Head out in search of the northern lights, if desired



DAY 8

Today we traveled even further across the southern coast to the far east of Iceland. After another delicious Hotel Ranga breakfast we checked out and made our way to the Jokularson Iceberg Lagoon and the black sand beach where icebergs who fail to make it out to sea crash against the shore. We continued our way west and marveled at the dramatic landscape along the way and wild horses during a magical sunset. Eventually, we relaxed with a delicious meal and settled in at Höfn for the evening.

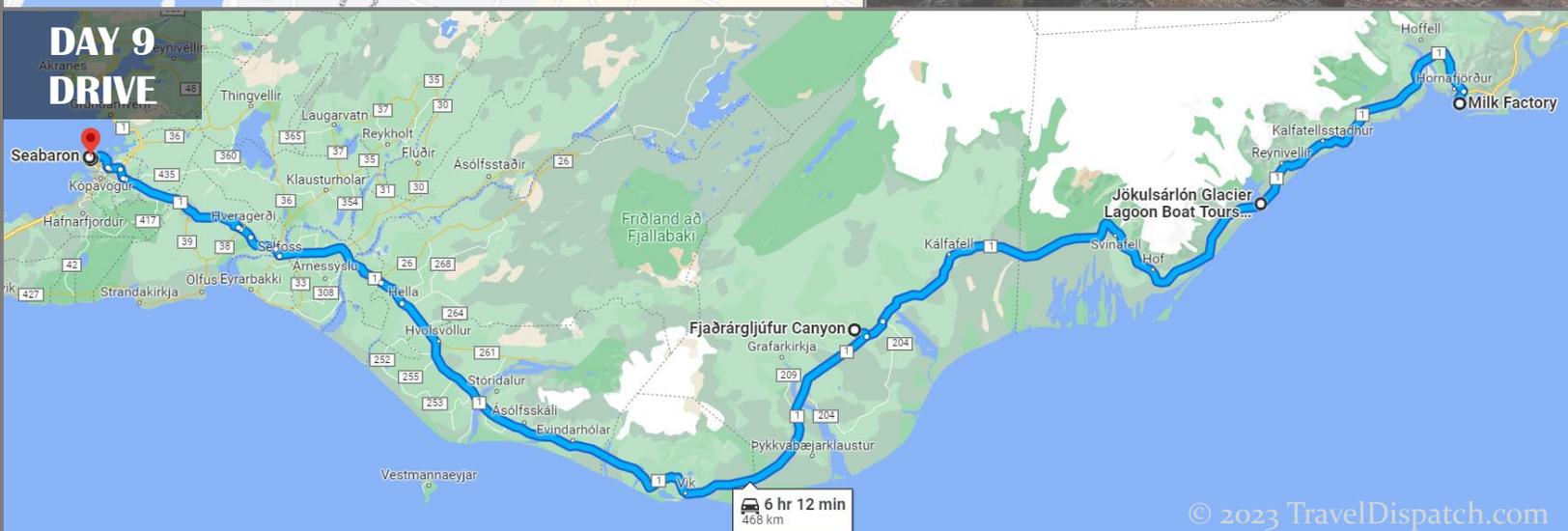
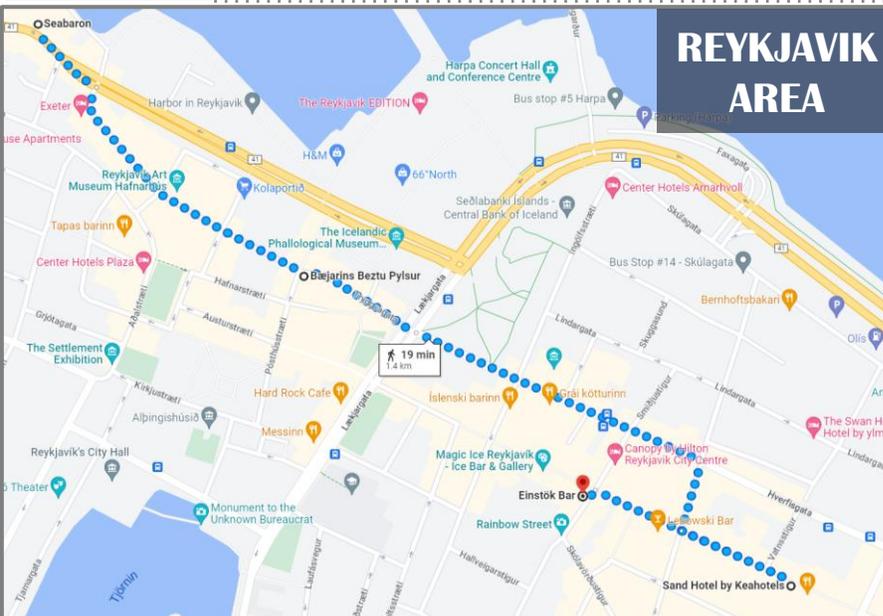
7:00AM	Breakfast at Hotel Ranga
7:30AM	Drive to Jokularson [278km; 3hr 30min]
11:00AM	Wander around Jokularson and Diamond Beach
12:00PM	Drive to Höfn [80km; 1hr]
1:00PM	Lunch at Kaffi Hornið
1:45PM	Check in at Milk Factory
2:30PM	Drive to and check out Hoffellsjökull and then Stokksness for sunset w/ Icelandic horses [53km; 1hr]
4:45PM	Drive to dinner [18km; 20min]
5:15PM	Dinner at Pakkhús Restaurant or Otto Matur & Drykkur



DAY 9

Today we not only made our way back to Reykjavik, but hiked into the belly of a glacier. We grabbed a quick breakfast in Hopn before making our way back west to meet up with our guide for a surreal hiking tour through a sapphire blue ice cave within one of the largest glaciers in the world. We then continued our long journey back to Reykjavik and eventually settled in at our hotel right in the thick of Laugavegur Road; the main pedestrian-only entertainment and shopping district of downtown Reykjavik.

7:30AM	Breakfast at Milk Factory
9:00AM	Drive to Jokularson [79km; 1hr]
10:00AM	Take the <i>Ice Cave Tour</i> with Local Guide (3hr hike)
1:30PM	Drive to Reykjavik via Fjaðrárgljúfur [381km; 4hr 30min]
6:45PM	Delicious seafood bisque at the Sægreifinn
7:30PM	More Icelandic hotdogs from Bæjarins Bestu Pylsur (Tryggvagata)
8:00PM	Check in at Sand Hotel
9:00PM	Night cap drinks on final evening at Einstök Bar



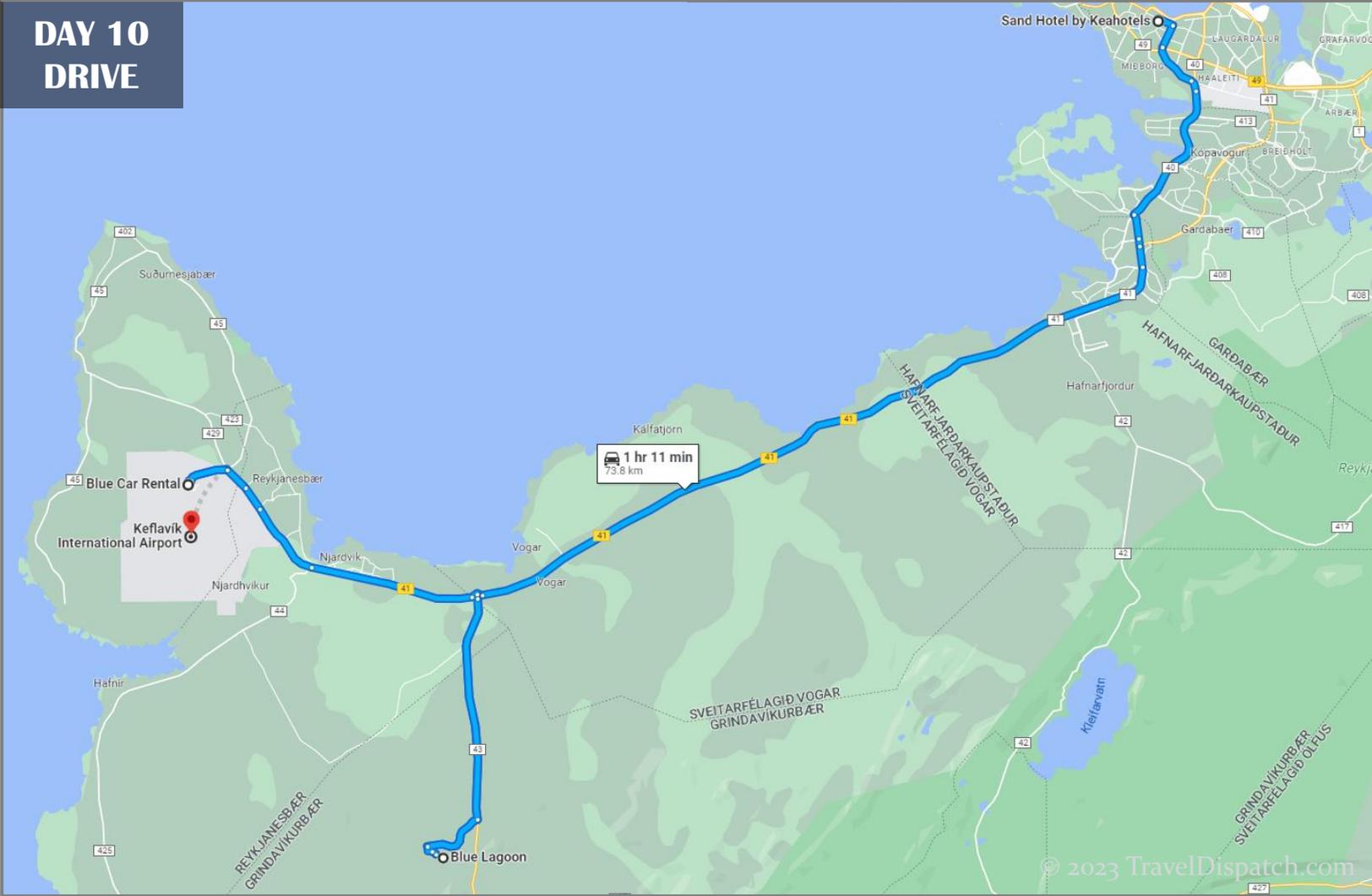
DAY 10

Today we headed home, but not before soaking in all our memories at the infamous Blue Lagoon. We enjoyed a quick breakfast and wandered around Reykjavik for a bit before heading over to the Blue Lagoon. It's there we relaxed, got our 'gram shots, and reflected on all the amazing memories from our trip before returning our rental and hopping on our flight home.

8:00AM	Breakfast at Sand Hotel or Early in the Morning
8:45AM	Wander around Reykjavik one last time
10:00AM	Drive to the Blue Lagoon [49km; 45min]
11:00AM	Soak and relax at the Blue Lagoon
1:30PM	Drive to KEF and return rental car at Blue Car Rental [21km; 20min]
4:50PM	Depart KEF for home!



DAY 10 DRIVE



The lists below illustrate our top picks based on our experiences along our trip. The lists are not intended to be exhaustive and we do not have partnerships or receive incentives from any of our recommendations. We've included any available links to the providers and to 'our reviews' I've posted on TripAdvisor. We wish you memorable travels and encourage you to reach out with any questions!

LODGING

There are plenty of options across Iceland from traditional and boutique hotels to farm stays and Air B&B options. I've ranked ordered where we stayed during this trip below.

[Hotel Ranga](#) [Southern Coast; Days 6 & 7] [{Our Review}](#)

[Sand Hotel](#) [Reykjavik; Day 9] [{Our Review}](#)

[Hotel Kea](#) [Akureyri; Days 1 & 2] [{Our Review}](#)

[Milk Factory](#) [Höfn; Day 8] [{Our Review}](#)

[Center Hotels Arnarhvoli](#) [Reykjavik; Day 5] [{No Review}](#)

[Kirkjufell Guesthouse](#) [Snæfellsnes; Days 3 & 4] [{Our Review}](#)



RESTAURANTS

There are many unique, fresh, and delicious food options across Iceland from fine dining to some very tasty street food favorites. It was tough, but here are our Top 5 places from this trip.

[Reykjavik Kitchen](#) [Reykjavik; Day 5]

Very creative, beautiful, and delicious tasting menu for New Year's Eve; made for a special experience.

[Hotel Ranga](#) [Southern Coast; Days 6 & 7]

Delicious fine dining in a warm and casual atmosphere; the way it should be in remote Iceland.

[Sand Hotel](#) [Reykjavik; Day 10]

One of the most fresh, diverse, and delicious hotel breakfasts in the country.

[Centrum Kitchen & Bar](#) [Akureyri; Day 2]

Very flavorful variety of dishes that are hearty without being heavy.

[Kaffi Hornið](#) [Höfn; Day 8]

One of the best lobster soups in the country and fantastic reindeer burger.

EXPERIENCES

[Ice Cave Tour with Local Guide](#) [Southern Coast]

Ride out to a glacier in a specially modified monster truck and hike into the sapphire blue glass-like caves that are naturally bored by water each summer; absolutely awe-inspiring experience. (3-4hr; 19.900 ISK)

[New Year's Eve Fireworks at Hallgrímskirkja](#) [Reykjavik]

The locals coordinate to deliver one of the most impressive and immersive fireworks experiences I've ever seen. Although the fireworks are everywhere, I think the best place to see them is Hallgrímskirkja. (FREE!)

[Pólar Hestar](#) [Akureyri]

Icelandic horses are known for their smooth gait but also require you to actually ride and control them; a very refreshing experience compared to the auto-pilot horses I've ridden in the USA. (1.5hr; 10.500 ISK)

[Jokularson](#) and [Diamond Beach](#) [Southern Coast]

There aren't many places in the world with easy access to a giant lagoon full of icebergs and a black sand beach littered with failed icebergs of all shapes and sizes; it's a truly unique and amazing place. (FREE!)

[Snowstorms in Northern Iceland](#) [Akureyri]

So it's not something you can book or control, but wandering around town or driving (if you're skilled) in a snowstorm is a memorable experience; the only drawback is that things may be closed by the storm.

