



DAILY LIFE

December 03 | A Start of Something New (ESA)



The only thing the grumps who didn't vote on Saturday achieved is that they won't have a say in the upcoming democratic reforms. [more](#)

DAILY NEWS

December 03 | Action Plan for Indebted Households Signed



The government signed a declaration of intent along with the pension funds and loan institutions on an action plan to solve the problems of indebted households earlier today. [more](#)

MULTIMEDIA

November 22 | Icelandic Fox in the Wild



Click on the picture to watch an audio slideshow of a fox feasting on a golden plover nest in the Icelandic

highlands last summer. The Arctic Fox is the only native land mammal to Iceland. Foxes are good hunters. They feed on ptarmigans and various other birds, eggs and chicks. They are even known to attack lambs. [more](#)

November 01 | Village Profile: Sandgerdi – Within Reach



Located just 40 minutes by car and six minutes from Keflavik International Airport, Sandgerdi

("Sandy Hedge") is a growing town of 1,700 with a storied history and loads to see. Read this special promotion about the hidden secrets of one of Iceland's most charming seaside villages. [more](#)

Friends of Iceland Review: super 8 film

REVIEWS

Welcome to *Iceland Review Online's* review section. Guest contributors and staff writers will provide you with a new review every Monday about a current art exhibition, a new Icelandic film, an album recently released by an Icelandic band or a new Icelandic novel likely to be published abroad. Please email any comments you might have to the web editor:

eyglo@icelandreview.com.

29/11/2010 | 11:46

Iceland's Unspoiled Nature... Now You See It, Now You Don't: Dreamland

Review by Alana Odegard.



"When travelling around the country or seeing pictures of the landscape, one thinks: 'Even if I have nothing, I'd still have this, this is ours.' But now, the message is: 'No, this is not yours.'"

Dreamland (Draumalandið) is a documentary based on the popular book by Andri Snaer Magnason called *Dreamland – A Self-Help Manual for a Frightened Nation*, first published in 2006.

In her rave review of the book, Eyglo called it a must-read and the film

follows in its footsteps because *Dreamland* is a must-see.

According to [the official website](#), *Dreamland*, directed by Thorfinnur Gudnason and Andri Snaer Magnason, is a film about a nation standing at a crossroads: how much unspoiled nature should be preserved and what should be sacrificed for clean, renewable energy?

It seems that every day there is a news story here related to the harnessing, development, or selling of geothermal or hydroelectric energy. There is also plenty of talk about aluminum smelters, be it the construction of new ones or proposals to expand existing ones.

When reading these stories, I usually just skim over the names of the places that are affected by the wheeling and dealing taking place between the government and companies, both foreign and domestic.

For me, these locations were just names I had read on a page or heard in passing but *Dreamland* changed all of that. This film takes you to the sites in question, showing you they aren't just headlines, but rather real places.

As you see some of the landscape that has been forever destroyed and altered, reality gradually sets in and the film's tagline takes hold of you: What do you own when you have sold everything?

First and foremost, the film is informative. It provides a history and background of Iceland in the lead-up to the energy frenzy.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Giants of the North



The third issue of the print edition of *Iceland Review* 2010 has just been published. Entitled "Giants of the North" the magazine contains a photo essay by Páll Stefánsson about

Iceland's, and Europe's, most powerful waterfall and its surroundings. New subscribers will receive the book *Puffins* as a gift and all subscribers are part of a draw to win a trip to Iceland. [Click here](#) to subscribe to the magazine. [more](#)

November 29 | Feature of the Week: Iceland's Dark Passion



Upon arrival in Iceland it's immediately clear that the population has something of a licorice fetish. Hypnotic-striped Opal boxes in red, green and black hem checkout lines

at every supermarket, not to mention the candy aisles and movie theatre snack stalls overflowing with the stuff, especially with chocolate covered licorice in its various bits, bombs and bars. [more](#)

November 29 | Event of the Week: A Considered View



How about a photo exhibition this week? Currently on display at the Reykjavik Museum of Photography is the exhibition "A Considered View" by Wayne

Gudmundson, an American of Icelandic origin. In addition to exploring the land of his ancestors, with his camera, he could also see the upper Midwest through the eyes of those who had come before him. [more](#)

There are many interviews accompanied by facts and figures, but what's nice is that the film pauses after someone rattles off some technical lingo and asks, "But what do all of these words mean? What does it all signify?"

Dreamland also takes the time to put some of the information into perspective.

For example, in addition to providing stats on the total tonnage of a smelter's output, you're also told that "the Alcoa aluminum plant in east Iceland uses as much electricity as a city of one million citizens."

I think the key to this film is that it's accessible and it doesn't talk down to you. Actually, what I particularly liked about this film is that it gives the viewer time and space to let the pictures tell the story, without voice-over or narration.

There's something to be said for seeing the side of a beautiful mountain being blown to smithereens. You really do feel it.

It's also unsettling to actually see the sterile industrial buildings stuck smack dab in the middle of what was once unspoiled nature. It's something that cannot be conveyed by reading or hearing about the factories or demolition projects.

Of course where money and profits are concerned, the Icelandic word of the moment is bound to creep up: corruption.

Hearing and seeing even more about corrupt politicians triggered my gag reflex once again. Some of the words that came to mind: disturbing, sad, maddening, disgusting and embarrassing. You truly feel embarrassed for some of the people who got sucked in to pushing through legislation and contracts.

To know that nearly every rule in the book was being broken makes me sick, but I'm not surprised. There's one scene in particular about a mayor-turned-employee of an aluminum company that will really make your skin crawl.

But regardless of whether you agree with the politics behind the decisions or not, everyone should have to watch this movie.

The incredible footage of the wildlife and scenery also tells a story. When looking at the landscape you can't help but think, "Will this lava field, waterfall or river be next?"—and I think tugging at your heartstrings is part of the film's ultimate goal.

There may have been a few scenes where I felt the message of "Companies are Evil" was being pushed on me a little too forcefully, but for the most part, I was interested in hearing what I felt was the other side of the story.

In her assessment of the book, Eygló states that nothing should be read unquestioned and I think the same applies to the film.

Dreamland certainly has an agenda but it's not doomsday dramatic, aiming to guilt or bully the viewer into making changes or taking a stand.

No, instead the film manages to make you feel ashamed.

What I mean by this is that it's all too easy to assume that other people will "take care of it", but *Dreamland* puts some of the onus on us, bringing up the moral duty we have to protect the natural resources of the world.

Icelanders especially cannot afford to watch and wait because unfortunately once the damage is done, there's no way to undo it. You just can't take back something like [the Kárahnúkar dam](#).

If anything, *Dreamland* raises many interesting questions and serves up plenty of food for thought.

Dreamland won the award for Best Documentary at the 2009 Eddas (Iceland's Academy Awards) and let me tell you, it is well deserved.

See the movie or read the book, I don't care which. The bottom line is get informed because once paradise is paved, so to speak, it will be too late for this tiny little nation.



Dreamland is available on DVD with English subtitles in webstores such as nammi.is and shopicelandic.com.

Alana Odegard – alana@wordbyword.is

Ready and willing to watch anything that comes her way, Alana has an unquenchable thirst for the motion picture art form. Alana studied film as part of her BA degree and as the story so often goes, she is tirelessly trying to find ways to surround herself with the enchanting world of film. She hopes this passion will one day spill over from the realm of pastime to likewise envelop that of fulltime day-job as well.

[Back](#)

[Email this article](#)

November 22 | [Nylon-Concealed Lie or Disgraceful Truth?](#)

November 15 | [A Literary Scavenger Hunt: In the Footsteps of a Storyteller](#)

November 08 | [On The Road: Stafraenn Hákon – Sanitas](#)

November 01 | [A Place Fit For Kings: King's Road](#)

October 25 | [Watercolor Nostalgia Heals the Autumn Blues](#)

October 18 | [A Celebration of Whales](#)

October 11 | [Sound Bites – Iceland Airwaves Preview](#)

October 04 | [Something for Everyone: Reykjavik International Film Festival](#)

September 27 | [History Lesson in Icelandic Feminist Art](#)

September 20 | [Making Sense of the Eruption: Volcano Island](#)

September 06 | [It's Time to Make Some Changes: Future of Hope](#)

August 30 | [And More Mountain Art](#)

August 23 | [A Guide to Reykjavik's Greens: 25 Beautiful Walks – Walking Trails of the Greater Reykjavik Area](#)

August 16 | [I Love It Loud: Miri – Okkar](#)

August 09 | [Power of Nature: Kraftur – The Last Ride](#)

[next page](#)