

KRAIG ADAMS

Hornstrandir Hiking Guide

4 days alone across Iceland's Hornstrandir Nature Reserve

2027 season edition · updated October 2026

Contents

	Welcome
	At a glance
	Straight answers
	When to go
	The reserve rules
	Camping
	Getting there
	The boats
Day 1	**Hesteyri to Aðalvík**
Day 2	**Aðalvík to Fljótavík**
Day 3	**Fljótavík to Hornvík**
Day 4	**Hornvík to Veiðileysufjörður**
	Getting home
	Other ways to do it
	Food and water
	What I paid
	Gear for this route
	Weather and safety
	Using the GPX files
	Before you go, check these
	One-page trip sheet
	About this guide

Welcome

In July 2019 I spent four days backpacking alone across the Hornstrandir Nature Reserve, the remote northwest corner of Iceland's Westfjords. A boat dropped me at Hesteyri, I walked about 60 miles with a tent over passes and along empty beaches to Hornvík and the Hornbjarg cliffs, and another boat picked me up in Veiðileysufjörður. There are no roads, no shops and almost no phone signal in the reserve.



Me below Kálfatindar at Hornbjarg, Day 4.

The film of this trip, "Hiking 60 miles Alone in Iceland," is the one that kind of launched my career as a silent solo hiking filmmaker. It's a magical place that I didn't know about until I researched it a week or two before the trip. I never did a guide with that video, and this trip deserves one. This is everything I used and learned, in one place, checked again for 2027.

What's inside

- Straight answers to the questions people ask me about Hornstrandir
- When to go, the reserve rules and where you can camp
- Getting to Ísafjörður, and the boats in and out, with 2026 prices
- All four days: my notes, the trail, where to get off, a map with an elevation profile, and links to that day in my film
- A slower six to seven day version, and shorter trips
- Food and water, what I paid, the gear for this route (what I carried and filmed with), weather and safety
- One page of things to check before you go, and a printable trip sheet

How to use it offline

Save this PDF to your phone's Files or Books app before you leave home. Load the GPX files and download offline maps while you still have Wi-Fi, because there's really no cell service once you're in the reserve. Each day starts on a new page, so you can jump straight to it. The film links need a connection; everything else works in airplane mode.

When I say "I," it's my own trip. Boat times, prices and rules change, so they're dated, and the checks are collected on one page: Before you go, check these.

At a glance

QUICK FACTS

Distance	58.1 miles (93.5 km) of walking over 4 days
Climbing	about 10,600 ft (3,220 m) up and the same down
Days	4 walking days, 3 nights in my tent
Start	Hesteyri (boat from Ísafjörður)
Finish	Veiðileysufjörður (boat back to Ísafjörður)
Highest point	1,630 ft (497 m), Hafnarskarð, Day 4
When	Summer. Scheduled boats run about June 1 to late August
Difficulty	A little harder than usual: no trees, but swampy, muddy and marshy in places, fords, snow on the passes, and a surprising amount of climbing for a coastal walk
Nearest airport	Ísafjörður (IFJ), from Reykjavík's domestic airport
Trip date	July 10 to 13, 2019, solo

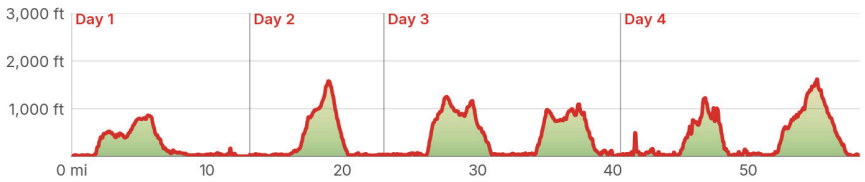
DAY	ROUTE	MILES (KM)	UP / DOWN (FT)	SLEEP
1	Hesteyri to Aðalvík	13.2 (21.2)	1,357 / 1,354	My tent on the Aðalvík shore
2	Aðalvík to Fljótavík	9.9 (15.9)	1,609 / 1,612	My tent at Fljótavík
3	Fljótavík to Hornvík	17.5 (28.1)	3,295 / 3,298	Hornvík campsite
4	Hornvík, Hornbjarg, Veiðileysufjörður	17.6 (28.4)	4,317 / 4,308	Nap, then the boat

The numbers come from my own GPS recordings, smoothed the same way for every day. The route I planned said about 50 miles, and apps count climbing differently: AllTrails shows about 12,500 ft for my four days. My title says 60 miles; my GPS says 58.1.



Kálfatindar, the high point of Hornbjarg, on Day 4.





My four days across Hornstrandir. Solid lines are walking; dashed lines are the boats, drawn straight (not the boats' real courses). Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

Straight answers

How many days do I need? I walked it in four days and three nights, and I hiked faster than most people I saw. It's a three or four day trip at my pace, but you're the only person who can answer this, because you know how many miles you can do. This hike is a little harder than usual, so if you usually do 15 miles a day, plan on 10. That makes my line about six days. There's a plan in A slower version.

Is it hard? No trees, so the views are open, but it can be swampy, muddy and marshy, and there's a surprising amount of elevation gain for a walk that spends so much time on beaches. Day 3 crosses three passes, and Day 4 climbs onto Hornbjarg and then over Hafnarskarð. There are river crossings, snow patches on the passes, and two short spots with a fixed rope. The trail was much wetter than I showed in the video; my boots and socks were soaked most days.

Do I need a permit? No permit is needed in summer. From 1 March to 15 June and from 1 September to 1 November you must register your trip online with the reserve before you go. In summer you don't. See The reserve rules.

Can I camp anywhere? No. Camping is only allowed at the designated campsites (or on private land with the landowner's permission), and my Day 1 and Day 2 camps were not at one. Don't copy them. With small changes to Days 1 and 2 you can still do it in four days. See Camping.

How do I get there? Fly or drive to Ísafjörður, then take a boat. You have to book both the boat in and the boat out, and that's the most difficult and most expensive part of the trip. See The boats.

Can I fly with stove fuel? No. You can't take gas canisters on the plane to Ísafjörður. I bought a canister for my stove at the Nettó supermarket in town.

Is there food or water on the way? Water, yes: streams almost everywhere. Food, no. There are no shops in the reserve, so carry everything plus a spare day for weather. In 2019 there was a crêpe and coffee place at Hesteyri, where the boat dropped me.

Is there phone signal? There's really no cell service in Hornstrandir. You have to be very precise and have good planning for getting picked up. Carry offline maps, and think about a satellite messenger.

What about the bugs? The flies were terrible. They didn't bite, but they went for my eyes, nose, mouth and ears whenever there was no wind, especially at camp. I really wish I'd had a bug net.

Will I see arctic foxes? I saw one. They change color with the season. Keep at least 40 m (130 ft) from their dens and don't feed them.

Why is your film silent? My microphone broke on this trip, so I didn't bring one, and I only had the camera's own mic for natural sound. That's how the silent solo hiking style started for me.

Can I do it alone? I did. You'll see a few people at the boat landings and the main campsites, especially Hornvík, and almost no one in between. Leave your plan with SafeTravel and someone at home. See Weather and safety.

When to go

Summer. The scheduled boats run from about June 1 to late August (2026), and the reserve's rangers are at Hesteyri and Höfn in Hornvík in summer. Outside summer you'd need a chartered boat, and in spring and autumn you must register your trip.

What I got. I walked July 10 to 13, 2019. For most of the boat ride out it was white-out fog, and I was worried it would be like that the whole hike. As we landed it cleared up: blue skies and wildflowers everywhere. The first couple of days were bright and sunny, and the flies were bad wherever the wind dropped. On Day 4 storm clouds were coming in at Hornbjarg, it started to rain as I went back to my tent, and it poured right after I got my tent up in Veiðileysufjörður.

Snow. I crossed snow patches on the passes in July, and Hafnarskarð can hold snow long into summer. Earlier in the season there's more of it.

Light. The reserve is just south of the Arctic Circle. On the north coast the sun doesn't fully set from about June 8 to July 6, and through July and early August it never really gets dark (computed). I was able to dry my socks more than usual because of it. Bring an eye mask if you need dark to sleep.

Weather changes fast. Fog can hide the cairns, rain makes the streams too big to jump, and it's cold even in July. Check the forecast at vedur.is before the boat and every morning you have signal.

The reserve rules

Hornstrandir is a nature reserve, managed since 2025 by Náttúruverndarstofnun, Iceland's Nature Conservation Agency. Its visitor centre, Hornstrandastofa, is in Ísafjörður (665-2810, hornstrandastofa@nattura.is; summer 2026 hours June 1 to August 31, Monday to Saturday 8:00 to 15:30). The main rules, from the reserve's special rules as published in 2026:

- **Register** your trip online from 1 March to 15 June and from 1 September to 1 November: gogn.ust.is/hornstrandir. Not needed in summer.
- **Camp only at designated campsites**, and no more than one week on the same pitch.
- **No campfires.** Cook on a stove.
- **No dogs** (landowners excepted, on a leash) and **no bicycles**.
- **No drones** or other aircraft without a permit from the agency. Since May 2026 it only gives drone permits for work such as research, filming projects and commercial photography, not for hobby flying.
- **Groups:** at most 30 people in the western part and 15 in organized groups in the eastern part.
- **Arctic foxes:** stay at least 40 m (130 ft) from dens, watch for no more than 20 minutes, pass quietly, never feed them.
- **Carry out all your rubbish.**

The reserve's official map (campsites, emergency shelters and marked routes) and the route descriptions are on nattura.is and ust.is. Download both before you go.

Camping

Where I slept

NIGHT	WHERE	DESIGNATED CAMPSITE?
July 9	A guesthouse in Ísafjörður	
July 10	My tent on the Aðalvík shore, northeast of Sæból	No
July 11	My tent on the west side of Fljótavatn, Fljótavík	No
July 12	Hornvík campsite at Höfn	Yes
July 13	Veiðileysufjörður campsite, a few hours before the boat	Yes
July 14	Mánagisting guesthouse, Ísafjörður	

My two wild camps. On Day 1 I camped on the grass above the beach in Aðalvík, and on Day 2 at Fljótavík, because I'd had a rough day. Neither was a designated campsite, and camping is only allowed at those. Use the campsites below instead; the GPX waypoints mark them.

Campsites on my route

From the reserve's official map. Every campsite has a toilet (a dry latrine or a water toilet).

CAMPSITE	WHERE ON MY ROUTE
Hesteyri	Mile 0.3 of Day 1, by the boat landing. Ranger in summer
Sæból (Aðalvík)	Mile 9.5 of Day 1. Boats land here
Látrar (Aðalvík)	Mile 2 of Day 2. Emergency shelter next to it
Fljótavatn (south end)	Mile 1.7 of Day 3
Atlastaðir (north Fljótavík)	Across the lake outlet from my Day 2 camp. Emergency shelter
Hlöðuvík	Mile 9.6 of Day 3. Emergency shelter
Hornvík (Höfn)	End of Day 3. Ranger house and boat landing
Horn	Mile 8.3 of Day 4, on the east side of Hornvík
Veiðileysufjörður	End of Day 4, by the boat landing

So the fair version of my days is: Day 1 to Sæból (9.5 mi) or on to Látrar, Day 2 to the Fljótavatn campsite, then Days 3 and 4 as I did them.

Hornvík was the main campsite, where most of the people were. When I got there, other hikers were sitting at the picnic tables. **Veiðileysufjörður** had other hikers too, waiting for the boat.

Emergency shelters (the orange huts, run by the rescue association Landsbjörg) are for emergencies only, not for planned nights.

Getting there

What I did. I flew into Reykjavík and then took the quick flight on a very small plane from the city's domestic airport to Ísafjörður, a lovely little town between the fjords. The opening shot of my film is me landing there. You hop on a little shuttle that takes you around the water into town. You could also take a bus or rent a car, but I don't recommend it.

Flights (2026). Icelandair flies from Reykjavík's domestic airport, close to downtown, to Ísafjörður in under an hour. Icelandair had planned to drop the route after summer 2026, but in April 2026 it signed a state contract that keeps the flights going until at least August 31, 2030. International flights land at Keflavík, not at the domestic airport, so allow time to get across. Leave slack before your boat.

Ísafjörður

It's a very small, quaint town, and it's worth a day either side of the hike. I've been back since with my wife, and it was nice to reminisce about the hike.

- **Sleep.** I stayed at a guesthouse in town; when I looked it up in 2023 it was about $93 a night. After the hike I paid ISK 21,400 on my card at Mánagisting (Mánagata 4) on July 14, 2019.
- **Eat.** Tjöruhúsið is the one place you have to go: the best fish soup and fish buffet. It serves only the catch of the day (no menu); in 2026 it's open April 1 to October 31, and you should book at least three days ahead in summer (456-4419). There's also a pretty cool brewery, Dokkan Brugghús, and a café in the centre where I always got breakfast and good coffee.
- **Supplies.** I got a gas canister for my stove at the Nettó supermarket, and my groceries.
- **Boats.** The boat offices are in the centre, and the boats leave from the harbour. See The boats.

The boats

The trail starts across the water, so you need a boat in and a boat out. You book both, you figure out the times from the schedules, and you plan your walking days around the pickup. Booking the boat is the hardest part, because once you're in the reserve you can't call to change it.

What I did. When I arrived in Ísafjörður I went straight to a boat office to book my ferry to the trailhead. I believe it was West Tours. I got very lucky: I showed up, booked, and left about 30 minutes later. It's probably more popular now, and the boats can sell out, so book as early as you can. I took the boat to Hesteyri, walked to Hornvík and the Horn, and got picked up in Veiðileysufjörður. My memory was almost ISK 20,000 each way, over $100, so up to about $300 for the round trip. It's the most expensive thing about this hike.

The companies (2026). Three companies run scheduled boats. You can go out with one and come back with another, but changing a booking between companies later may cost you.

COMPANY	FROM	WHERE (2026)	ONE WAY (2026)
Borea Adventures	Ísafjörður harbour; office Aðalstræti 17	Hesteyri, Veiðileysufjörður, Hornvík, Grunnavík on request	Hesteyri or Veiðileysufjörður ISK 14,900; Hornvík ISK 19,300
Sjóferðir (book through West Tours, Aðalstræti 7, +354 456 5111, or Sjóferðir directly, +354 825 5550)	Ísafjörður	Hesteyri, Veiðileysufjörður, Grunnavík, Aðalvík, Hornvík; other landings on request	Ask when booking
Hornstrandaferðir	Ísafjörður, 9:00 daily, June 1 to late August	Hesteyri daily; Veiðileysufjörður Mon, Wed, Fri, Sun	Hesteyri ISK 13,900; Veiðileysufjörður ISK 14,900

Sjóferðir's 2026 departures from Ísafjörður, as West Tours listed them: Hesteyri, Veiðileysufjörður and Grunnavík Monday 14:00, Tuesday 17:00, Wednesday 14:00, Friday and Saturday 9:00; Aðalvík Tuesday and Wednesday 9:00, Friday 17:30, Saturday 15:30; Hornvík Thursday 9:00, Sunday 13:00. As of October 11, 2026, none of the three companies had published 2027 timetables or prices, so check before you book.

Pickups. The companies can't tell you the exact pickup time on the return; it depends on the day's route, the weather and the luggage. Be at the landing early with your gear packed, and carry food for an extra day in case the boat can't come. Borea's fare includes one backpack of about 20 kg (44 lb); an extra bag is ISK 5,000. Be at the dock 20 minutes before departure.

Landings. At some landings, like Veiðileysufjörður when I left, you ride a small inflatable from the shore out to the bigger boat.



The path south along Hesteyrarfjörður on Day 1.



Aðalvík on the evening of Day 1.

DAY 1

Hesteyri to Aðalvík

DISTANCE	CLIMBING	DESCENT	TIME TO ALLOW
13.2 mi (21.2 km)	**1,357 ft** (414 m)	**1,354 ft** (413 m)	**7 to 8 hours** (I took 7 hours 9 minutes, 5.5 hours moving, 2:35 to 9:45 p.m., after the boat)

HIGH POINT

864 ft (263 m), on Sléttuheiði at about 5.6 miles

BOAT

Ísafjörður to Hesteyri

SLEEP

My tent on the Aðalvík shore (not a campsite). Use Sæból campsite at mile 9.5 instead

FOOD AND WATER

The café at Hesteyri, then nothing. Plenty of streams.

My day

The boat ride was white-out fog almost the whole way, and I couldn't see anything. As we landed at Hesteyri it cleared up: blue sky, wildflowers everywhere. There was a crêpe and coffee place right there, in a house run by a single person.



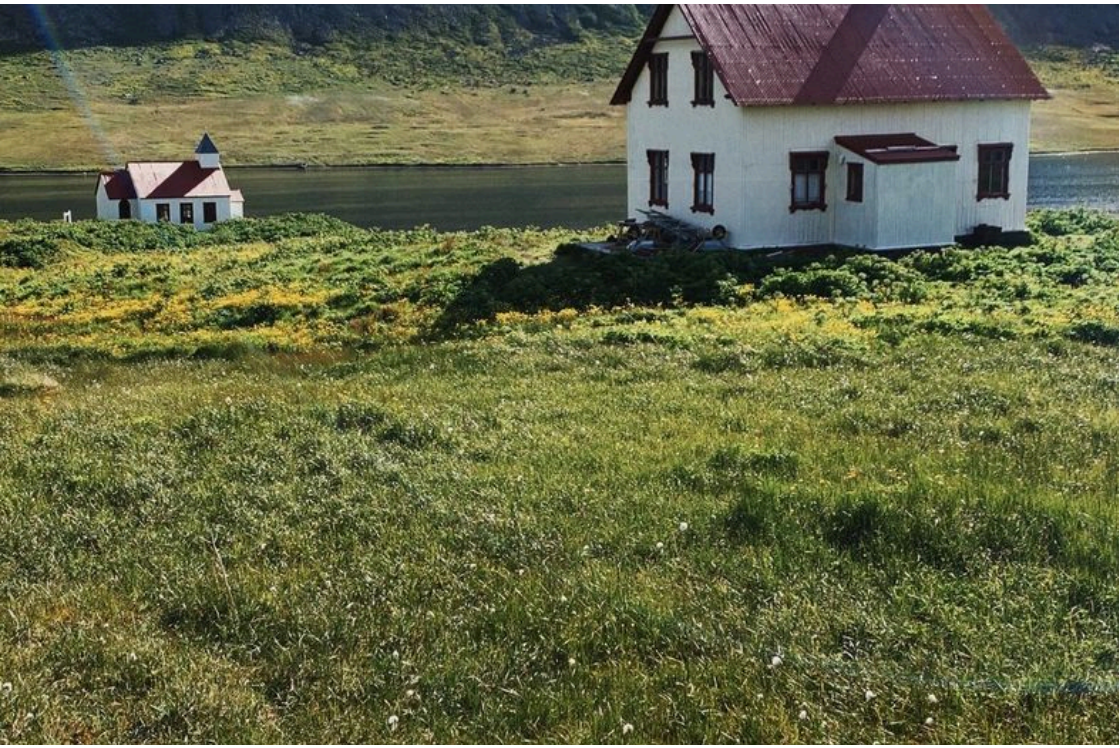
The café in the old doctor's house at Hesteyri.

I walked south along the fjord, crossed a river on the stones, and climbed over the heath to Aðalvík, past the old houses at Staður. It was bright and sunny, and I had no cap, no sun hoodie and no sunscreen. I regretted that. This was also the first time I'd used a water filter, a Sawyer Squeeze, and I remember thinking for the first time that I couldn't filter the ocean, because it's salt.

From Sæból I walked the beach, took my shoes off to cross the streams, and scrambled around a rocky point, descending on a rope. I camped on the grass above the beach. The flies attacked me every time I stopped, so I kept my hood up, ate as quickly as I could and went into the tent to escape them.

The trail

From the pier at Hesteyri, a marked path runs south along Hesteyrarfjörður for about 1.5 miles, then climbs west onto Sléttuheiði, the heath between the fjord and Aðalvík. The path is marked with cairns and mostly visible, but it can be wet and hard to see in places. The official description has you ford the Sléttuá river. My high point was 864 ft at about 5.6 miles. The descent reaches Staður, with its old church and houses by Staðarvatn, at about 7.6 miles, and the Sæból campsite and boat landing at 9.5 miles. The official route, Hesteyri to Sæból, is 12 km (7.5 mi) and about 6 hours.



Staður in Aðalvík, Day 1.

After Sæból my track follows the Aðalvík shore northeast. Around mile 11 to 12 there's a rocky point with a fixed rope and chain. It took me about an hour to cover less than a mile here. This shore between Sæból and Látrar isn't one of the reserve's described routes: it's beach, stream mouths and that rocky point, so check the tide before you go round it.

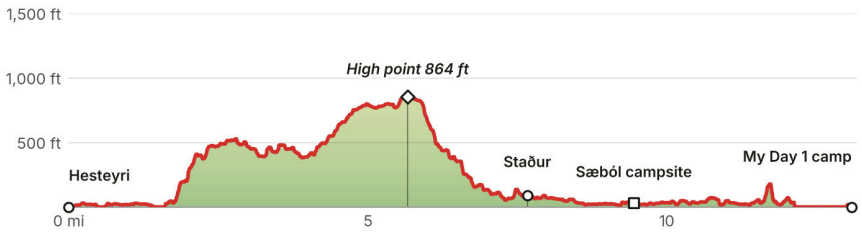
If you need to get off

Hesteyri and Sæból both have boat landings, and there's a ranger at Hesteyri in summer. There are no scheduled boats you can just catch, so an early exit means waiting at a landing for a pre-booked boat, or calling for help from somewhere with signal. The Látrar emergency shelter is about 3 miles past my camp.

Watch this day

Film, Day 1 · The boat and Hesteyri, in my guide video





Day 1 map and elevation profile. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.



Coming down Tungudalur toward Fljótavík on Day 2.

Contents

DAY 2

Aðalvík to Fljótavík

DISTANCE	CLIMBING	DESCENT	TIME TO ALLOW
9.9 mi (15.9 km)	**1,609 ft** (490 m)	**1,612 ft** (491 m)	**6 to 7 hours** (I took 7 hours 12 minutes, 4.5 hours moving, 10:30 a.m. to 5:40 p.m.)

HIGH POINT

1,592 ft (485 m), on Tunguheiði at about 5.8 miles

SLEEP

My tent at Fljótavík (not a campsite). Use the Fljótavatn campsite at the south end of the lake instead

FOOD AND WATER

Nothing to buy. Streams and small lakes.

My day

I started by wading across the river mouth before Látrar barefoot, with my shoes in my hand, then walked past Látrar and climbed onto the plateau over snow patches. On the way up I stripped down for a dip in a small pond. It was nice. It was cold. That's the "swimming pool" shot in the film.

Then I came down Tungudalur to Fljótavík. At the end of the day my GPS shows me walking out to where Fljótavatn drains into the sea: I saw an option to cross there, but with the tide it was all filled with water and it just wasn't possible. I turned back and camped, because I'd had a rough day.



My Day 2 camp at Fljótavík, which was not a designated campsite.

The trail

The first stretch is Aðalvík beach, then the Stakkadalsós river mouth at about 0.2 miles. The official description says its bottom is mostly sand. Látrar, with its campsite and emergency shelter, is at 2 miles. From there the

official route over Tunguheiði to Fljótavík is 10 km (6.2 mi), 4 to 5 hours, marked with cairns. You climb steadily to about 1,600 ft at 5.8 miles; the way down into Tungudalur is steep. At the bottom the route reaches the Fljótavík lowlands. The ford by Fljótavatn is marked, and the official description says the water can be up to your groin.

The Fljótavatn campsite is at the south end of the lake, where Day 3 goes anyway.

If you need to get off

Látrar has an emergency shelter and an unequipped airstrip, and boats serve Aðalvík (Sjóferðir, on its Aðalvík days). Fljótavík also has an unequipped airstrip. As on every day, any exit needs a pre-arranged boat or a call for help.

Watch this day

Film, Day 2 · The swim and my Day 2 camp, in my guide video





Day 2 map and elevation profile. The dashed line is a mile of beach that wasn't recorded. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.



A sea stack on the shore just before Hornvík, the end of Day 3.

DAY 3

Fljótavík to Hornvík

DISTANCE	CLIMBING	DESCENT	TIME TO ALLOW
17.5 mi (28.1 km)	**3,295 ft** (1,004 m)	**3,298 ft** (1,005 m)	**11 to 13 hours** (I took 11 hours 8 minutes, 8.5 hours moving, 7:15 a.m. to 6:25 p.m.)

HIGH POINT

1,264 ft (385 m), at Þorleifsskarð

PASSES

Þorleifsskarð and Almenningaskarð, then Atlaskarð

SLEEP

Hornvík campsite at Höfn

FOOD AND WATER

Nothing to buy. Streams on the way; fill up at Hlöðuvík.

My day

The flies found me as soon as I started. I went around the south end of Fljótavatn and climbed over the passes to the coast, then walked a beach piled with driftwood, cooked lunch on the beach, passed the orange emergency hut at Hlöðuvík and waded the river there.

After the climb to Atlaskarð, the last stretch before Hornvík goes past a sea stack and down a steep, rocky gully on a fixed rope. I finally reached Hornvík, the main campsite, where most of the people were that I got to hang out with and talk to. I pitched my tent and ate.



On the climb from Hlöðuvík toward Atlaskarð, Day 3.

The trail

This is the longest and hardest day. From my camp the track follows the west shore of Fljótavatn to the campsite at its south end (1.7 miles), then climbs to Þorleifsskarð (about 1,300 ft) at 4.6 miles and Almenningaskarð (about 1,200 ft) at 6.5 miles. The official description of Fljótavík to Kjaransvík over Þorleifsskarð: 15 km, 7 to 8 hours, part marked with sticks, "a difficult hike and a slow journey," with steep rockslides and boulders, and easy to lose your way in fog.

You come down to Kjaransvík at about 8 miles and walk the shore to the Hlöðuvík campsite and shelter at 9.6 miles. The official route from Hlöðuvík to Hornvík over Atlaskarð is 10 km, 4 to 5 hours, well marked with cairns, and narrow and quite steep. I reached Atlaskarð (about 1,070 ft) at 14.3 miles, came down past Rekavík bak Höfn, and at 16.7 miles hit the roped gully: short, steep and rocky. The Hornvík campsite is at 17.4 miles.



The path near Atlaskarð, Day 3.

Split it. Hlöðuvík is the natural halfway point: stop at its campsite and do Atlaskarð the next morning.



The roped gully just before Hornvík, Day 3.

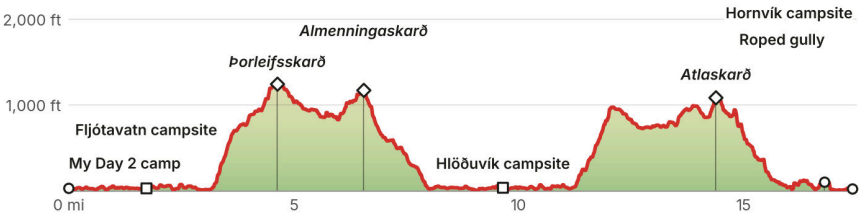
If you need to get off

Hlöðuvík has an emergency shelter, and boats land there on request. Hornvík has a ranger in summer, an emergency shelter and scheduled boats (Borea and Sjóferðir). There's also an old route from Hlöðuvík south over Kjaransvíkurskarð to Hesteyri (14 km, 6 to 7 hours, cairns), if Hesteyri is where your boat can reach you.

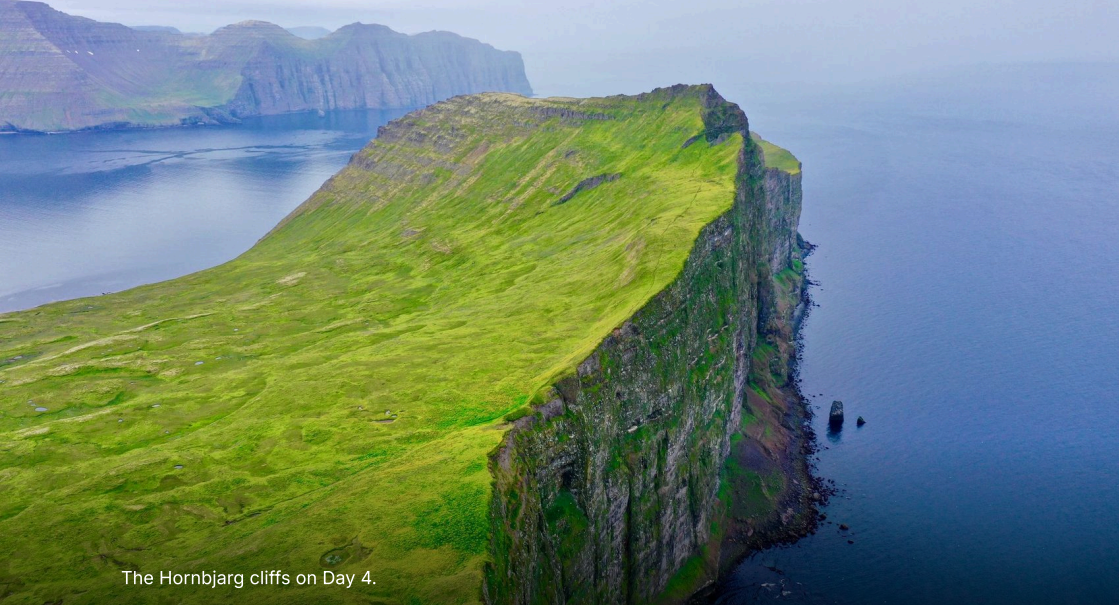
Watch this day

Film, Day 3 · The roped gully





Day 3 map and elevation profile. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.



The Hornbjarg cliffs on Day 4.

DAY 4

Hornvík to Veiðileysufjörður

DISTANCE	CLIMBING	DESCENT	TIME TO ALLOW
17.6 mi (28.4 km): 10.7 mi for Hornbjarg and back to Höfn, then 6.9 mi over Hafnarskarð	**4,317 ft** (1,316 m)	**4,308 ft** (1,313 m)	**12 to 14 hours** or split it into two days (I took 10 hours 39 minutes with a 2-hour break, 9:30 a.m. to 8:10 p.m.)

HIGH POINT

1,630 ft (497 m), at Hafnarskarð

BOAT

Veiðileysufjörður to Ísafjörður, a few hours later

SLEEP

a nap at Veiðileysufjörður campsite

FOOD AND WATER

Nothing to buy. Streams, and snowmelt on Hafnarskarð.

My day

This was the part I was most excited about, the climax of the hike. I had a tight window before my boat, so I went up to Hornbjarg in the morning and left my tent at Hornvík. The weather was okay, but storm clouds were starting to come in, so I was a bit rushed. There were birds everywhere, the cliff was amazing, and the grass was so bright green. The sun came out in little bits and pieces, and I had the whole time up at the Horn to myself. I didn't see a single person. This was definitely the best part of the experience.



The path along the Hornbjarg cliff edge, Day 4.

It started to rain, so I rushed back to my tent. I washed off, took a quick nap, packed up, and started over my last pass, booking it up past the snow. I got to the campsite in Veiðileysufjörður right on time: it started to pour just after I got my tent up, and I felt so good, because other people were arriving and having to set up in the rain.

Two hikers were camped there too. One of them had a white Hyperlite pack, the first one I'd ever seen. I asked him all about it, and that's why I later got my own black Southwest 2400 for the Tour du Mont Blanc.

The trail

From Höfn, my track goes around the lagoon at the head of Hornvík and north along the east side of the bay past the Horn campsite (3 miles), then climbs onto Hornbjarg. The official description of the Hornbjarg walk from Höfn: 13 km, 8 to 10 hours, and the path over Miðfell is steep and hard to walk, especially in the wet. I reached the cliff top at 6.3 miles, walked the edge to below Kálfatindar, the high point of Hornbjarg at 1,755 ft (535 m), and came down to the Horn campsite at 8.3 miles. From there I walked back along the beach and across the mouth of the lagoon to Höfn (10.7 miles). The official route has you wade Hafnarós, the lagoon outlet, here: cross it at low tide.

The cliffs drop straight into the sea. Stay back from the edge, especially in wind, fog or rain, and leave the birds alone.

The crossing to Veiðileysufjörður over Hafnarskarð is 10 km, 4 to 5 hours on the official description: well marked with cairns, steep, and it may be covered with snow long into the summer. In wet weather the streams can get too big to jump. I reached the pass at 14.5 miles. The Veiðileysufjörður campsite and boat landing are at 17.5 miles, on the shore where the path comes down to the fjord.

Split it. Most people would spend a day at Hornvík for Hornbjarg and cross Hafnarskarð the next day. See Other ways to do it.



On the snow near Hafnarskarð, Day 4.

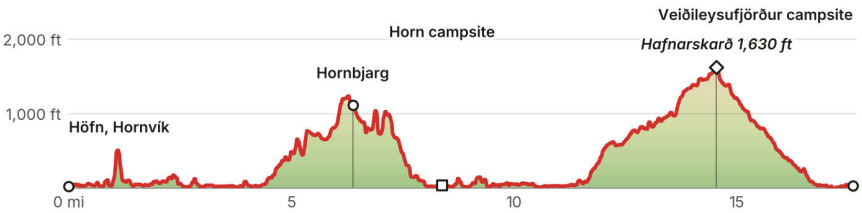
If you need to get off

Hornvík has the ranger house, an emergency shelter and scheduled boats, so it's the best place on the whole route to end early. Once you're over Hafnarskarð, Veiðileysufjörður is the boat landing.

Watch this day

Film, Hornbjarg · Film, Day 4 · The Horn and the last pass, in my guide video





Day 4 map and elevation profile. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

Getting home

What I did. I set my tent up in Veiðileysufjörður and napped for a few hours to get out of the rain, and then the boat picked us up. We rode a small inflatable from the shore to the bigger boat. Back in Ísafjörður I had a big meal (it was nice to not eat ramen), found a puppy, and checked into a guesthouse. I stayed a few more days in town before flying out.



The view from my tent in Veiðileysufjörður, waiting out the rain before the boat.

Boats from Veiðileysufjörður (2026). Borea and Sjóferðir both serve it, and Hornstrandaferðir sails there on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Book the return before you leave Ísafjörður, and ask where and roughly when to wait. See The boats.

Leave slack. Boats depend on the weather, and so do small planes. Don't book your flight home for the day you come out of the reserve.

Other ways to do it

I walked the four days in this guide. These are other ways to use it, and I didn't do them.

A slower version (6 to 7 days)

My line, split where the campsites are. The distances come from my GPS.

1. Boat to Hesteyri, walk to the Sæból campsite (9.5 mi)
2. Sæból along the beach to Látrar (about 7 mi)
3. Látrar over Tunguheiði to the Fljótavatn campsite (about 8 mi)
4. Fljótavatn over the passes to the Hlöðuvík campsite (about 8 mi)
5. Hlöðuvík over Atlaskarð to Hornvík (about 8 mi)
6. Hornbjarg from Hornvík and back (about 11 mi)
7. Hornvík over Hafnarskarð to Veiðileysufjörður (about 7 mi), boat the next day

If I were to do it again, I'd probably do something very similar to my own trip. But for most people the extra days make this a much better hike: time for the weather, and time to sit at Hornbjarg.

Shorter trips

- **Hornvík only (2 to 3 days).** Boat to Hornvík, a day on Hornbjarg, then walk over Hafnarskarð to Veiðileysufjörður for the boat back. My Day 4 is exactly this route.
- **Hesteyri to Hornvík the short way.** From Hesteyri an old route crosses Kjaransvíkurskarð to Hlöðuvík (14 km, 6 to 7 hours on the official description), cutting out Aðalvík and Fljótavík.

What I'd tell you before you go

My pack was much smaller than other people's. I didn't bring as much, I didn't stay as long, and I hiked a bit faster than most. I was a noob hiker in a lot of ways on this trip. Learn from my list in Gear for this route.

Food and water

Food. There are no shops in the reserve. Buy everything in Ísafjörður, including stove fuel, and carry a spare day of food in case the boat can't come. I cooked my own food on a small gas stove, mostly ramen, and the big meal back in town tasted great. In 2019 the café at Hesteyri, in the old doctor's house, sold crêpes and coffee; check it's open before you count on it. Campfires are banned, so cook on a stove, and pack out all your rubbish.

Water. There are streams almost everywhere, and small lakes on the plateaus. I used a Sawyer Squeeze filter. Treat or filter everything, and fill up before the passes. The sea is salt, of course, so on the beaches fill up where the streams come out.

In Ísafjörður: Nettó for groceries and gas canisters, Tjöruhúsið for fish (book ahead), Dokkan Brugghús for beer.



Fish soup at Tjöruhúsið in Ísafjörður, a few days after the hike.

What I paid

My records for this trip are thin: no booking emails survive from 2019. This is what's on record.

ITEM	WHAT I PAID
Boat Ísafjörður to Hesteyri, and back from Veiðileysufjörður	Almost ISK 20,000 each way, as I remembered it in 2023 (up to about $300 round trip)
Guesthouse in Ísafjörður before the hike	About $93 a night when I looked it up in 2023; it was cheaper when I stayed
Campsites in the reserve	Nothing on record
Mánagisting guesthouse, Ísafjörður, July 14 2019	ISK 21,400 (card receipt)
Gas canister and groceries, Nettó	Not in my records
Flights	Not in my records

For your budget (2026 prices). The boats are the big cost: Hesteyri out and Veiðileysufjörður back is ISK 29,800 with Borea, or ISK 28,800 with Hornstrandaferðir (Hesteyri ISK 13,900, Veiðileysufjörður ISK 14,900). Starting or ending at Hornvík is ISK 19,300 each way with Borea.

Gear for this route

What this trip needs

- Full rain gear and warm layers, even in July, and a tent that handles wind and rain
- Boots you don't mind soaking, and sandals or a spare pair for the fords
- A filter, a stove and fuel from Ísafjörður, and all your food plus a spare day
- A head net, sun hat and sunscreen. Nothing else helps with those flies except a bit of wind
- Offline maps with the GPX files, a power bank, and a satellite messenger or beacon

Paid links: I earn a commission if you buy through these links, at no extra cost to you. As an Amazon Associate I earn from qualifying purchases.

I was a noob hiker in a lot of ways on this trip, with a small pack and four nights in my tent. Here's what I carried in 2019, what I'd take now (including what I wish I'd had), and what I filmed with.

What I carried in 2019

- **Pack:** a small backpack. Smaller than most people's out there.
- **Tent:** REI Passage tent. I'd had it since Peru. Similar: NEMO Hornet Elite OSMO 1P (Amazon).
- **Sleeping bag:** Nemo sleeping bag
- **Sleeping pad:** a sleeping pad
- **Clothes:** pants and a shell. I wore them with the hood up against the flies.
- **Hat:** a beanie. I brought warm layers because I knew it was a colder hike, and wore the beanie to keep the sun off my forehead.
- **Boots:** my old boots. They were terrible, and my boots and socks were soaked most days. I dried my socks on the outside of my pack while I walked.

- **Water filter:** Sawyer Squeeze. My first filter. Similar: Katadyn BeFree AC · 1L (Amazon).
- **Stove:** a small gas stove. With a canister from Nettó in Ísafjörður, and ramen.

What I'd take now

My current kit for what this route needs, starting with what I wish I'd had in 2019.

- **Cap:** PATH Projects Muir Cap 2.0 (PATH Projects). It was bright for the first couple of days and I got sunburned. I wish I'd had a cap.
- **Sun hoodie:** PATH Projects Pyrenees T19 Hoodie (PATH Projects). The other thing I wish I'd had for those sunny days, with sunscreen.
- **Socks:** PATH Projects Joyner Crew Sock (PATH Projects). Bring an extra pair. If socks are the one thing you bring extra of, you can always have a dry pair.
- **Rain shell:** Arc'teryx Beta AR Jacket (Arc'teryx). Full rain gear, even in July: fog, rain and wind come in fast from the sea.
- **Puffy:** Arc'teryx Cerium Hoody (Arc'teryx). It's cold even in July.
- **Tent:** NEMO Hornet Elite OSMO 1P (Amazon). This route needs a tent that handles wind and rain.
- **Sleeping pad:** Therm-a-Rest NeoAir XLite NXT (Amazon)
- **Stove:** Jetboil Stash (Amazon). You can't fly with a gas canister: buy one at Nettó in Ísafjörður.
- **Water filter:** Katadyn BeFree AC · 1L (Amazon). The filter I carry now.
- **Power bank:** Nitecore NB20000 (Amazon)
- **Navigation:** AllTrails+ (AllTrails, 30% off). Import my GPX files and download them offline before the boat. Offline maps need the paid plan.
- **Phone data:** Airalo eSIM (Airalo, $3 off). Data in Ísafjörður and around Iceland. There's almost no signal inside the reserve.

Filming kit

What I filmed this trip with in 2019. I'd set up the tripod, lock the exposure and focus, walk through the shot and come back for the camera, so every scene cost me about three times the energy. Check The reserve rules before you think of flying: since May 2026 the reserve gives no drone permits for hobby flying.

- **Camera:** Sony a7 III (Amazon)
- **Lens:** Sony FE 16-35mm f/2.8 GM (Amazon)
- **Drone:** DJI Mavic 2 Pro. No longer made.
- **Tripod:** a tripod

What I film with now

Since September 2026 I film with a smaller setup: the Pocket 4 and the Mic 3 on the trail, and the Mini 5 Pro in the air.

- **Camera:** DJI Osmo Pocket 4 (Amazon)
- **Mic:** DJI Mic 3 · 1 TX + 1 RX (Amazon). It pairs with the Pocket 4.
- **Drone:** DJI Mini 5 Pro (Amazon)

Weather and safety

Emergency: 112. If you can't connect, try 599-0112; from a satellite phone, +354 809 0112 (112 Iceland, 2026). Phone numbers don't give you signal, and there's almost none in the reserve. A satellite messenger or personal locator beacon is the real backup.

Leave a travel plan at safetravel.is and with someone at home, with your boat times, and update it when you're back. Rangers are at Hesteyri and Höfn (Hornvík) in summer.

Forecast. vedur.is (Icelandic Met Office) for the Westfjords, before the boat and whenever you have signal. Fog, rain and wind come in fast from the sea.

Where to be careful:

- The rocky point with the rope and chain on the Aðalvík shore (Day 1): check the tide
- River mouths and fords: the Stakkadalsós (Day 2), the ford by Fljótavatn (up to your groin, officially), Hlöðuvík (Day 3), Hafnarós (Day 4). Water is usually lower in the morning; loosen your pack straps, and keep your shoes on for rocky bottoms
- The tide at Fljótavík, where I couldn't cross the lake outlet
- Þorleifsskarð in fog (Day 3): rocky, part marked with sticks, easy to lose the way
- The roped gully before Hornvík (Day 3)
- The Hornbjarg cliff edge (Day 4)
- Snow on Hafnarskarð (Day 4), and streams too big to jump after rain
- Polar bears: very rare, but one came ashore in Jökulfirðir in 2024. Call 112

Emergency shelters. The orange huts at Látrar, Atlastaðir, Hlöðuvík and Höfn, run by the rescue association Landsbjörg, are for emergencies only.

Going solo. I hiked alone and saw almost no one between the campsites. If you go alone, be conservative about the weather, and don't cross a river you're not sure about.

Using the GPX files

My own GPS recordings from July 10 to 13, 2019, with all timestamps removed.

FILE	WHAT IT IS
hornstrandir-day-1.gpx	Day 1: Hesteyri to Aðalvík
hornstrandir-day-2.gpx	Day 2: Aðalvík to Fljótavík
hornstrandir-day-3.gpx	Day 3: Fljótavík to Hornvík
hornstrandir-day-4.gpx	Day 4: Hornbjarg and Veiðileysufjörður
hornstrandir-full-route.gpx	All four days, with waypoints for the campsites, my two wild camps, the boat landings, the passes and the roped gully

AllTrails. On a computer, sign in at alltrails.com, create a new map and use Import. It then shows up in the app on your phone. Offline maps need a paid plan.

Gaia GPS. Open the file from Files, email or AirDrop and choose Gaia GPS, or use Import on gaiagps.com. Download the map area offline.

Garmin. In Garmin Connect on the web, go to Training, Courses, Import. Save it as a course and send it to your watch.

Organic Maps (free). Download the offline map for Iceland, then open the GPX file and choose Organic Maps. It works fully offline.

Before you leave, download offline maps for the whole reserve, turn on airplane mode, and check that each day and your location show up. Download the reserve's official map and trail map too (see The reserve rules).

Before you go, check these

These change every year. Everything else in this guide stays the same.

Boats and flights

- The 2027 timetables and prices of Borea, Sjóferðir (West Tours) and Hornstrandaferðir, and which days they serve Hesteyri, Aðalvík, Hornvík and Veiðileysufjörður
- Book the boat in and the boat out, and ask how the pickup works at your landing
- Icelandair's Reykjavík to Ísafjörður flights, with a spare day on each end

The reserve

- Whether you're inside a registration period (1 March to 15 June, 1 September to 1 November), and register at gogn.ust.is/hornstrandir if so
- The reserve's rules, official map and trail notices at nattura.is, or ask Hornstrandastofa in Ísafjörður
- Snow on the passes early in the season

Prices, conditions and your stuff

- Prices (this guide uses 2026 prices), Tjöruhúsið's season and a table booking, and whether the Hesteyri café is open
- The forecast on vedur.is, and the tides for the river mouths and the Aðalvík point
- A travel plan at safetravel.is
- Offline maps and GPX files on your phone, stove fuel from Ísafjörður, a filter, a head net, a spare day of food

One-page trip sheet

DAY	MI (KM)	FROM, TO	SLEEP	NOTES
0		Reykjavík, fly to Ísafjörður	Ísafjörður	Buy fuel and food; book both boats
1	13.2 (21.2)	Hesteyri to Aðalvík	Sæból campsite (9.5 mi)	Boat to Hesteyri
2	9.9 (15.9)	Aðalvík to Fljótavík	Fljótavatn campsite	Stakkadalsós ford, Tunguheiði
3	17.5 (28.1)	Fljótavík to Hornvík	Hornvík campsite	Two passes, Hlöðuvík, Atlaskarð, roped gully
4	17.6 (28.4)	Hornbjarg, then Hafnarskarð	Veiðileysufjörður campsite	Snow on the pass
5		Veiðileysufjörður to Ísafjörður	Ísafjörður	Boat pickup
Total	**58.1 (93.5)**			**About 10,600 ft up**

Boats (2026): Borea Adventures (Aðalstræti 17), Sjóferðir through West Tours (Aðalstræti 7, +354 456 5111), Hornstrandaferðir. One way ISK 13,900 to 19,300.

Campsites on the route: Hesteyri · Sæból · Látrar · Fljótavatn · Atlastaðir · Hlöðuvík · Hornvík · Horn · Veiðileysufjörður

Emergency shelters: Látrar · Atlastaðir · Hlöðuvík · Höfn (Hornvík). Rangers in summer at Hesteyri and Höfn.

Rules: camp only at campsites · no fires · no dogs · no hobby drones · 40 m from fox dens · register 1 March to 15 June and 1 September to 1 November

Apps and sites: vedur.is (weather), safetravel.is (travel plan), your offline map with the GPX files

Emergency: 112 · backup 599-0112 · satellite +354 809 0112

About this guide

Hornstrandir Hiking Guide: 4 days alone across Iceland's Hornstrandir Nature Reserve, by Kraig Adams. 2027 season edition, updated October 2026.

I hiked across Hornstrandir alone from July 10 to 13, 2019, and made a film about it: Hiking 60 miles Alone in Iceland. In 2023 I made a video guide to the same trip: Hornstrandir Iceland - Hiking Guide. Everything in first person comes from that trip, those videos, my GPS recordings and my photos. Boat, rule, flight and safety facts were checked in September 2026 and again on October 11, 2026, and anything that changes yearly is dated.

Updates and contact. If something has changed, or you spot a mistake, email me at kraig@kraigadams.com.

Paid links, no sponsors. The gear links in this guide are paid links: I earn a commission if you buy through them, at no extra cost to you. Nobody paid for a mention in this guide, and it isn't sponsored.

Safety. Hiking in Hornstrandir has real risks: no roads or signal, cold rivers and tides, snow, cliffs, fog and fast-changing weather far from help. This guide describes my trip and what I found, not current conditions. Trails, rules, prices and timetables change. Check the weather, follow the reserve's rules, and turn back when conditions aren't right. You're responsible for your own safety.

Copyright. © 2026 Kraig Adams. This guide, its photos and the GPX files are for your personal use. Please don't share or resell them.

Credits. Photos are mine, from my trip. GPX files are my own recordings. Maps © OpenStreetMap contributors, openstreetmap.org/copyright (ODbL). Relief: Mapzen Terrain Tiles, from EU-DEM, produced using Copernicus data funded by the EU. Route descriptions quoted from the reserve's official pages (Náttúruverndarstofnun).