



Nature Hiking Trail in Ellidaar Valley

ROUTE IS 1

Presentation of the route

The Ellidaar Valley is the most popular and largest green area in Reykjavik. The valley offers varied environment, including, landscape, geology, birdlife, river fish and vegetation, but the river is the main attraction. People visit the valley all year round, especially folks from the neighborhood. At the northern edge of the valley is the Arbaer outdoor museum, located at the old farm Arbær, which housed for centuries a hostel for travellers and farmers driving their livestock for sale in the town, along with their other farm products.



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Waypoint 1	Hydro power plant and forest paths
	<p>START at waypoint 1 The Ellidaar 3 MW hydroelectric plant, inaugurated in 1921 by his majesty Christian the 10th then king of Denmark and Iceland. The classical churchlike station house, is filled with up to 100 years old machinery converting river water under pressure into sustainable electricity, by turning water turbines linked to electric generators. The plant was 1 MW in 1921, but was enlarged in two stages up to 3 MW in the first 15 years as needed, with added machinery and storage reservoir at Ellidavatn lake 4 km upstream. The station was in operation for almost a century. Towards Waypoint 2. Walk south in between the houses that belonged to Reykjavik Electricity to the river, then turn left and walk upstream on the river bank, and soon reach to the left the turf covered pressure pipe that conducted the water to the power station from the Arbaer intake dam almost 1 km upstream. We soon arrive at a timber bridge crossing the northern branch of the river and enjoy the sound of nature, murmur of the cascading river and bird song. We may see salmon battling up the river towards the upstream spawning grounds in June/July. In front of us is the wooden valley floor.</p>

Waypoint 2	Forest and vegetation
	<p>Clairvoyant people are aware of elves and dwarfs in the lava on the valley floor. Erla Stefansdottir, a well known clairvoyant made a map of the elf and dwarf dwellings. We now cross over the main lava island towards waypoints 3 through the 60 year old forest, which was planted by the Reykjavik Energy Co. employees. The two river branches form a long lava island, as they flow at the edges of the young, Leiti lava flow (only 5 thousand years old) originating from the crater Leiti, 20 km to the south, on the water divide of the Reykjanes peninsula. Another bridge crosses the southern branch of the river.</p>

Waypoint 3	Ellidaa southern branch and sustainable geothermal water
	<p>Forward we can see a few red huts, which house pumps pumping 90 degrees hot geothermal water that goes straight into the geothermal heating system of the Reykjavik area. These holes were drilled after 1967, up to 2.3 km deep, 8 of them now in use producing 15 MW power (5% of the total geothermal power of the capital area). (Towards waypoints 4). We walk east along the footpath along the south bank of the river and soon see the largest waterfall in the river (Kermoar fall), falling off the edge of the lava onto the much older rock below. Beyond we see a main road crossing the valley on a rather high bridge (Hofdabakki bridge) built around</p>



1980. We now come to the southern end of the intake dam from the 1920's, forming the intake reservoir.

Waypoint 4

Dam, Reservoir, Salmon and Birds



Half the year the reservoir is split into two halves, the southern one empty of water, but the northern one full. This is to enable the salmon to migrate easily up through the bottom outlet under the south part of the dam. The northern part of the reservoir is a summer paradise for birds, esp. ducks, geese and whooper swans, which nest in the lava island between the two rivers, just upstream from the reservoir. We now walk along the footbridge on top of the dam and watch the birds that abound on the north arm of the reservoir. The whole dam acts as a spillway when the river is in spring flood. At the northern end of the dam are the control locks for letting the river flow into the three meter wide and 1 km long wooden pressure pipes that used to lead the water down to the power house . We now continue north along the Hofdabakki main road for approx. half a km to an underpass over to the Arbaer outdoor cultural museum 4), located at the old farm/hostel Arbaer, which was a common overnight stop for farmers travelling to Reykjavik with their products in the late 19th century and into the early 20th century. The underpass is located exactly where the main path/trail into Reykjavik from South and West Iceland, passed towards the Arbaer farm traversing the museum area straight from the entrance to the Arbaer farm gate just north of the small Turf church . This route is in fact part of the old route to Reykjavik from South and West Iceland during the last few centuries.

Waypoint 5

Arbaer Open Air Museum



Open daily June – August 10:00-17:00 and September – May 13:00-17:00. Arbaer is a living museum open all year round with of a collection of around thirty historical houses, most of which have been relocated from central Reykjavik. The area consists of a town square, a tiny village and a farm site with turf church and gives a good idea of life in Reykjavik during 19th to early 20th century.



Waypoint 6

The farm Arbaer and the Turf Church



The first documented references to Arbaer farm dates back from around the 15th century. The current farmhouse however, dates back to around 1900. Farming ceased at Arbær in 1948. You can walk through the interior of the farmhouse.

Waypoint 7

Old route to Reykjavik



Towards Waypoint 7. We continue out of the museum grounds and continue west along the museum grounds fence along a foot- and biking path that soon meets up with the old route/path to Reykjavik that leads south of the Artun primary school, down to the hydro station (waypoint 1) at the start of this walk. The path goes down a rather steep gully, Reidskard (Riding pass), whose name points to the olden times, when travellers came riding towards the then village of Reykjavik.

Waypoint 8

End of walk



Just downhill from Reidskard we walk past the home and studio of one of the best known painters in Iceland, the late Georg Gudni, whose mysterious landscape paintings, often “completely flat landscapes in the mist” can be seen in many art museums in Europe and USA. This walk ends at the car park opposite to the Ellidaar hydro power station. End of tour.