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DEVELOPING HRINGVEGUR 2  
STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS  
SEPTEMBER 2019

BLUE SAIL ▶  
VISITORS PLACES DESTINATIONS

This is a record of three workshops that took place in September 2019 in Ísafjörður, Patreksfjörður and Dalir/Strandir. Around 50 people from businesses, organisations and municipalities attended to give their ideas for developing Hringvegur/Ring Road 2. The workshops were facilitated by Lorna Easton and Adam Bates from Blue Sail.

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JUNE/JULY 2019

Research  
and visits

SEPTEMBER 2019

Stakeholder  
Workshops

OCTOBER –  
DECEMBER 2019

Development  
Framework

JANUARY –  
FEBRUARY 2020

Brand &  
Business Toolkit

APRIL 2020

Planning  
Workshops

HRINGVEGUR 2  
TILLAGA 2



## WHY A TOURING ROUTE?

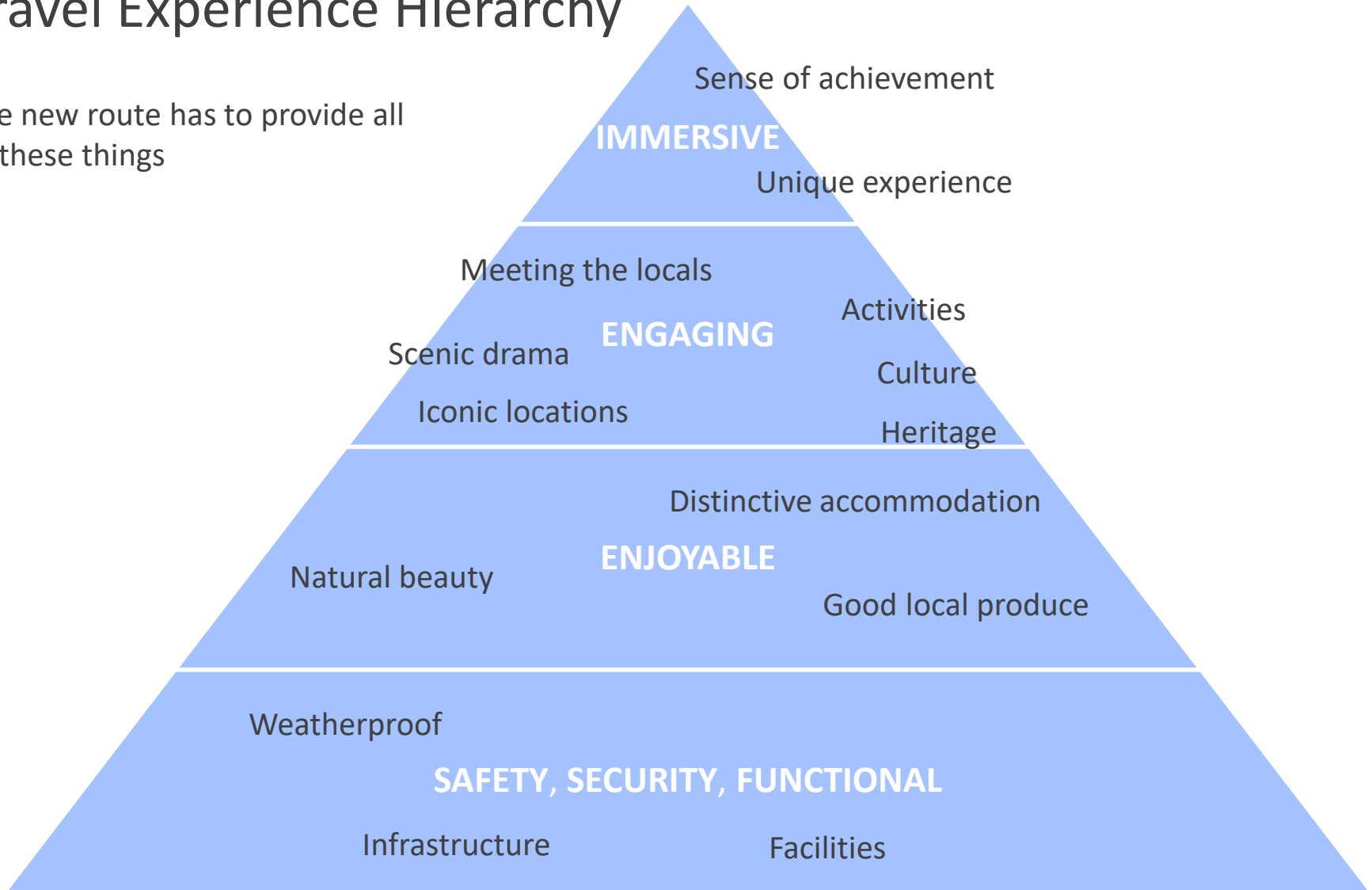
- ▶ Routes are having a ‘moment’
- ▶ Simple, clear proposition and brand
- ▶ Great for PR and marketing
- ▶ Encourage longer trips
- ▶ Encourage wider exploration
- ▶ Encourage spend
- ▶ Makes ‘sense’ of a place – where to go and what to see
- ▶ Focus for business development and new experiences



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# Travel Experience Hierarchy

The new route has to provide all of these things



Weatherproof

**SAFETY, SECURITY, FUNCTIONAL**

Infrastructure

Facilities

Natural beauty

**ENJOYABLE**

Good local produce

Distinctive accommodation

Scenic drama

**ENGAGING**

Culture

Meeting the locals

Activities

Unique experience

**IMMERSIVE**

Sense of achievement

Heritage

Iconic locations

Culture

## Impressions from our research and our visit in July 2019...

- ▶ We found lots of what we expected. The ever changing landscape and the sensory appeal (sight, sound, smell, feel) were terrific.
- ▶ Vistas and landscapes are big and impressive. The light is always changing. There is real drama in this land. And there is real drama in the variety and challenge of the driving.
- ▶ Stories were strongly evident – not just the Sagas. Real stories of real people who had endured or had mysterious happenings.
- ▶ Those touring were both young and old. But we saw very few families.
- ▶ The built environment is largely functional. It can lack a warmth and a charm. That functionality extended to much of the accommodation. Though of course there are exceptions
- ▶ Information signs at stopping points were very good. But signs for attractions and places such as cafes are easier to miss. A touring visitor could very easily miss some great experiences.
- ▶ Water is everywhere but it is not always obvious how you can experience getting near it or being on it. The same is true of the landscape.



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# The Name

The working title of the new route has been Hringvegur 2/Ring Road 2. The route needs a name that will be strong in the marketplace and Blue Sail suggested me “Hringvegur 2 – The Westfjords Circle” because:

- Having an Icelandic name makes it more authentic and distinctive
- ‘Hringvegur’ is relatively easy for non-Icelanders to say
- ‘West’ locates it geographically
- ‘Fjords’ are recognised and appealing
- A circular route is attractive

Here is a summary of the discussion:

- ‘Circle’ or ‘ring’ is good and important to have– gives sense of completion
  - Like Icelandic and English versions – Icelandic is more authentic and more interesting for visitors
  - Having a number (‘2’) is strange – and ‘2’ is not as good as ‘1’
  - Like ‘The’ in the name – makes it stronger
  - Like ‘fjords’ in the name – what makes us different and attractive
  - Should have ‘Iceland’ in title as that’s what people search for
  - Alternative suggestions:
    - Hringvegur Vest- The Westfjords Circle
    - Westfjords Ring (Hringur)
    - Icelandic Ring Road 2
    - West Iceland Circle
    - Vestfjarðarhringur – The Westfjords Circle (very much liked at the Strandir/Dalir meeting)
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# Describing Ring Road 2 through our senses

Participants thought about how to describe Ring Road 2 only using one sense – here are some of the things they said.

## Smell

Salt - sea, fish & seaweed  
Animals – sheep, horses, manure, bird poop  
Dust from gravel roads  
Rain, wet stone, fresh air  
Vegetation – cut grass, wild herbs  
Food – sweet cakes, bakeries, herbs,  
Sweat after walking  
Wet wool  
Oil

## Tastes

Land – fruit, ice cream, herbs, wild roaming lamb, kleina, skyr...  
Sea – fish (fresh & dried), salt, seabirds, seaweed  
Nature – storm, wind, snow, sea breezes  
Tasty fisherman's kisses!  
Chocolate  
Fermented, smoked, cured, dried, bitter  
Beer  
Traditional whey bread

## Sounds

Rivers, waterfalls (each different), breaking waves (powerful & soft, dripping water)  
Birds  
Weather – storms, rain, wind, snow, frost  
Silence  
Echoes  
Boats, cars, trucks, tractors  
Choirs  
Northern lights  
Sheep, farm animals  
Foxes  
Music in odd places  
Kids playing outside  
Seeds cracking - lupins

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### **Touch/Textures**

Gravel

Driftwood

Water – natural pools, waterfall spray

Cold – snow, ice - crunch

Soft moss

Moving grass

Solitude

Different kinds of sand

Slime – algae in hot pools

Harsh – metal, steel, corrugated iron

Rocks – round, smooth, sharp

### **Sight/Colours**

White – snow, sheep, waterfalls

Black – mountains, ravens, sand, whales, puffins

Blue – waterfalls, ocean, fjords, distant mountains, blueberries

Yellow – sun, dandelions

Red – minerals in mountains

Green – moss

Grey – seals, rainy days, storms, tunnels, roads

All colours – rainbows, northern lights, people, sheep

Neon/violet – sunsets, sunrise

Change of seasons

Softness in landscape

Light

Summer – purple, blue, green, yellow

Autumn – red, dark green, mustard yellow, berry blue, pink sunset, northern lights (blue, green, purple, white, silver)

Winter – northern lights, white, gray, brown, ice blue, gray blue, green blue

Spring – green, yellow, light blue sky, orange,

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# Mapping our Experiences

Participants mapped the experiences along Ring Road 2 choosing the best and most distinctive. The wordcloud represents the themes identified by participants. The bigger the word, the more frequently it was mentioned.



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## The Fun-Loving Globetrotter

### Target Segment 1



- 20-50 years
- Live in cities
- Average income, average education
- From USA, Germany, Scandinavia, Britain, France, Iceland
- Very sociable, open-minded, independent
- Active travellers
- Interested in culture, ideas, other lifestyles
- Want to travel to new and exciting destinations
- Respectful of nature and the environment
- Look for new challenges but like guidance
- Love to share their stories on social media



## Target Segment 2



## The Independent Explorer

- 35-65 years
- Average income, average education
- From USA, Germany, Scandinavia, Britain, France, Iceland
- Reliable, responsible and rational
- Not particularly sociable
- Active travellers – seek out new and exciting places
- Want to travel off the beaten track
- Love the outdoors
- Respectful of nature and the environment
- Love learning about local culture
- Travel in smaller groups
- Travel all year but particularly up for coming in winter

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# Best Place To ...

Participants choose the best place for a range of things for each of the target market segments. Here are some of those mentioned – those frequently mentioned are **highlighted**

Taste something special

**Sætt og salt**, Salt (Reykjanes), Kaffi Sól, **Tjöruhúsið**, Dokkan Brughús, Fisherman (Suðureyri), **Ice Cream (Erpsstaðir)**, Mussels (Galdur), Heimsendi, Stúkúhusið

Give a sense of personal achievement

**Hiking Hornstrandir**, Kaldbakur or Klofningsfjall, Biking, fishing or riding horses, Driving the gravel roads, Alfraunasteinar (lifting the stones)

Take a picture

**Dynjandi**, Bolafjall, Skálavík (sunset), Rauðasandur, Látrabjarg, Skarðsströnd

Sleep, eat or drink somewhere different

**Heydalur**, Nyp (Skarðsströnd, Erpsstaðir, Castle (Búðardalur), Melanes (Rauðasandur), Holt Inn (Flateyri), Vegamót (Bildadalur)

Learn to do something new

Skálinn Viking Center, Fisherman (Suðureyri), Saett og Salt (Suðavík), **Eldsmiðjan** Iron making (Þingeyri)), Seamonster Museum, drive on gravel roads and ice

Be surprised

Wildlife & Nature e.g sea eagles and seals (Látrabjarg, Huitarnes), **Rauðasander**, Cherry picking (Svanshóll), Views and warm pools, Svalvogar Route

Be exhilarated

Boat tours, Mountain Views and Drives (**Bolafjall, Látrabjarg**), Mountain Hiking, Oshlið, Northern Lights from a hot spring,

Get a sense of history

**Hnjótur Museum**, Þingeyri, Hrafsneyri, Osvör, Vinland Center (2021)

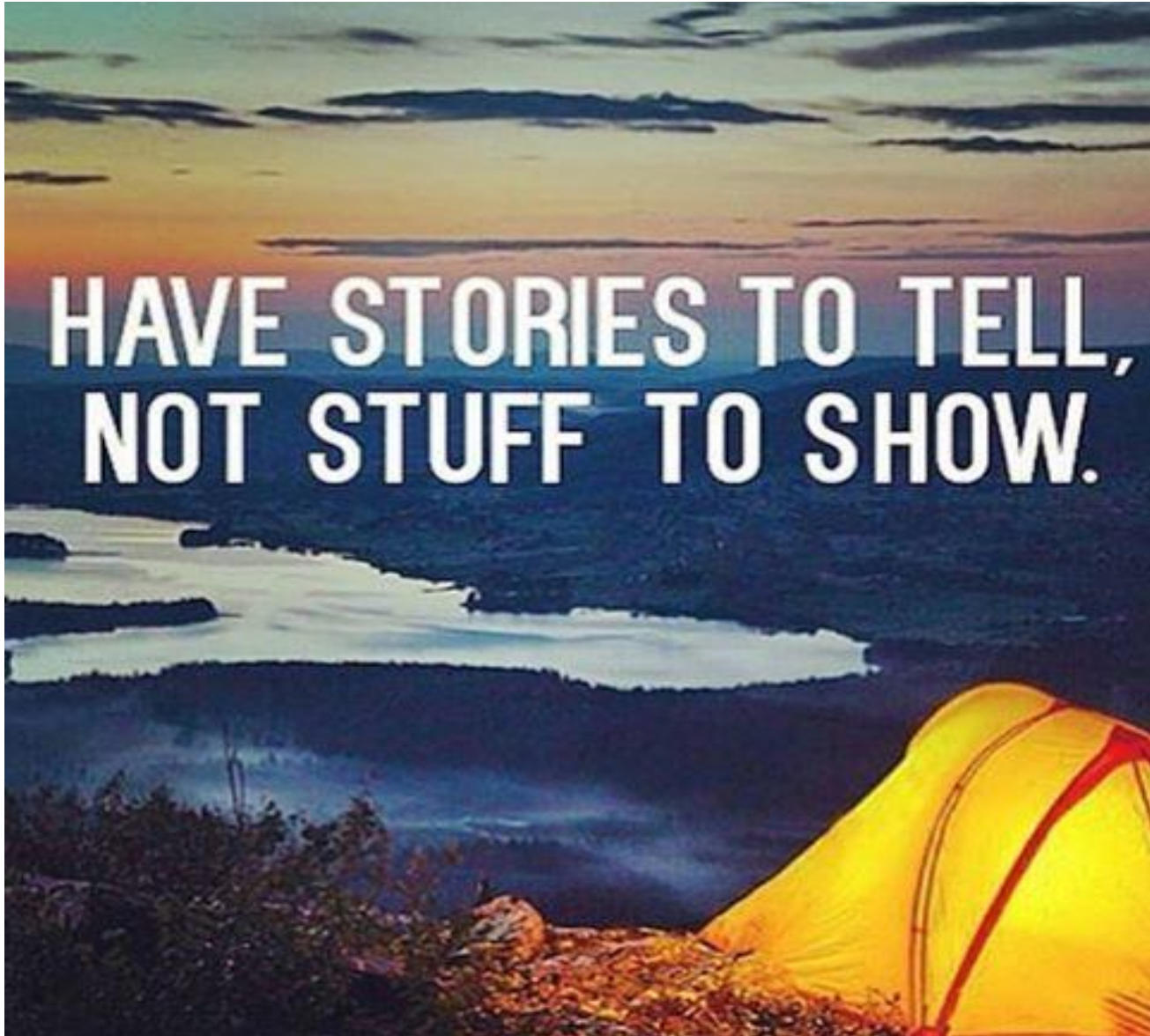
Get to know the locals

**Swimming Pools and Hot Springs**, Harbours, Guesthouse owners, Events

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**HAVE STORIES TO TELL,  
NOT STUFF TO SHOW.**



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## The Stories

One of the strengths of Westfjords is the stories it has - and the people are great storytellers. Here are just some of the stories we heard.

### People/Characters

The road around Svalvogar was never meant to be, but for a stubborn local man (Elis Kjaran) on a small bulldozer who made the road on his own over many years.

Once there was a cow that was meant to be slaughtered but escaped and swam 2.5 km across the fjord coming ashore in Valpjofsdal. The farmer there decided to keep her after this achievement and will to live. A few months later she was in calf. Nowadays she has a beer named after her.

In Patreksfjörður, this guy, Mangi I Botri, stated fish farming at the bottom of the fjord and dug out small ponds to grown fish. He also had a bus that he drove around the country selling various goods such as clothes, tools and vitamins.

A German spy used to live in a cave in the mountain above Patreksfjörður during the second world war.

### Personal

Skard Skardsstrond: 1870 a woman was doing laundry at the river with her baby lying beside her. An eagle flew down and took the baby away towards its nest. The woman's screams were heard by her husband who took a stick, jumped on his horse and followed the eagle for at least 2km. The man caught up with the eagle and hit it with the stick when it flew lower, the baby fell unhurt and grew to be an old woman. (Claimed to be a true story by someone who met her. Similar stories were told with a less happy ending).

Saudafell Guesthouse: Built in 1897 by the county sheriff who started the Danish "Ugeblad Hjemmet" and Art Museum of Iceland. In 1918 my great grandfather bought the farm and his first winter was one of the coldest in the century ... I am the 4th generation in the house and was born in the south west corner of the second floor.

Stories of family patterns – often unconventional with many twists. Such as the lady who had 16 children, 15 of her own and 1 fostered. But 12 of these were twins – 6 sets of twins!

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## Place

We used to measure mountain roads in shoes (made of skin.)

This place – Hundadalur – got its name because Auður, one of the first settlers gave freedom to some of her slaves and boatsmen after she settled here in 890. One slave was called Hundi, that's why it is called Hundadalur (Hundi's Valley)...4 other farms are named after slaves too.

Iceland is divided into sections which are separated by fences to minimise spread of sheep diseases. Strandir in eastern Westfjords is a 'clean' area where there has never been disease. When farmers need to cut their stock because of disease they will buy live lambs from Strandir to restock.

Blood stone: A stone found at Goðdalur dates back to settlement (900-1000). It was used for collecting blood from sacrificed animals (maybe people) in pagan rituals. The stone is in the Witchcraft Museum at Holmavík. It has been DNA tested and blood traces confirmed.

Tjörúhúsið is one of the best seafood places in Iceland. You will not get high class service but the best produce.

Vatnsfjörður. The place where Hrafna-Flóki named Iceland.

Did you know that the Westfjords was considered to be the best place to live in Iceland up until the Industrial Revolution (1900s). Because there was always enough food to be had here. Fish in the sea, birds on the cliffs, berries in the mountains and land to raise cows and sheep. No-one ever starved here.

Rauðsdalur – the last executions in Iceland took place here.

Kleifa Kallinn is a statue on Kleifaheiði made by road construction workers in the 60's. The tradition is to wave to him when you pass by for good luck.

## Superstitions

If you light a cigarette with a candle you risk killing a fisherman.

Seamen were not supposed to go out on the sea if they met a woman on the way to their boat.

When the season started fishermen did not change clothes until the season was over. And did not wash their coffee cups.

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## Myths

**Bjartmars Stone:** A large rock/cliff close to Reykholar is believed to be the elves' marketplace and you can see the white line in the sea from the elf-boats sailing through. It is also a geological site, since this large rock is an old volcano with basalt columns.

**Galmastrond Steingrimsfjordur.** At night you might see people walking or moving across the road. Ghosts! ...My grandfather told me. Today I tell my children and we drive there often.

There is an elf stone a few kilometres north of Búðardalur. Road workers tried to move it but the machines broke down. It stays put in the same place today. While driving I honk the horn in warning before I pass the stone just in case there are elves on the road.

In my garden there's a small hill where we were told that only kids under 18 can play. When my little sister was being naughty she ran away from my mother who chased her onto the hill. The moment my mother got to the hill she fell and broke her leg in 3 places although she was only jogging. Now, what do you believe?

Deep inside the valley of Haukadalur is a waterfall called Drangafoss (Ghost Waterfall). Its name comes from ancient times when a witch summoned all the ghosts of the valley and locked them up in there forever.

Just above my house is a line of rocks – obviously the habitat of hidden people. I tend to be alone on the farm in the winter and very often at night I almost hear music; it is just out of my ears' reach, but I feel it.

Folks around here believe you need to stop by a special big rock near Sudavik and say a rhyme many know. If you do that you might find hidden money nearby. My family always makes this stop.

People here believe that trolls tried to dig the Westfjords apart from Iceland but the sun came up before they finished so they turned to rocks (which can still be seen south of Holmavik).

They used to burn witches on the beach at low tide so that their remains would be washed away on high tide

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# Thinking about 2025

Participants imagined it was 2025 and a travel journalist is writing an article that celebrates the success of Hringvegur 2. Here's a few they came up with



See the best area of Iceland – where you can experience loneliness  
Untouched nature for everyone at any time of year  
The Westfjords Circle – a genuine touch to Iceland and it's folks  
The most beautiful and amazing route I have been on ever  
Increasing numbers of tourism in last 6 years  
The other Iceland/The authentic Iceland – fabulous nature – a journey through saga and wilderness  
New things on every corner of the ring road  
Rediscover your inner self in the arm of Westfjords nature  
Challenge your limitations  
Dramatic diversity  
Is it the sea or the mountains?  
A midsummer night's dream come true

The secret alternative to Ring Road 1 – wider, rougher, remote and extreme  
Unique experiences at every turn  
Treasure trove full of adventure  
Tourism boom on Ring Road 2  
Now cyclethon on The Westfjord Ring  
Iceland's most scenic route!  
Big contrast of everything you would imagine – wilderness, small villages, mountains, shore  
The Westfjords Route will stretch all your senses to the limit  
Hringvegur 2 name winter destination of the year  
Experience stories off the beaten path in Ring Road 2  
Don't waste your time on Ring Road 1 – stay on #2!  
West is the Best!

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VISITORS PLACES DESTINATIONS