



## Geldingadalir

Hiking paths and place names



### A unique eruption

Late on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, a volcanic eruption started east of Fagradalsfjall in Geldingadalir. It is the first eruption on the Reykjanes peninsula in nearly 800 years. The emerging lava originated from a depth of 17 km and exited through two adjacent vents. Later, more fissures opened to the north, but closed soon again. In late April, activity was mainly seen in one vent and volume of the lava discharge stayed between 5 to 13 m<sup>3</sup>/s. In mid-August, activity slowly died down, and as of September 18<sup>th</sup> 2021, no lava-flow has been observed from the main crater. Its rim now towers 40 metres above the surrounding lava field, which is up to 70 metres thick. The lava fields now cover an area of 5 square km – including all of Geldingadalir and extend into the valleys of Meradalir and Nátthagi. Compared to most other volcanic eruptions in Iceland, the eruption in Geldingadalir is considered to be rather small, but nevertheless impressive to watch, as it was easy to approach and observe. Visiting the eruption site remains very interesting although the active lava flow has seemingly come to an end. It can be strongly recommended for visitors to Iceland to visit the eruption site to see how the eruption has moulded and changed the area with their own eyes.

### Hiking paths to the eruption

Different hiking paths are available; the shortest and fastest start from the south, from Suðurstrandavegur, road 427. Other paths to the volcano are longer but nevertheless an interesting choice. Here it is important to protect the sensitive vegetation by following old riding paths and sheep trails.

### Nátthagakriki-paths

During the first weeks of the eruption, two hiking paths were marked that both started as one path from the car park at Suðurstrandavegur and went through Nátthagakriki up the mountainside of Fagradalsfjall. The path to the east (Path A) was unfortunately cut short and closed by the proceeding lava field. The path to the west (Path B) is still open; it takes a bit more than 4 hours back and forth to walk to the top of Fagradalsfjall. The hike along Borgarfjall is pleasant, followed by a steep climb up Fagradalsfjall on loose and slippery ground. From the top, you have a great view of the nearby crater and the lava field.

#### Weather forecast and equipment

It is very important to check the weather forecast before heading towards the eruption site, e.g. on [www.veduris.is](http://www.veduris.is). There, you will get information about the wind direction and if there is a danger of high levels of toxic volcanic gasses. Although the eruption seems to be over gas emissions can remain high and reach toxic levels. It is therefore extremely dangerous to walk on the lava or up to the crater rim. Geldingadalir is a somewhat remote area in the Reykjanes peninsula and the weather can change very quickly. It is moreover always important to be well equipped for a hike in the Arctic. Advice on equipment can be found on the website of the Icelandic Touring Association: [www.fi.is](http://www.fi.is).

### Meradalir-path

From Grindavík or Krýsuvík, you drive to a car park close to Ísólfskáli. You now follow a 5 km long jeep track north towards Meradalir and Stóri-Hrútur (351 m), which offers a great view over the eruption site. On the way back you can walk down over the ridge of Langihryggur towards the southern coast between Meradalir and Nátthagi, where you can approach the new lava field. From the car park west of Ísólfskáli lies a much shorter, marked hiking path (Path C) to the lava field and up the ridge of Langihryggur. There, you can either turn around and go the same way back, hike up to Stóri-Hrútur, or follow an unmarked and steep path down towards Meradalir.

### Dalahraun-path

Park your car at Amarsetur north of the Blue Lagoon. This hike leads past Stóra-Skógfell, nearly 7 km towards the western slope of Fagradalsfjall. There is another car park further to the south, at Svartsengi; if you start from there, the hike is a couple of km longer and leads you along Sýlingafjall through the rugged lava field of Dalahraun.

### Krýsuvík-path

This 20 km long hike (back and forth) is challenging but diverse. Park the car close to the geothermal area at Seltún in Krýsuvík. From there, you follow a path called Ketilstigur towards Sveifluháls, which offers great views over Kleifarvatn and Reykjanes. Now head towards Vigdísarvellir, passing beautiful geothermal areas before walking over tuff ridges and the old lava field of Leggjarbrjótshraun to Meradalir and Stóri-Hrútur. This hike is best suited for experienced hikers.

### Keilir-path

A 20 km hike both ways which leads to the northern part of the eruption site. Drive along the jeep track to the car park north of the mountain Keilir, where the hike starts. Fit hikers can first climb to the mountain top of Keilir (378 m) and enjoy the views from up there. Then follow small paths and sheep trails to the northern part of Fagradalsfjall. This path is suitable for mountain bikes, and in the winter time for cross-country skis.

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