

The New York Open Center Presents

AN ESOTERIC QUEST  
FOR THE

# MYSTERIES of the North in ICELAND

HELLNAR, ICELAND  
AUGUST 24 TO 29, 2016

## POST CONFERENCE JOURNEYS

### SIX DAYS IN THE WESTFJORDS:

*An Immersion in Silence,  
Spirit and Beauty*

AUGUST 29th TO SEPTEMBER 4th

### THE MAGIC OF THE SAGAS:

*An Exploration of Culture In  
and Around Reykjavik*

AUGUST 29th TO SEPTEMBER 1st

[www.EsotericQuest.org](http://www.EsotericQuest.org)

# Iceland

IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND MYSTICAL COUNTRIES ON EARTH. LONG FORGOTTEN, IT HAS EMERGED RECENTLY AS A BRILLIANT DESTINATION THAT OFFERS AN ENDLESS SPECTRUM OF NATURAL WONDERS IN THE FORM OF GLACIERS, MOUNTAINS, WATERFALLS, VOLCANOES, THERMAL POOLS, AND OCEAN SIDE VILLAGES, ALL WITHIN A VAST SETTING OF SILENCE AND GRANDEUR. IT IS TRULY THE “LAND OF FIRE AND ICE.”

This August, the twelfth in the Open Center’s series of conferences on the Esoteric Quest will take place on the Snaefellsnes Peninsula in the West of Iceland, a place long held sacred in Norse Mythology. Its sparkling ocean and long ridge of protective mountains terminate in the Great Snow Mountain Glacier itself, *Snæfellsjökull*, long seen as a holy place. While Norse mythology itself is filled with fascination and spiritual depth, there also was much more to the Vikings than the familiar stereotype of plunder and mayhem. They were not only warriors and raiders, but also adventurers, artists and shamans who deeply valued the *Völvas*, seeresses capable of peering into the future.

The Icelandic sagas, a major source of inspiration for Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, are filled, in the words of Seamus Heaney, with “the poetry of the North Atlantic ... testimony to the spirit’s ability not only to endure what fate may send it but to be renewed by the experience.” Once again, we invite you to join leading scholars, writers, artists and adventurers as together we enter the great Mysteries of the North in one of the most magical realms on earth.

The Esoteric Quest starts with an optional pre-conference day in which we will bathe in the Blue Lagoon, the most famous thermal waters in Iceland, visit a Viking museum, and enjoy dinner in Reykjavik.

We will also offer two post-conference journeys: one to the beautiful and mystical Westfjords, the least visited part of Iceland; and the other in and around Reykjavik with its many cultural and natural wonders.



New York  
OPEN  
CENTER  
Inspired Learning  
at 30th & Madison

The New York Open Center has been, for over thirty years, one of America’s leading institutions of holistic learning.  
[www.opencenter.org](http://www.opencenter.org)

For more information, please contact Andrea Lomanto at 212.219.2527 x101, or write [quest@opencenter.org](mailto:quest@opencenter.org). Please see our website at [www.esotericquest.org](http://www.esotericquest.org) for additional conference details and program updates.

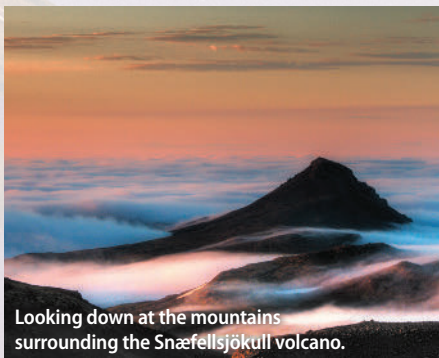
Co - Sponsor: The Lumen Foundation

# PLENARIES

## JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE NORTH: Iceland in the Esoteric Cosmos

**Leonard George, Ph.D.**

Iceland might seem like a marginal place, tucked away in the corners of global maps. But in the heyday of Viking society, it was the focal point of a Norse-speaking culture spanning the Scandinavian homeland in the east, Greenland and Vinland in the west, and areas of the British Isles in the south. Icelandic texts are the source of most of our knowledge of old northern mythologies. They tell of the world's creation out of fire and ice, its ultimate fate, and the tales of gods and heroes, giants and elves that have populated the Western imagination ever since outlanders learned of them. We will meet at the foot of Snæfellsjökull, where volcanic fire meets hyperborean ice, to ponder the esoteric significance of this land's treasures.



Looking down at the mountains surrounding the Snæfellsjökull volcano.

## ODIN, KING OF THE GODS

**Gabriel Hilmar**

Odin, the one-eyed god of wisdom, grants magic and inspiration to those who are sensitive and gifted enough to hear the song of the universe. He can be considered a key to understanding Norse mythology as his own hero's journey through the nine worlds of wisdom is a metaphor for our own inward



*Odin the Wanderer* by Georg von Rosen (1886)

quest to discover ourselves. Through self-sacrifice and keen intuition, Odin uncovered the universal magic of the runes and the mead of poetic inspiration. His old man magic and wisdom are mirrored in figures such as Tolkien's Gandalf, and his archetype is alive and active in our own times.

## VANADÍS, VÖLVA AND VALKYRIE:

### Three Aspects of the Goddess Freyja

**Valgerður Bjarnadóttir, M.A.**

The Norse Goddess Freyja has many guises. She is both human and divine. Snorri Sturluson's Edda tells us that she has many names because she traveled the world searching for her husband Óður. This lecture examines three aspects of Freyja starting with the Völva, the sibyl of the North, greatly valued for her ability to see into the future. Her voice rings forth in the poem *Völuspá*, in which she responds to the quest of Odin by recounting the story of this world from genesis to apocalypse. We will also explore Freyja's other aspects as the Valkyrie, a female being of death and rebirth, and Vanadís, great goddess of the tribe of Vanir.

## THE LEGACY OF NORDIC AND TEUTONIC MYTHOLOGY

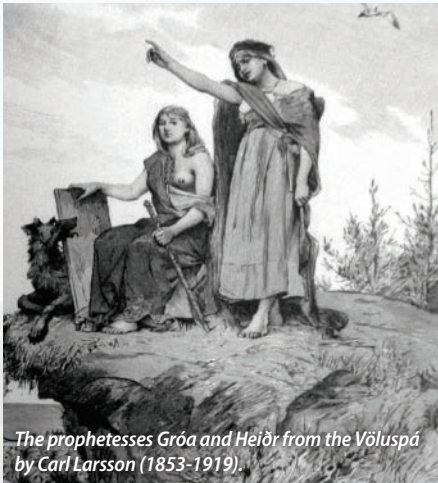
**Christopher McIntosh, D.Phil.**

Wherever the influence of the Nordic and Teutonic peoples has been felt, their mythology, their traditions and their religious view of the world have left a profound mark on culture, language, and customs. Easter has its hares and eggs—the hare being the symbol of the winter goddess, Skadi, who hands over at the equinox to the spring goddess Ostara, whose symbol is an egg. We can also think of the three witches in *Macbeth*, who are the three Norns of fate; of Wagner's *Ring* cycle and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*—all drawing on old Norse literary sources. Nordic and Teutonic mythologies have cross-fertilized each other over the centuries. This talk presents a revealing comparison of them and explores the possibility that they are part of an ancient Nordic tradition of wisdom, whose traces can be found across a large part of the northern hemisphere.



*Freyja* by John Bauer (1882–1918)

# PLENARIES



*The prophetesses Gróa and Heiðr from the Völuspá by Carl Larsson (1853-1919).*

## THE SIBYLS' VISION: The Saga of the Völuspás and Names of the Dwarfs

**Haraldur Erlendsson, MD**

The poetic *Saga of the Völuspás* is the heart of Nordic spiritual culture. In it the völvas, the Viking seeresses, speak in the voice of the mother of the world. They describe the formation of the cosmos and the creation of mankind. A great war arises between the wise powers of the gods and the monstrous forces embodied in the dragon, the Midgard Serpent, and the Fenris Wolf. Eventually the gods of the Aesir and the Vanir are overwhelmed, and the world is destroyed in Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods. A new world is born with the golden tablets of wisdom, through the actions of the silent god Vidar. We will explore how this great poem can be interpreted as a manual for the transformation of consciousness.

## THE DREAM SONG OF OLAV ÅSTESON:

A Medieval Norwegian  
Visionary Poem

**Halvard Harklau, M.Sc.**

During the era of national romanticism in the 19th century, folkloric material was collected widely in Norway. In

certain areas of the country, a tradition of singing verses called “dream-chants” was discovered. These described the adventures of a figure known as Olav Åsteson on his visionary travels in the “otherworld.” Several attempts were made to reconstruct what is believed to be a great work of Medieval visionary poetry. This presentation examines the esoteric interpretation of this poem by author, cleric, mystic, anarchist and theosophist Ivar Mortenson-Egnund.

## POETRY AND ESOTERICISM: From Odin to the Present

**Christopher Bamford**

Odin, who brought “the precious mead” from the other world, was called the God of Poetry. Before he seized it, it was in the hands of the dwarfs, whose drink it was. Elsewhere, however, it is suggested that Odin learned of poetry when he hung upon the tree of Yggdrasil. In fact, poetry is ever-present in Norse mythology. And the texts from which we learn such things are written in poetry. This talk examines why—from ancient Greece, through Gnosticism and hermeticism, Sufism and alchemy, all the way to Goethe and Blake—poetry is so often the language of choice in which to transmit esoteric cosmology, metaphysics, and prophetic eschatology.



*The Yggdrasil from Prose Edda, 1847. Painted by Oluf Olufsen-Bagge*

## FIRE & ICE, SEA & SKY: ICELANDIC MUSIC AS A MIRROR OF NATURE

**Marjorie Roth, Ph.D., DMA**

Whether traditional, popular or classical, the music of Iceland springs organically from the stuff of the island itself. Rhythm, melody, texture and harmony combine to reflect the wildness of Iceland’s natural landscape, the timelessness of its vast unbroken spaces, and the drama of its volcanic birth. This vivid musical imitation of nature probes deeper into the heart and soul of the Icelandic people, rendering their historical experience, their sagas and their myths in sound. We will explore Icelandic compositions and seek in them the esoteric essence of the island through the particular gnosis that is music.

## THE ODINIC MYSTERIES AND THE WELL OF REMEMBRANCE

**Scott Olsen, Ph.D.**

Odin is the archetype of the perennial quest for initiation: the relentless visionary seeker of wisdom. Representing the shamanic-ascetic-warrior, he pursues initiatory transformation and loses an eye in order to imbibe from Mimir’s Well of Remembrance. Enduring a nine day ordeal by hanging on the Yggdrasil World Tree, he discovers the secrets of the Runes, the mathematical patterns of nature, and the mastery of the magical power of language. Thus equipped, Odin becomes the center of the twelve Aesir sky-gods of Valhalla. Drawing upon the writings of John Michell, Robin Heath, Ralph Metzner and Leif Sahlqvist, this talk aims both to uncover the practical applications of this ancient tradition and demonstrate the parallels with other initiatory and transformative practices.

# WORKSHOPS

## BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO OLD GODS

**Christopher McIntosh, D.Phil.**

Across numerous countries, from Iceland to Russia and from Norway to Greece, there is renewed interest in the worship of the ancient gods and goddesses and a celebration of the old sacred festivals and traditions of their regions. The vigorous revival of the pre-Christian religion in Iceland since the early 1970s is one example of this remarkable growth of Paganism / Neopaganism. In this vividly illustrated talk, Christopher McIntosh will explore the Pagan revival and its impact on many areas of life, including politics, art, music and literature.

## THE SAGA OF BARD, THE GOD OF MOUNT SNAEFELL: The All-Mighty Ace of Pagan Iceland

**Haraldur Erlendsson, MD**

Bard, son of King Dumbar, was born in northern Norway. After a dream foretelling the birth of a new golden king, he decided to move to Iceland. He settled under Mount Snaefell (near the location of our Quest), and legend tells us that he entered the mountain from where he is said to continue to rule. Years later, Bard's son Gestur undertook a journey from Bordeyri to the North (midsum-



*Icelandic statue of Thor holding his Mjollnir.*

mer sun) to reclaim the kingship of his forefathers. Together we'll explore the saga's concern with the creation of a sacred mythological landscape, one which humanity can use to face its inner challenges and be assisted in its spiritual journey.

## SHAMANS, SEERS AND SORCERERS:

### The Quest for Hidden Knowledge in Northern Esotericism

**Leonard George, Ph.D.**

Is the ordinary waking state the pinnacle of clarity for gaining knowledge? In many societies we find the notion that altered states of consciousness can enhance access to certain kinds of knowledge. The culture of old Scandinavia and Iceland was one of these. The Saami people practiced shamanism, and influenced the Norse—or was it the other way around? According to some scholars, the seers mentioned in the Eddas and Sagas connect to a lineage of sibyls rooted in the Greco-

Roman world. And the sorcerous lore of Iceland is clearly tied to a thread of magic extending back through medieval Europe to ancient Egypt.

## HIDDEN ORDER IN THE RUNES

**Halvard Harklau, M.Sc.**

Were the runes of medieval Scandinavia strange signs imbued with magical power, or simply a set of phonetic idioms for common writing? Popular opinion today, as well as scholarly opinion in a more romantic era, certainly associates them with mystery and magic. This workshop suggests that the runic forms and their sequence indicate a complex mathematical structure that may throw new light on their origin. Esoteric currents, Eastern or Western, may have conveyed the cosmological system that inspired their creation.



*The Codex Runicus, a law code written in runes (c. 1300 CE)*



*Bárðar Saga Snæfellsáss Statue at Arnarstapi, Iceland*

# WORKSHOPS

## RUDOLF STEINER & THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NORSE GODS AND MYTHS

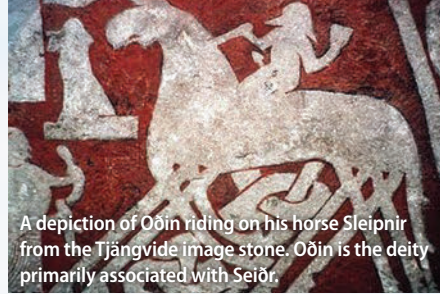
**Christopher Bamford**

Throughout his life, Rudolf Steiner felt close to Norse mythology and valued it highly. And, as is always the case, he had his own radical, esoteric, and unique understanding of it. Above all, he saw it as having continuing, evolutionary importance. This talk will trace his ideas and seek to place them in a wider context.

## A PANORAMA OF NORSE MYTHOLOGY

**Gabriel Hilmar**

This talk will give a foundational understanding of Norse mythology through its pantheon of fascinating and eccentric gods and goddesses. Odin the Allfather united two powerful orders of gods: the Aesir and the Vanir. We will see how this significant event shaped this mythic world, and how nature magic and divine authority converged to form the nine realms of the universe. Through vivid sagas and captivating poetry, the medieval Icelanders captured the ancient wisdom of the cold, dangerous Arctic Circle, interweaving human society with the grand cathedral of nature.



A depiction of Óðin riding on his horse Sleipnir from the Tjängvide image stone. Óðin is the deity primarily associated with Seiðr.

## SEIÐR, DREAMS AND THE SELF

**Jesse Bransford, M.F.A.**

Seiðr is the vision-magic practiced by those working within the Norse pagan traditions. Oracular and meditative, the practice is designed to allow meetings with spirits and ancestors in the dream/spirit realm. This workshop will cover the basic concepts of seiðr as well as read and discuss the primary texts from which seiðr rituals are derived (e.g. the Poetic Eddas).

## THE ICELANDIC PAGAN POETIC TRADITION

**Hilmar Örn Hilmarson**

The pagan poetic tradition survived in Iceland while it was mostly wiped out in the rest of Northern Europe. This workshop takes us on a journey, punctuated by music, strange poetical meters, metaphors, circumlocutions and the fact that the old ethical precepts of the Poetical Edda are just as relevant today as they were over thousand years ago.

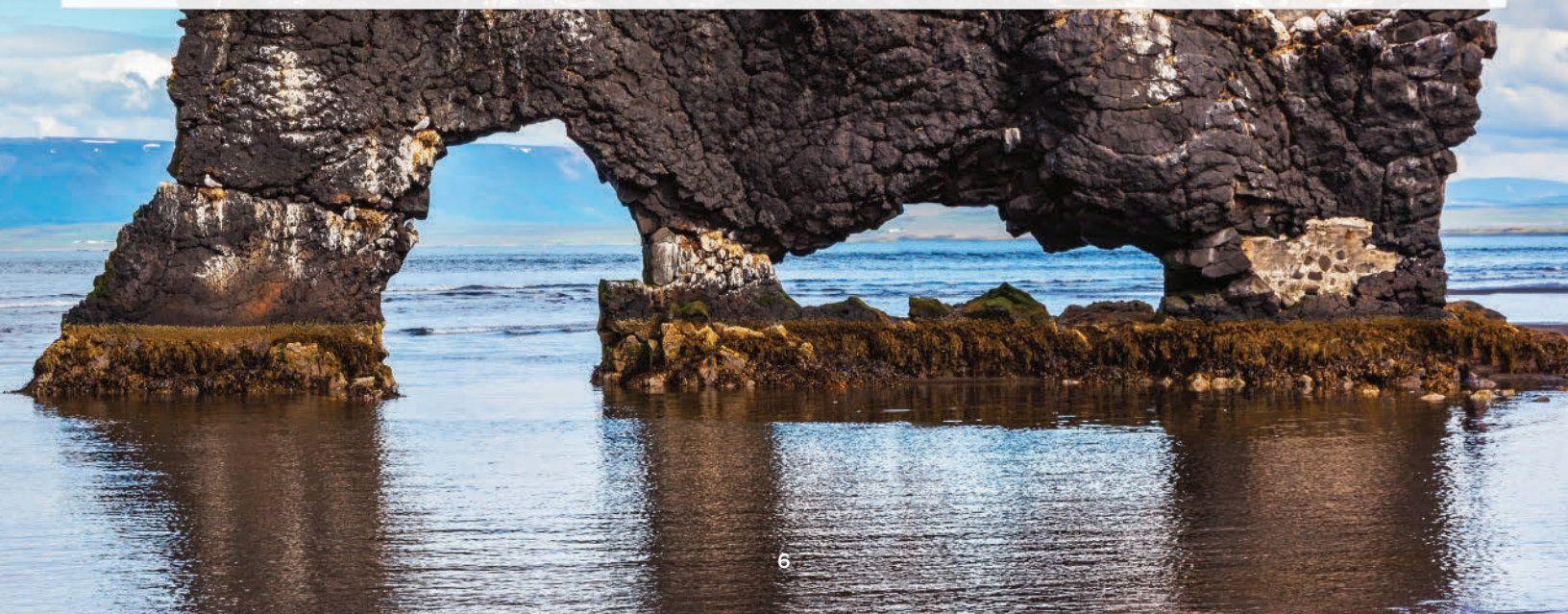
## LINES IN THE LANDSCAPE

**Thorarinn Thorarinnsson**

About 30 years ago, inspired by the work of Einar Pálsson, Thorarinn discovered geometric patterns in the landscape around Reykjavik. He will share how these patterns, marked with cairns, standing stones, prominent hills and other landforms, stretched eastward across mountains to the south of Iceland and were linked to the winter and summer solstice and other cardinal points of interest.



Skaftafell National Park, Iceland



## AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES



### NATURE MEDITATION

*Útiseta* (sitting outside) was the core Icelandic spiritual practice of the Viking period. By law, spiritual celebrations had to be under the sky and in front of the Gods. We will follow this tradition and engage in a daily attunement to the land as a living and vibrant being and to the elemental beings inhabiting stone, water and air.



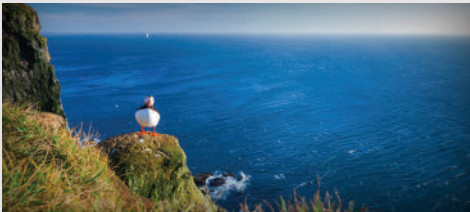
### GLACIER HIKE ON THE SNÆFELLSJÖKULL\*

Our conference site in Hellnar is located directly beneath the great glacier-covered snow volcano of Snæfell, long considered a sacred place in Icelandic tradition. We will have the opportunity to visit the glacier safely with a local guide knowledgeable in the flora, fauna and ecology of the region.



### WHALE WATCHING BOAT EXCURSION\*

The Snæfellsnes Peninsula juts into the Greenland Sea and is celebrated for its natural beauty and for the rare opportunity it offers to experience the North Atlantic Ocean in all its moods. There will be an optional whale-watching trip from the village of Olafsvik on which we hope to see orcas, sperm whales, and multiple other whale and dolphin species.



### HORSEBACK RIDING\*

Riding or walking along the sandy beaches, lava fields and mountain paths of the Peninsula can be an exquisite experience. Those who wish will be able to enjoy Icelandic horses known for their unique gait.

### ELVES AND HULDUFOLK

Ragnahildur Jonsdottir

In Iceland, the worlds of elves and humans have always been connected, and there are many stories of encounters through the ages. Ragnahildur, an Icelandic painter who has been sensitive to these encounters throughout her life, will describe her experiences with elves and lead us outside where we can attune to the subtle presences in nature.

There will also be plentiful opportunities for beautiful strolls and hikes along the coastline, although as this is Iceland, **all outdoor afternoon activities are weather dependent.**

\*Limited space is available for these optional activities; they must be selected separately during conference registration.

## SONGS FROM THE EDDAS

Hilmar Örn Agnarsson, Steindór Andersen, Páll Guðmundsson

This evening, with some of the leading musicians and poets from the country's celebrated arts scene, will feature song and chants from the Eddas, and other selections of old Icelandic literature. We'll seek to invoke the atmosphere of the early golden age of Iceland, around 1000 AD, a period that saw the country imbued with a rich array of cultural influences, including those of the Sami from northern Scandinavia, the Norse, the Celts, the Romans, Byzantines, and Muslims as well.

## THE SEERESS' ENCHANTMENT: THE MEETING OF OLD AND NEW

With various musicians and storytellers, including the South Icelandic Chamber Choir

"The Sibyl's Prophecy" (*Völuspá*) is one of Iceland's most important esoteric poems, and tonight the tale comes alive in an evening of storytelling and song. The *Völuspá* tells of the story of the birth of the world, the troubles that emerged in this paradise, the war of the gods, the creation of man, and finally the destruction of the world that leads to its rebirth. We will hear how the names of the dwarfs at the heart of the poem were used as invocations by the smiths who shaped and transformed mortal man, opening him to the source of all. Through music and sung poetry, drumming and chanting, we too will encounter a sense of the sacred, from times of old.

## TALES FROM THE SAGAS

With Valgerður Bjarnadóttir as the Viking sisters Þórunn Hyrna and Auður Djúpúðga

This evening, performer and scholar Valgerður Bjarnadóttir will tell stories of the Viking settlers through the eyes of two significant sisters who feature prominently in the Sagas. Who were they? Where did they come from? What was their religion? How have they affected today's culture as ancestors? Born in Norway, raised partially in Scotland and Ireland, these sisters' were daring pioneers in the new world of Iceland.

## EVENING EVENTS





## SIX DAYS IN THE WESTFJORDS:

*An Immersion in Silence,  
Spirit and Beauty*

August 29th to September 4th

This Post-Conference journey through the mystical Westfjords will be a contemplative and nature-based experience on Europe's westernmost edge, an area long considered Iceland's best kept secret. We begin by taking the Baldur Ferry across the Greenland Sea to this silent, beautiful and magical world where Iceland's landscape rises to its dramatic climax. We will walk the fjords, find our way to sacred sites and places of outstanding natural beauty, listen to Icelandic storytellers and musicians recounting the Sagas, and soak up the unique feeling of one of the most pristine and cosmic realms on the planet. We will experience jagged cliffs, deserted beaches, stunning coastal fjords, towering mountains, and tiny fishing villages where traditional ways are still

practiced. Those who wish may participate in an Icelandic dream practice used for centuries that aims to deepen our spiritual connection to this vast landscape. Our journey will take us initially to the tiny town of Patreksfjordur with its quiet beaches and nearby waterfalls, and then to the perfect natural harbor of Isafjordur, the region's capital, located on a sand spit surrounded by dramatic mountains, and a center of new Icelandic music. From here, we can sail to the remote Hornstrandir Peninsula with its unspoiled beauty. We then travel to Holmavik and the Strandir Coast, a magnificently peaceful area with a history of magical traditions; to Reykholar from which we can gaze back upon the north coast of Snæfellsnes; and finally to Borgarnes, with its settler museum and thermal pools. There will be ocean vistas, geothermal springs, and a sense of time that can be expected to slow to the virtually timeless. Throughout this rare journey into one of the most sublime landscapes on earth, we will explore, and with luck we may even glimpse, the profound Mysteries of the North.

**Price:** \$2425 per person in double accommodations; \$2925 in single accommodations

**Includes all six nights' accommodations and all meals through breakfast on the 4th, all entrance fees, fully-guided tour, coach transport and airport transfer on the 4th.**

**Optional boat trip to Hornstrandir:** \$95 per person



## F E R E N C E

## PRE-CONFERENCE DAY ON THE REYKJANES PENINSULA

August 23-24

The Reykjanes Peninsula exists where the North Atlantic ridge rises from the ocean, and is a region of lava fields, astonishing cliffs, and black sand beaches. Our day begins with a visit to the legendary geothermal spa of the Blue Lagoon, an otherworldly place with its black lava surroundings, clouds of steam, and the healing properties of its waters. We continue with an afternoon at *Vikingaheimar*, a beautifully designed museum devoted to Viking history, and an evening amongst the colorful buildings and cultural delights of Reykjavik, the world's most northern capital.

**Includes airport transfer on the morning of the 23rd, one night's accommodations in Grindavik, entrance fees, ground transport, and all meals from breakfast on the 23rd through breakfast on the 24th, transport to Reykjavik on the 24th for an independent midday excursion, and to Selfoss later that day for the conference opening.** An additional night's accommodation is available for participants arriving in Iceland on the 22nd. (See [www.esotericquest.org](http://www.esotericquest.org) for details)

**Price:** See Registration information on page 11 for the joint Pre-Conference Day and Main Conference fee.

## N C E J O U R N E Y S

## THE MAGIC OF THE SAGAS:

*An Exploration of Culture  
In and Around Reykjavik*

with Valgerður Bjarnadóttir, M.A.

August 29th to September 1st

We begin our three day exploration of the world's northernmost capital and its culture by traveling from Hellnar to the *Snorrastofa* in Reykholt, accompanied by storyteller and writer, Valgerður Bjarnadóttir. Reykholt is the cultural and medieval center devoted to the work of Snorri Sturluson, the celebrated 13th century author who compiled and wrote the Edda that gave us most of what we know about Viking mythology. From there we travel to Reykjavik itself where we will spend our next three nights. Our first full day has us exploring Icelandic history through the lens of the Sagas with a visit to Skálholt, the political and spiritual capital of Iceland for many years. We'll then have some time at the Njál's Saga Centre in Hvolsvollur, with its replica of a Viking Hall, its tapestries, and its insight into Viking navigation, cosmology, ocean travel, religion and literary art. We travel on to nearby Stöng where we will explore an artful recreation of an Icelandic chieftain's majestic dwelling from the Age of Settlement, and then go back to Reykjavik for dinner and an evening enjoying the city's vibrant arts scene. Our second full day begins by heading out to Hofsstadir to see the turf-walled remains of a traditional Viking longhouse, and then making the trip to the old harbor town of Hafnarfjörður. Here, we will visit the lovely lava park and garden, and take a guided elf walk with Seer and Artist Ragnhildur Jónsdóttir, who will share with us her knowledge of the elves, huldúfolk and other beings and their dwellings in enchanting Hellisgerði Park. Finally, we return to Reykjavik to immerse ourselves in the many outstanding museums and art galleries of this creative, colorful and welcoming city.

**Price:** \$1525 per person in double accommodations; \$1870 in single accommodations

**Includes three nights' accommodations and all meals through breakfast on the 1st, all entrance fees, fully-guided tour, and coach transport.**



## BIOGRAPHIES

**Hilmar Örn Agnarsson** is the conductor of The South Iceland Chamber Choir with whom he has performed all over the world. He has worked with many of Iceland's most prominent musicians and composers, as well as with Sir John Tavener. Hilmar was also the bass player in *Theyr*, the renowned band that helped bring about the New Wave movement in Iceland.

**Steindór Andersen** is an Icelandic musician noted for his Rímur chanting (related to the Indian ragas), and is most widely known for his collaborations with the band *Sigur Rós*.

**Christopher Bamford** is the editorial director of SteinerBooks and Lindisfarne Press. He is the author of *An Endless Trace: The Passionate Pursuit of Wisdom in the West*, co-author of *Green Hermeticism: Alchemy and Ecology*, and has written numerous introductions to the works of Rudolf Steiner.

**Valgerður Bjarnadóttir, M.A.**, holds a master's in Philosophy and Religion from the California Institute of Integral Studies with an emphasis on Women's Spirituality. She is the author of *The Saga of Vanadís, Völva and Valkyrja*, and maintains a private practice in Iceland where she lectures, teaches, counsels, and performs.

**Jesse Bransford, M.F.A.**, is a Brooklyn-based artist whose work is exhibited internationally at venues including The Carnegie Museum of Art and the UCLA Hammer Museum. An associate professor of art at New York University, he has lectured widely on the artistic and esoteric topics surrounding his work. In 2013 and 2016 he co-organized The Occult Humanities Conference in New York.

**Haraldur Erlendsson, MD**, is an eminent Icelandic psychiatrist and specialist in the treatment of psychological trauma. He has long had a keen interest in the esoteric, particularly dream symbolism and yoga. His recent novel, *The Man Who Drew Triangles*, draws on his research into earth energies and sacred geometry. Haraldur will accompany our post-conference journey through the Westfjords.

**Leonard George, Ph.D.**, is a Canadian psychologist, educator, writer and broadcaster, and a lifelong student of Western esotericism. Currently he is the Chair of the Psychology Department at Capilano University, British Columbia. The author of two books and dozens of articles, he has been an advisor and presenter for the Esoteric Quest conferences for many years.

**Páll Guðmundsson** has dedicated his life to his vocation as artist, musician and nature-lover. He has taken part in a large number of both solo and group exhibitions, and is known for the stone harps he builds. He has toured the world performing with the group *Sigur Rós*.

**Halvard Hårklau, M.Sc.**, a biochemist by profession, is a long-time student of the esoteric traditions whose research aims to combine the best of academic rigor with authentic spirituality. An instructor in Mindfulness Meditation, he is also a practitioner of Tai Chi and Qi Gong.

**Gabriel Hilmar, M.A.**, earned a master's in Mythological Studies from Pacifica Graduate Institute and is currently completing his doctoral dissertation on Odin and Norse mythology. His essay on comparative religion recently appeared in an anthology entitled *Evolving God Images*. He was a presenter at the first Joseph Campbell Foundation Symposium in 2010.

**Hilmar Örn Hilmarson** is one of Iceland's most renowned composers seen by some as the spiritual father of the new Icelandic music scene. Active in the Ásatrúarfélagið Association for over four decades, he was elected *Allsherjargoði* in 2003. Under his leadership, traditional Norse paganism has become a well-integrated and respected force in Icelandic society.

**Ragnhildur Jónsdóttir** is a painter who has felt close to the elves and huldufolk all her life. She runs The Elf Garden outside Reykjavik where she serves as a sort of a translator between humans and elves.

**Christopher McIntosh, D.Phil.**, is the author of *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason; Gardens of the Gods; and Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival*. He was on the faculty of the Centre for the Study of Esotericism at Exeter University. His fictional writing includes the short stories *Master of the Starlit Grove* and *The Wyrde Garden*.

**Scott Olsen, Ph.D.**, is a Professor of Philosophy and Comparative Religion at the College of Central Florida and the author of *The Golden Section: Nature's Greatest Secret*, which was awarded first place for design by the Bookbinders' Guild of New York. Scott lectures widely on the Perennial Philosophy with special emphasis on the Divine Proportion and Transformative States of Consciousness.

**Björg Þórhallsdóttir** has featured as a soloist throughout Europe, bringing audiences fresh interpretations of classical and contemporary Icelandic music. The performance of sacred music has played a significant role in her career, and she was named "The Akureyri Artist of the Year" in 2007.

**Marjorie Roth, Ph.D., DMA**, is professor of music history at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY, where she teaches music history, music and magic, and gender and music. She has presented papers at international conferences on Renaissance music and alchemy, spiritualism and feminism, troubadour song and poetry

**Thorarinn Thorarinnsson**, an architect and town planner, has long been involved in research on the roots of Icelandic culture and has given special attention to the work of Einar Pálson on allegory in the Icelandic Medieval sagas.

### Conference Staff:

**Director:** Ralph White,  
*New York Open Center*

**Coordinator:** Carrie Wykoff,  
*Events That Matter*

**Registrar:** Andrea Lomanto,  
*New York Open Center*

**Director of Finance:** Nancy Rotger,  
*New York Open Center*

**On-Site Coordinators:**  
Haraldur Erlendsson  
Unnur Silfá Eyfells, [www.icelandunlimited.is](http://www.icelandunlimited.is)

**Ralph White** is co-founder of the New York Open Center, one of America's leading institutions of holistic learning. He has directed the Esoteric Quest conferences since their beginning in 1995, and is the author of the highly regarded memoir, *The Jeweled Highway: On the Quest for a Life of Meaning*. He also edited and introduced *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited*.

**Carrie Wykoff** has been the conference coordinator for the Esoteric Quest since 1998. She produces all types of events and the Quest is truly one of her favorites. She is also an interfaith minister, a musician, a fitness instructor and a home educator.

**Andrea Lomanto** has served as the registrar for the Esoteric Quest since 2006. She is also a puppetista, educator, and founder of Power Up Youth Project.

## REGISTRATION

### Conference Fee

**Main Conference Course Code:  
16SQUEST**

**Registration through May 16, 2016:  
\$2795**

**Through June 1, 2016: \$2945**

**Through June 17, 2016: \$3095**

**Main Plus Pre-Conference Course Code:  
16SQUESTPRE**

**Registration through May 16, 2016:  
\$3060**

**Through June 1, 2016: \$3210**

**Through June 17, 2016: \$3360**

The conference fee includes the full conference program, evening events, all meals and airport transfer on the morning of the 24th and back into Reykjavik on the 29th. See [www.esotericquest.org](http://www.esotericquest.org) for optional afternoon activities.

### Accommodations Fee

Accommodations are provided in Selfoss and Hellnar, Iceland, for the five nights of Wednesday, August 24 through Monday, August 29. See [www.esotericquest.org](http://www.esotericquest.org) for info on pre-conference accommodations.

**August 24** (one night) in Selfoss

**Single room:** \$270 **Double room:** \$160 per person

**August 25 - 29** (full four nights) in Hellnar

**Single standard room:** \$690

**Double standard room:** \$370 per person

**Single ocean view room:** \$755

**Double ocean view rooms:** \$420 per person

**Single upgraded rooms:** \$1350

**Double upgraded rooms:** \$675 per person

### Student/Budget rate shared rooms

**and baths:** (2-4 persons per room; limited availability) Contact Andrea Lomanto at 212.219.2527 x101 or [quest@opencenter.org](mailto:quest@opencenter.org).

For booking double rooms, please specify whether you will be attending as a couple, sharing a room with a friend, or wish to have a roommate arranged for you by the Open Center (pending availability).

### Registration

The Open Center invites you to register on our website at [www.EsotericQuest.org](http://www.EsotericQuest.org), where you will find our complete registration information and payment form. Payment is required to secure your registration.

### Payment

All payment is in US dollars. Please pay by credit card, international money order or personal check (US bank accounts only). Prices do not include travel to and from Reykjavik, Iceland. An affordable payment plan for the conference is available. Please contact Andrea Lomanto at 212.219.2527 x101, or at [quest@opencenter.org](mailto:quest@opencenter.org) for details.

### Travel Arrangements

Participants must make their own travel arrangements to and from Reykjavik, Iceland.

### Arrival in Reykjavik

Participants for the main conference only will arrive at Reykjavik-Keflavik International Airport (KEF) no later than the early morning of August 24, where transportation will be provided that

morning to our first night's accommodations in Selfoss. Those of us attending the Pre-Conference Day will want to arrive no later than the early morning of August 23 as our program will begin after breakfast that day. More information may be found on our website at [www.esotericquest.org](http://www.esotericquest.org).

### About the Conference

Our main conference begins with an opening night reception and dinner at the Ingólfsskáli (Ingolf's Hall) in Selfoss on the evening of August 24. On the following morning of the 25th we'll travel as a group to Hellnar. Each day in Hellnar, we will have morning plenary sessions followed by lunch. Afternoons will feature workshops or excursions into the natural wonders of the Snaefellsnes Peninsula. Evenings will have dinner and events exploring Icelandic culture. The conference ends at lunchtime on Monday, August 29.

### Refunds

A full refund, less a \$200 processing fee, is offered for cancellations made by Friday, June 17, 2016. Travel insurance is **strongly recommended** in the event of unexpectedly having to cancel or change your travel plans either before or during the conference, losing your luggage, needing medical assistance, or if the program is affected by circumstances beyond our control.

### Scholarships / Work Study

A limited number of partial scholarships are available. A scholarship application can be found on our website at [www.EsotericQuest.org](http://www.EsotericQuest.org).

**“THE POETRY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC...  
A TESTIMONY TO THE HUMAN SPIRIT’S ABILITY  
NOT ONLY TO ENDURE WHAT FATE MAY SEND IT  
BUT TO BE RENEWED BY THE EXPERIENCE.”**

*— Seamus Heaney*



22 East 30th Street  
New York, NY 10016

New York  
**OPEN  
CENTER**

Inspired Learning  
at 30th & Madison

NON PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Aberdeen, SD  
PERMIT NO. 200

The New York Open Center Presents

AN ESOTERIC QUEST  
FOR THE

**MYSTERIES**  
of the **NORTH**  
in **ICELAND**

HELLNAR, ICELAND

AUGUST 24 TO 29, 2016

[www.EsotericQuest.org](http://www.EsotericQuest.org)

**CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS**

Journey to the Center of the North:  
Iceland in the Esoteric Cosmos  
—Leonard George, Ph.D.

The Sibyls' Vision: The Saga of the Völuspás  
and Names of the Dwarfs—Haraldur Erlendsson, MD

Poetry and Esotericism: From Odin to the Present  
— Christopher Bamford

Vanadis, Völva and Valkyrie: Three Aspects of the Goddess Freyja  
— Valgerður Bjarnadóttir, M.A.

The Odinic Mysteries and the Well of Remembrance  
— Scott Olsen, Ph.D.

The Icelandic Pagan Poetic Tradition— Hilmar Örn Hilmarson

A Panorama of Norse Mythology—Gabriel Hilmar

**POST CONFERENCE JOURNEYS**

Six Days in the Westfjords: An Immersion  
in Silence, Spirit and Beauty  
August 29th to September 4th

The Magic of the Sagas: An Exploration  
of Culture In and Around Reykjavik  
August 29th to September 1st