

Wildlife mammals

As in Iceland in general the wildlife in the area around Eldhraun is not very versatile. It mainly consists of a few bird species and small mammals. The only native mammal is the arctic fox. The fox has been a resident in Iceland since long before the settlement 1000 years ago. Coming from the Arctic on ice it is an extremely tough animal. It can survive in extreme conditions. In order to blend in with the environment and hide from predators it changes colour from being brown in the summer and white in the winter.

Another mammal that has lived in Iceland since the first vikings came there is the mouse. They live in small holes in the ground and despite their small size, only around 5 cm long, they are tough animals and can live in the rough surroundings in Eldhraun lava.

The third mammal is the mink. The mink was imported to Iceland in the 60' by farmers who wanted to try mink farming. Unfortunately most of the minkfarms went bankrupt and many of the animals got out of their cages. The mink is a vicious animal and it has been shown that they are amongst very few animals that seem to kill for recreational purposes. They attack larger animals like lambs and bigger birds, kill them and leave them. So they are not killing for food like the fox does.



left: Arctic fox during winter.
above: A mouse
top right: Arctic fox during summer
right: Mink
(all photos: VHS)

Wildlife birds

The bird flora in Eldhraun has a little more to offer. Many of the bird species fly south during the cold winter months but some stay there all year.

Rjúpa (e. ptarmigan) stays in Iceland all year. Like the Arctic fox it changes colour from brown to white depending on the season in order to camouflage itself. Rjúpa has many predators to look out for with man being one of them. Rjúpa is the most popular dinner on Christmas Eve in Iceland.

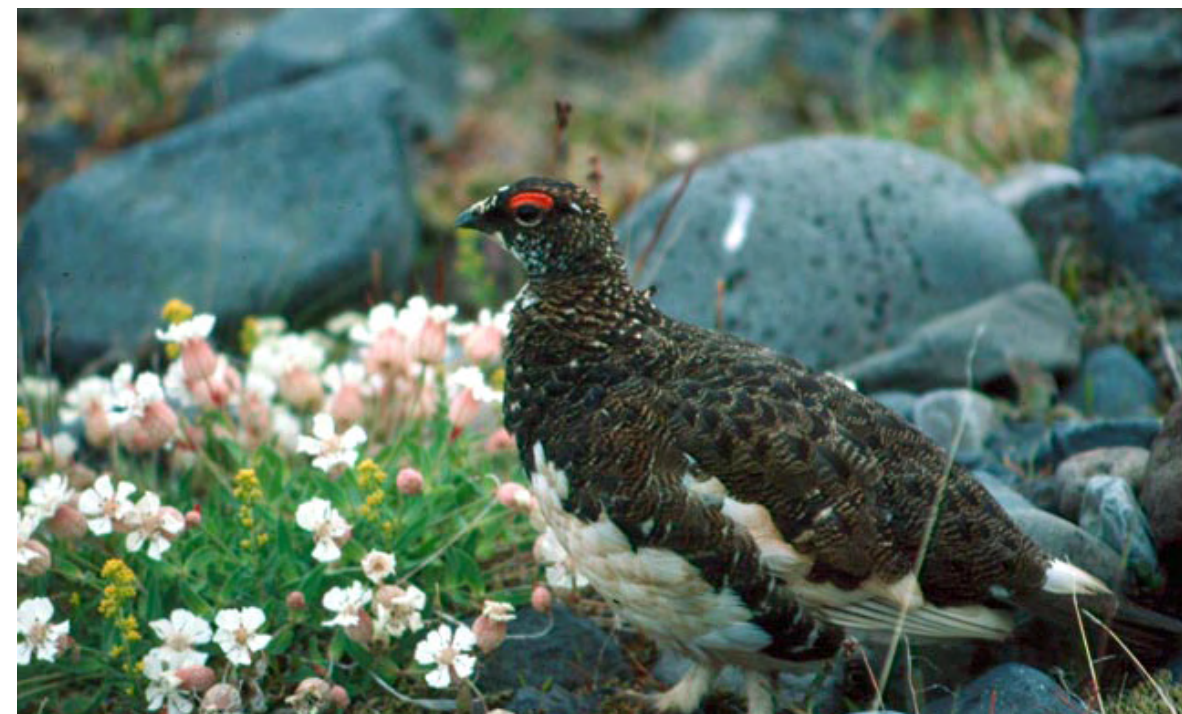
Lóa (e. golden plover) is the most beloved bird in the Icelandic bird flora. It flies to a warmer part of the world during the winter. When the Lóa is seen for the first time in the spring it is in all the media because it is the indication that summer has arrived in Iceland. It is also the theme in many of the Icelandic folksongs.

Spói is a slightly larger bird than Lóa. It has a light brown colour and a long and bent beak. The Spói also only stays in Iceland during the summer but his arrival in the spring is not celebrated as eagerly as the Lóa's.

All these animals will be visible from the lava hotel, even from the rooms.



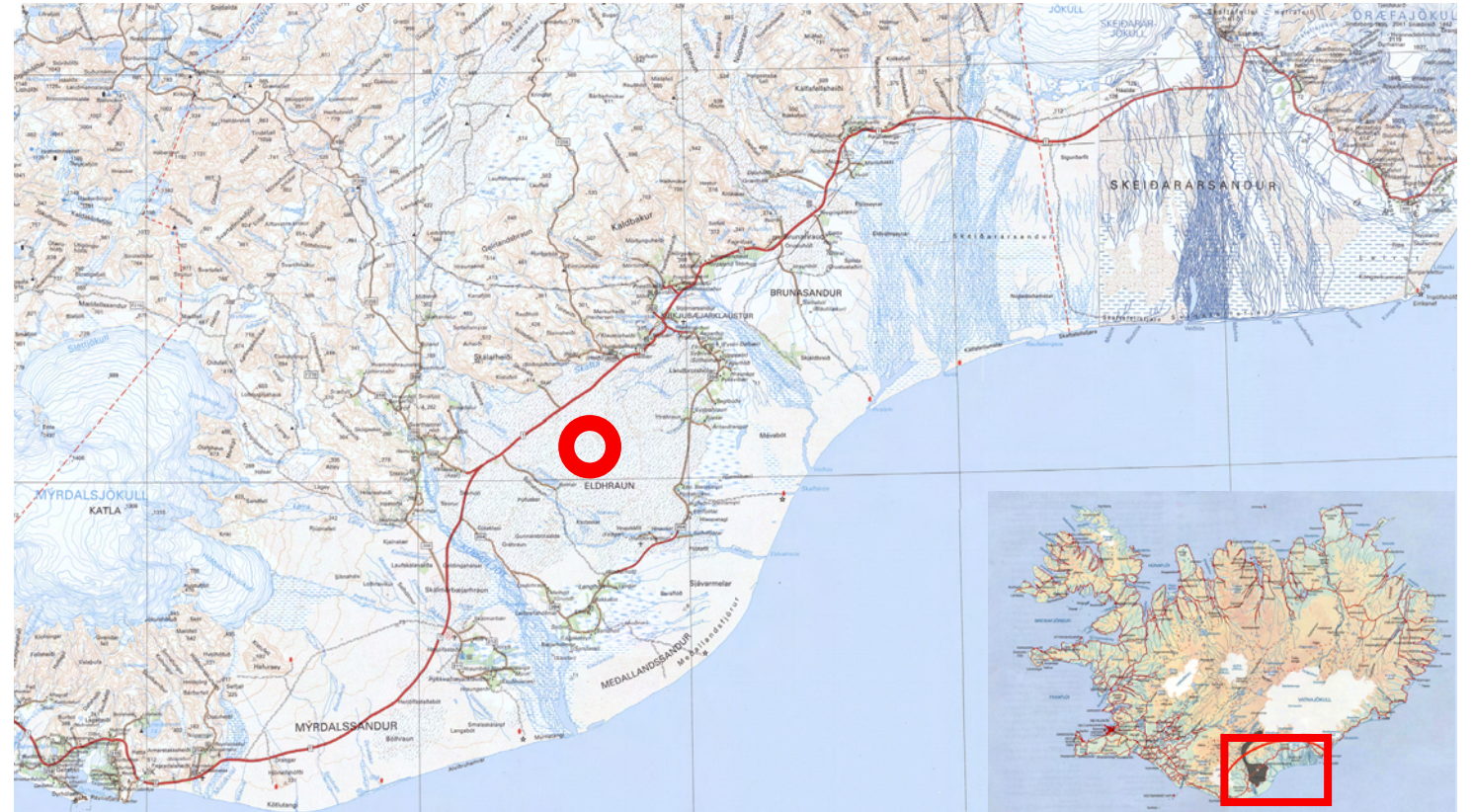
left: Rjúpa during winter.
above: Spói
top right: Lóa
right: Rjúpa during summer
(all photos: VHS)



Landscape

The Icelandic landscape has much to offer. Anywhere you stand you are likely to see flatlands, hills, mountains with white tops or glaciers just by turning your head from one side to the other. Eldhraun is no exception. The huge lavafield is located on the flat south coast of Iceland. Looking at it from a distance it may look flat but when approaching it one can clearly see that this is not the case. Small hilltops and valleys create a variation in the landscape.

The south coast consists of a long narrow strip of lowlands with the Atlantic ocean to the south and mountains and glaciers to the north, east and west. The south coast of Iceland is around 400km of black sand. Two of the largest glaciers in Iceland, as well as Europe, are close to the south coast. They are Mýrdalsjökull glacier (695 km²), to the west of Eldhraun and Vatnajökull glacier (8300 km²), with Örfæfjökull glacier (2119m), Iceland's highest peak, to the east. To the north of Eldhraun stand the mountains guarding the Icelandic highlands. These spectacular views in all directions from Eldhraun add to the experience of the large, moss covered, quiet and inspiring lavafield.



far right: View towards Örfæfjökull glacier to the east
right: The Atlantic meets the black south coast.
below: A part of the mountains guarding the highlands to the north
(photo: VHS)



Recreation in the area

Iceland has many different things to offer when it comes to recreation. Mountains, glaciers, waterfalls, glacier lagoons, black sandy beaches, birdcliffs, hotspots and so on. The south coast has most of these things, accessible and within a relatively small area. The distance from Reykjavík to Höfn is only 550 km.

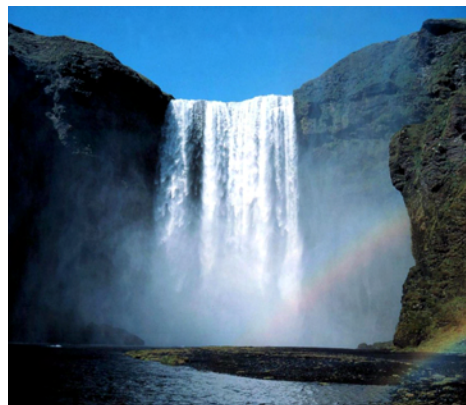
Following is a list of examples of what the area close to Eldhraun has to offer and the distance from these things to Eldhraun. In addition to the items on this list there are hundreds of small waterfalls, endless beaches with black sands, rivers and mountains. Eldhraun lava however, along with its twin Brunahraun lava, are the only lavafields on the south coast.



1. Seljalandsfoss waterfall, 100 km west
2. Skógafoss waterfall, 80 km west
3. Eyjafjallajökull icecap, 80 km west
4. Mýrdalsjökull icecap, 60 km west
5. Dyrhólaey birdcliffs, 60 km west
6. Reynisfjörur black beach, 50 km west
7. Thakgil mountains and canyons, 45 km west
8. Mýrdalssandur black desert, 40 km west
9. Hrífunes "forrest" area, 20 km west
10. Roads to the Fjallabak highlands, 15 km west
11. Fjaðrárgljúfur canyon, 5 km east
12. Lómagnúpur 800m high cliffs, 30 km east
13. Skeiðarársandar sand deserts, 40 km east
14. Glacier rivers, 40 km east
15. Skeiðarárjökull glacier, 40 km east
16. Skaftafell National park, 80 km east
17. Örfajökull icecap, 90 km east
18. Hvannadalshnjúkur top of Iceland, 90 km east
19. Ingólfshöfði birdcliffs, black sands, 90 km east
20. Breiðamerkurlón glacier lagoon, 120 km east



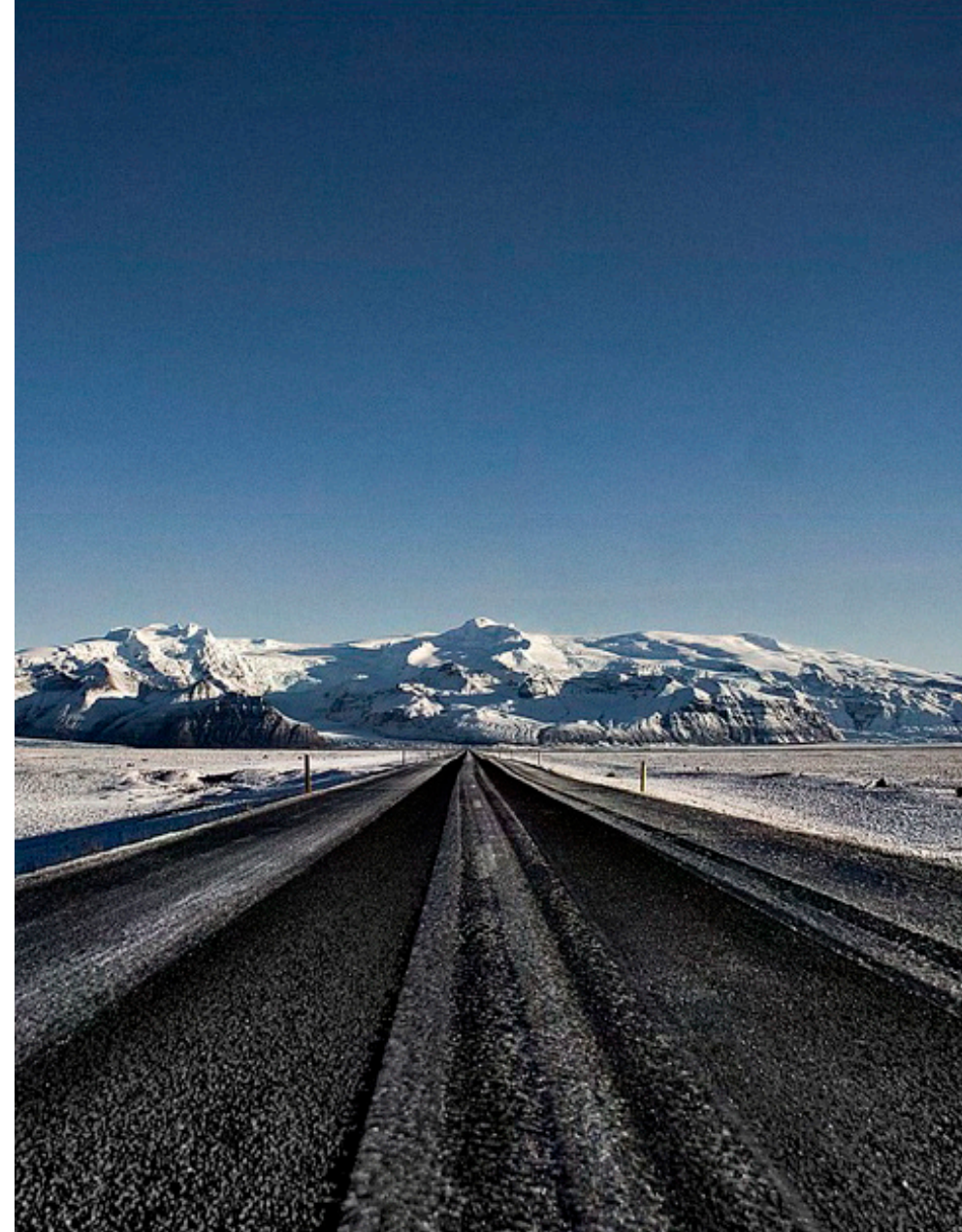
1. Seljalandsfoss



2. Skógafoss



11. Fjaðrárgljúfur



17. Örfajökull

View to the east

(photo: VHS)

Lómnúpur 600m high cliff

Skaftafell, National park
80 km. E

Öræfajökull, with Iceland's highest mountain.



