



Fairy-tale-like homes
in Skogar, Iceland
group of Yule Lad
impersonators
(bottom)

LOCAL COLOR

TINY TIDINGS

*Celebrate Santa's little
helpers in Iceland.*



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Elves are small—only 36 inches high at most. And though they have big ears and wear old-fashioned clothing, they do not wear pointy hats. Such facts can be learned on an “elf walk” in Hafnarfjörður, a harbor town just outside Reykjavík reputed to be the elves’ capital. Yes, elves. Fifty-four percent of Icelanders either believe in them or say it’s possible they exist. Roads have been diverted around boulders where the elves supposedly reside. A former member of parliament even swears his life was saved in a car accident by a family of elves.

A wintertime elf-themed stroll through Hafnarfjörður spotlights the 13 Yule Lads, pranksters with names like Hurdaskellir (Door Slammer) and Kertasnikir (Candle Stealer). Local children often leave out shoes for the Yule Lads to fill with treats. The holidays are an especially fortuitous time of year to see elves; on Christmas and New Year’s Eve, they’re known to be on the move, searching for new homes.

Walks often pass Hamarinn, the cliff where the elfin king and queen are said to hold court, and Hellisgerði Park, a solidified lava flow the elves find especially homey. In December visitors can embrace the Yuletide spirit even further at the popular Christmas market downtown.

Want to learn more? Enroll in Reykjavík’s Elf School, where in a three-to-four-hour course, complete with textbooks, tea, and cookies, you’ll earn an elf diploma. —~~CHRISTOPHER~~