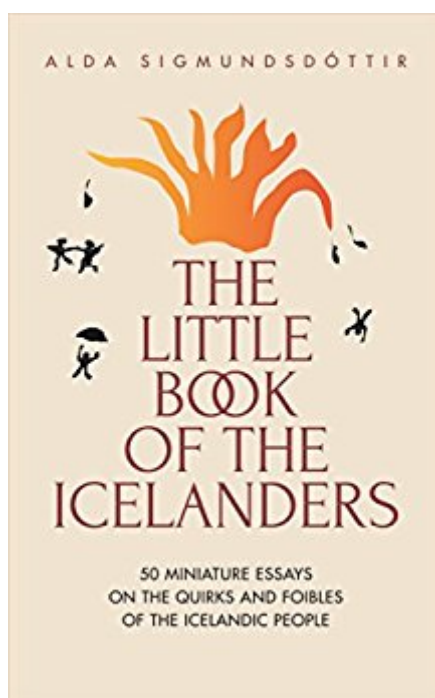


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# The Little Book Of The Icelanders: 50 Miniature Essays On The Quirks And Foibles Of The Icelandic People



## Synopsis

After more than 20 years away, Alda Sigmundsdottir returned to her native Iceland as a foreigner. With a native person's insight yet an outsider's perspective, Alda quickly set about dissecting the national psyche of the Icelanders. Among the fascinating subjects broached in *The Little Book of the Icelanders*: The appalling driving habits of the Icelanders, Naming conventions and customs, The Icelanders' profound fear of commitment, The irreverence of the Icelanders, Why Icelandic women are really men, How the Icelanders manage to make social interactions really complicated, The importance of the family in Icelandic society, Where to go to meet the real Icelanders (and possibly score some free financial advice), Rituals associated with weddings, confirmations, graduations, and deaths, and many, many more. One chapter leads to the next, creating a continuous chain of storytelling. It feels as if you're sitting in the author's kitchen, enjoying a cup of coffee and conversing with her about the quirks of her countrymen, every now and then bursting out laughing. [...] I'm going to heartily recommend *The Little Book of the Icelanders*, both to fans of Sigmundsdottir's blog and those unfamiliar with her work. - Iceland Review Online There aren't many books I'd recommend reading over morning coffee but *The Little Book of the Icelanders* is one of them. [...] I laughed at the essays in this book, not because I was laughing at Icelanders but because I recognize much of the behaviour in myself and members of my family. It felt good. It's not just the sanest, most impressive characteristics that we pass on and share but also some of the zaniest. As I read this book, I frequently thought, yup, I'm definitely part Icelandic. - L'Espresso, Igberg-Heimskringla, Canada

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## Customer Reviews

I'm planning a trip to Iceland soon and got this because it seemed like a quick cultural introduction. I've read many of the Icelandic Sagas and have a decent understanding of Icelandic history, but beyond the 13th century (and Bjartur of Summerhouse much later) I don't know much about modern culture and how Iceland has adapted to globalization and the connections that modern technology affords us. Alda Sigmundsdottir does an excellent job of identifying, explaining, and commenting on some of Iceland's major cultural idiosyncrasies and the influences that contribute to them. She bridges a gap between outsider and native because she is an Icelander by name and genes but was raised abroad and thus has experienced both sides. And, despite accurate (or at least it sounds accurate but we'll see when I visit) analysis of the country's culture and traditions, Alda keeps the whole thing light and casual and funny. I read this in spurts over the course of about a week, but it could be completed within a few hours. Each essay only takes a few minutes to read. Overall, this provides insight into a country that I don't think the globe really knows what to do with. It's such a unique little island that nowhere else on earth is similar. It's definitely worth the read and provides a good base to start from when you're visiting and looking to experience Iceland with a deeper understanding. Plus it was short and fun.

I absolutely adored this book. I initially came across this book at a gas station few days into our trip and I'm not sure what made me pick up this random book, except that we had noticed... some quirks. I found Icelanders and their culture to be incredibly interesting and unique, yet fascinatingly paradoxical at times. This book was an absolute delight to read, insightful in many ways, and helped this one tourist going around in a circle understand and see beyond the hot dogs, wool sweaters, and beautiful vistas. I would also recommend some of the author's other little books as well.

Just back from an all too brief visit to Iceland, I am curious to learn more about this strangely beautiful country and its people. This book has answered some questions, and whetted my appetite

for more information. Being an Icelander raised mainly abroad, the author is in a unique position to explain the country to non-Icelanders. Of course, as she is careful to make very clear, this is Iceland seen through one person's filter. Because it's so openly a personal perspective I'd have liked to have had more of an extended author bio upfront, explaining why her family left, where she has lived, where she studied, jobs, whom she is married to, number of children, other family still in Iceland? etc. in order for me to put her viewpoints into context. I get the feeling she is well-known and perhaps she assumes people know her back story already, but I don't. However, not knowing that stuff doesn't keep this from being a well-written and fascinating read! This book is an excellent brief introduction to contemporary Icelandic society. I highly recommend it as a starting place to anyone who, like me, is ignorant but sincerely interested. I'd love to see a "for further reading" list of books (fiction and non-fiction) by other authors or even movies that the author recommends, for more Icelandic perspectives. Of course, I definitely plan to read more by Alda Sigmundsdóttir!

Alda's personal history gives her a unique perspective on Icelandic culture. In essence, she's a Stranger in a Strange Land (must read sci-fi novel by Robert A. Heinlein). Alda was born in Iceland, but was raised mostly in Canada and Western Europe, moving back to Iceland when she was in her 30's. Whatever Alda missed out on by attending elementary school, secondary school and college abroad, she has more than made up for with her own research. Although Alda has clearly done quite a bit of academic research, most of the knowledge presented in this book is based on her personal experience of trying to "grok" (Heinlein reference) the social norms and culture that is both familiar and foreign to her. What I love most about this book is Alda's writing style - conversational, clever, humorous and incredibly informative. I couldn't put it down. In summary, both this book and Alda's other book, *The Little Book of Icelandic*, is a must read for anyone planning a visit to Iceland. If you're not planning a trip to Iceland, you should...it's an amazing "re-creational" experience.

This witty and informative collection of essays explains much about the Icelandic people and their quirky approach to life. It's written with obvious love but also with the clear-eyed assessment of someone who has taken a step back and really looked into the heart and actions of her countrymen. Parts had me laughing out loud, parts had me nodding in recognition, and some parts showed the delightfully baffling foibles of a people who battle both ancient and modern challenges everyday. I recommend it highly. I await more.

I am so glad I got this book! I have a trip to Iceland planned in the next few months and this book

gives me a greater understanding of the little quirks of the Icelanders. There are fun, interesting facts about the phone book, things I'm glad I now know in advance about swimming pools, and everything I need to know about being flott! If you want to know about Icelanders, you must read this book!

I love this writer and her style. This is a quick read and very interesting. If you're interested in Iceland and/or Icelanders, you will enjoy this fun little book. I've since bought two of this author's other books. So glad I found her.

Flott is an Icelandic word defined by the author as a combination of cool and awesome. I read this while visiting Iceland and found it a fascinating and entertaining read to help me understand both the country and its people. It reads like you asked the author to tell you about Iceland and this was her answer.

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