





# Søguslóðir

Destination Viking Sagalands

Sandoy, Skúvoy &  
Stóra Dímun



Føroya  
Fornminnisavnið



Faroe Islands

## Tourism

Sandoyar Sýslu Ferðalag (Sandoy Tourism Organisation) was set up in 2000 with the aim of increasing, developing and clearly defining the tourism experiences on offer in the Sandoy area.

The association receives financial support from Ferðaráð Føroya (the Faroe Islands Tourist Board) and municipalities in the area.

A tourist information office has been opened in the village of Sandur to promote tourism in the area and to provide visitors with a good service.

The author Heðin Brú once said that God must have been thinking about women when he created the islands. The area is really something special with its broad green expanses, steep valleys and its sheer cliff formations facing the sea to the west.

Fishing is the principal economic activity, but there is also a comparatively large agricultural sector. The area comprises eight villages with a population of around 1,450. There are primary schools in six villages and one central school for the whole area. Seven villages have churches. From Sandur, the largest village, where most of the services people need can be found, there is a daily ferry service to Skúvoy.

There is a lot of fishing activity in the village of Skopun, which is the second-largest village in the area. There is a ferry service between the village and Streymoy.

Many people spend their leisure time working on farmland or in outlying fields. The five community centres in the area provide the framework for a range of cultural activities for adults, young people and children.

There is a wide range of activities for tourists. Hiking trips and sailing trips to the nearby islands can be organised, as can visits to churches, museums and the art gallerie. Visitors can stay in hostels, summer homes, and community centres or in private homes on a bed & breakfast basis.

Boat trips to the bird cliffs of Skúvoy or fishing trips can be arranged from Sandur. On Skúvoy you can visit historical sites and areas of natural beauty with a guide. There are also guided tours to the area's archaeological excavations.

There are many ancient tales of pagans and Christians, rich and poor, good and evil and the happy and the tragic, not to mention the legends about magic and sprites. A good storyteller can really bring these stories to life.

**WELCOME TO SANDOY, SKÚVOY AND STÓRA DÍMUN.**



### Sandoy Tourist Information

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## Legends

### Kálvur lítlí

There was once a priest on Sandoy called Kálvur lítlí (Kálvur the Small). He is said to have been particularly evil and stubborn. He was a priest before the reformation and lived in the vicarage at *Todnes* in Sandur, which is still home to local priests today.

Close to *Todnes* you will find a sheep pen called *Kálmannarætt*.



### Kálvur's sons drown

Kálvur kept his store of food hidden out on the small



island of *Presthólmur* in the lake *Sandsvatn*. There were stepping stones connecting the island to the shore. Kálvur's sons were greedy and used to steal meat from their father. One winter they set out across the ice of the frozen lake, but missed their footing on the stones. The ice broke under them. All six drowned. The seventh son was not with them. According to the legend,

Kálvur did not shed a single tear when he heard of the tragedy.

### Haraldur Kálvsson on the bird cliff

One day one of Kálvur's farmhands set a ram loose and the animal knocked Kálvur to the ground. The priest stood up and swore he would get his revenge.

One day, when the farm hand and Kálvur's son, Haraldur, were collecting eggs on the bird cliff *á Drang*, Kálvur went up to the edge of the cliff with an axe hidden under his clothing. The two men noticed him and Haraldur asked the farmhand to change clothes with him. He then attached himself to the rope and was pulled up. As soon as Kálvur recognised the farmhand's clothing he leant forward to cut the line. Then Haraldur shouted that his father was welcome to cut the line, but that in doing so he would kill his son. Kálvur quickly tried to hide the axe, but when Haraldur had climbed up and had taken off the line, he hit his father.

Haraldur Kálvsson was the first head of parliament in the Faroes (*løgmaður*) and is mentioned in a document from 1412, in which he and Jóan, bishop of Kirkjubøur, sign an agreement about land in Sandur.



### Annika of Dímun

Annika was a farmer's wife on Stóra Dímun. She murdered her husband and took one of the farmhands as her lover. She was sentenced to death, but she positioned her men to watch *á Gjónni* - the only ascent from the sea on the west side of the island - and *á Barmi* - the only ascent on the eastern side. She defended the island for three years and prevented anyone coming ashore. However, eventually she was betrayed by one of her men and the authorities gained access. Annika was taken to Tórshavn, where she was drowned in the bay. Her hair kept her afloat, but once her plaits had been cut off she sank to the bottom of the sea.



### The Lady of Húsavík

According to the legend, there was a poor girl who lived with a farmer on Skúvoy. By day she kept watch on the cattle in the fields. One day she fell asleep and dreamt that she heard someone telling her that she was sleeping on gold. This happened three times and then an old woman interpreted the dream. When the place was dug up she found Sigmundur Brestisson's golden horn. The horn was sent to the king who rewarded her with money and land in Húsavík.



According to another tale, the log house that the woman had built on her large farm at Húsavík, came floating from Norway ready to put up. The stone fence, which she had built around the churchyard, is still standing today. The walls of the house and barns, the boat house foundations and the paved courtyard can still be seen.

Rumour says that the lady was hard hearted. Once she buried two maidservants alive. *Brynhildarheyggjur* is named after one of the maids. When the labourers came back after working in the fields or fishing they were rewarded or punished depending on whether or not they were tired.

### The old witch

There is a large hollow west of Sandur called *Gívrinarhol*, which - so legend says - is home to an old witch. According to the tale, a man passed by one day and saw an old witch grinding gold in a mill, while a child sat on the floor playing with a golden stick. The old witch was blind so the man took some of the gold and before he left the hollow he took the golden stick and used it to beat the child. Then he rode off on his horse. The old witch suspected something was wrong and called to another witch nearby asking her to chase the man. The witch began to chase the man taking giant strides and her footprint can still be seen on the rock *Gívrinar-spor*. At *Neytakonulið* the marks can still be seen of where she pressed her knuckles onto a stone. At *Vølsimýra* she managed to grab the horse's tail and pulled so hard that she pulled the tail right off. The horse threw the rider off, but at that very moment the man caught sight of the church and was saved.



### Óli the Shepherd

Óli the Shepherd lived in Húsavík, and according to legend, was descended from the powerful lady of Húsavík. One day when he was out in the mountain the eyelet in his leather shoes ripped and he sat down to make a new one. He put his knife down and at that very moment a crow appeared, took the knife and flew off eastwards with it in its beak. From then on Óli had a strong urge to visit Norway and he set off there that autumn. In Norway he met a widow who put some good food on the table in front of him and put out a knife for him to use. Óli realised at once that it was his knife and that the woman must have turned herself into a crow, taken the knife and then drawn him to her using magic. After some difficulty Óli managed to return to the Faroe Islands - with his knife.



### The Seal Woman

According to legend, seals are people who have drowned. One Twelfth Night, Demmus on Hamar from Skálavík went out to *á Borgarþöttu* and hid himself until the seals came ashore. The seals took off their skins and began to dance and play – just like people.

Demmus took the sealskin that belonged to a beautiful girl. Then when the night was over she had to go home crying with him to Hamar. They were married and had three children. The man locked the sealskin in a chest and always carried the key on him. One day, when Demmus had gone fishing he realised he had forgotten the key. When he went back home his wife and the sealskin were gone.

It is said you recognise people with seals in the family by their unusually short fingers.



### The Water Sprite

The water sprite lives in lakes but often comes ashore, where it can take on the appearance of a beautiful horse that looks quiet and good-natured. People are drawn to it, but when they touch its tail, their hands become trapped and they are dragged down into the lake.

Occasionally, a person manages to make the sign of the cross on the sprite's back and thus gains power over it. In this way the sprite can be used to haul stones down from the mountains for building houses and walls. It is said that the powerful Guðrun Sjúrdardóttir, the Lady of Húsavík, used a sprite to haul the stones that were used in her great building works. At *Takmýrar* you can see the great rock *Grásteinur* that the sprite was meant to haul to Húsavík. On the journey, its tail was pulled off and the stone was left standing here with the impression of a tail on it. The sprite vanished into the lake *Litlavatn* and has lived there ever since.



### The Wood Sprite of Gullsteinur

In *Skarvaneslið* there is a stone called *Gullsteinur* (the Gold Stone). Once there was a wood sprite that was in love with a woman from Skarvanes. She had to find a way to protect herself from his magic and so one day she asked him how she could protect one of her cows that was being bewitched. The wood sprite was most helpful and advised her to tie plantain around the cow. However, when she arrived home the woman tied plantain around herself and was able to avoid any further approaches from the sprite.



## Historical Places

### Gálgin

Once in Sandur there lived a thief by the name of Runti. He was sentenced to hang for cow stealing. There was an old custom that a convict could escape the noose by climbing over the gallows (*gálgin*) three times. Runti managed to climb over twice, but the third time a man in the crowd distracted him. Runti was hanged and – so the legend goes – no fish went near the village for three years and people said this was because Runti had been punished unjustly.



### Á Heyggi

The first historical person to have lived here was Jón, who was the hangman or corporal at *Gálgin* when Runti was hanged.

Sniálvur or Snæúlvur, who is known from the *Færeyinga Saga*, is said to have lived at *á Heyggi* (*á Krossi*), which may possibly have been the first dwelling in the village.

### Tingborð

The Faroe Islands were divided into six areas (called *sýslur*) each with its own assembly, called a *várting*. According to a law from 1274, each area had six representatives appointed by the bailiff and their role was to pass sentence alongside the *løgmaður* at the local assembly.

On Sandoy the assembly was held at *Traðir*, and a flat rock called *Tingborð* can still be seen. Engraved on the stone there is: 1789 and RL, which probably stands for Rasmus Lund, a judge.

### Søltuvík

The largest ship to be lost near the Faroe Islands is the *Principia*. The 3,000-tonne vessel from England ran aground at *Stórabøða* outside Søltuvík on 21st November 1895 and sank almost immediately. Only one of the 28 men onboard survived the wreck by climbing onto one of the cargo hatches. The current carried him a long way north, north of *Trollhøvdi* in the fjord *Hestfjørður* and finally over towards *Gamlarætt*, where a man saw him. After spending 14 hours in the storm he was rescued and put to bed at the house of the farmer Jóannes Patursson in Kirkjubøur.

### Á Mølini

Legend has it that three churches have stood in the old cemetery in Skálavík. In his book *Norges Beskrivelse* from 1632, Peder Clausson Friis said there were five churches in the area in Sandur, Skálavík, Húsavík, Skúvoy and Stóra Dímun.

The altarpiece in the present-day church in Skálavík was a gift from Jákup and Kristin Jóansson. Jákup Jóansson was *løgmaður* in the period 1677–1679 and bought the altarpiece in Copenhagen, which he was visiting on official business.

### Hvalnes

In February 1904 the *S/S Scotland* ran aground at *Hvalnes* to the north of Skálavík. The vessel was a passenger ship and all but the chief officer, made it to land. The second officer dived into the sea with a thin rope tied around him. A thicker rope was tied to the thin on the ship and the officer managed to pull the line ashore and secure it onto the rocks. Thus everyone was able to make it to the shore.

### Argisfossur

To the west of Skopun at a height of 140 m there are some small ruins along the river *Tungá*. The place name *Argisfossur* indicates a Viking *ærgi*.

At *Argisfossur* you will find *Gleðistoppar* (happy peak) – a most misleading name as, according to the old tales, slaves used to be hurled down from here.

### Høvdarhagi

In 1778 the Norwegian ship *Pater Gratiae* ran aground at *Hvalsryggur* in the sound *Høvdasund* and only one man made it ashore alive. By chance a shepherd from Sandur found the man by a cairn at *Ærskorarklettur* in *Høvdarhagi*.

### Krossmannatúgva

On Skúvoy there is a slope up to the edge of the bird cliff to the west. According to legend, this is where the first crops were sacrificed. People walked in three lines on the hill with a cross, whilst chanting the word “*kyrja*” (kyrie).

### Rættin

In *Vatnsdal* there is a large, well-built sheep pen called *Rættin*, where all the sheep on the island Skúvoy used to be brought together.

### Holið í fjalli

It is a cave that has a small opening, but is large and stretches a long way into the mountain. People used to come here to hide when pirate ships were sighted.

### Rannvátoft

The site of the house *Rannvátoft* can be found far to the north of Skúvoy in the beautiful valley *Fagridalur*.

According to legend, Rannvá was a farmer's daughter in Skúvoy. She was banished to look after cattle in the outlying fields at *Norður á Dal*, because her stepmother wanted her own daughter to take over the farm. After the Black Death struck, just one woman in the village, called Sunnuva, and the banished Rannvá survived the plague. It is said that Rannvá had a son, who later inherited the farm. The place name *á Setrisgarði* may indicate that this dwelling was built on a summer pasture.

### Tróndarsteinur

Tróndur lay on the ground behind the stone practising witchcraft at the time Sigmundur Brestisson leapt over the ravine and cut off the head of Steingrímur. Sigmundur was forced back and lost his sword. It was then that Sigmundur was forced to dive into the ocean.

### Ærgisá

In the southern part of Skúvoy there is a ruin by *Ærgisá* at a height of 180 m. The place name indicates that it was probably a summer pasture in the Viking Era.

### Ærgi

*Ærgi* is a word of Celtic origin which was used by Viking settlers for summer pastures. The word appears in 19 places in the Faroe Islands. In the spring, cattle were moved to spend the summer in these meadows. This practice ended early in the Middle Ages. There is nothing mentioned about *ærgi* in *Seyðabrévið* from 1298.

## Symbols



Varðagøta - Sti med varder - Path with cairns



Glaðingarstað - Baunested - Signalling by fire



Skjútsur - Skyds - Ancient transportsystem



Hvalvágur - Hvalvåg til grindefangst- Whalebay for pilotwhaling



Mylla - Vandmølle - Watermill



Ravnur - Ravn - Raven - Corvus corax varius



Skúgvur - Storkjove - Great Skua - Stercorarius skua



Fiskimási - Sølvmåge - Herring Gull - Larus argentatus



Lomvigi - Lomvie - Guillemot - Uria aalge



Lundi - Lunde - Puffin - Fratercula artica



Álka - Alk - Razorbill - Alca torda



Havhestur - Mallemuk - Fulmar - Fulmarus glacialis



Ryta - Ride - Kittywake - Rissa tridactyla



Drunnhvíti - Lille stormvale - Storm Petrel - Hydrobates Pelagicus



Skarvur - Topskarv - Shag - Phalacrocorax aristotelis



Teisti - Tejst - Black Guillemot - Cepphus Grylle



## Archaeology in the Sandoy area

### Sandur

#### The church site in Sandur

In 1863 a coinhoard was found in Sandur churchyard. It comprised 98 silver coins from Europe and Scandinavia dating from the 11th century. Investigations inside the church in 1969-70 uncovered the remains of five earlier churches on the site of the present building that was constructed in 1839. The oldest remains were of a small stave church of the same type as those found in Norway from the 11th century. 26 graves and 42 mainly Norwegian coins from the 13th century were discovered in layers of the second-oldest church building. Investigations in the churchyard in 1972 uncovered the eastern end of a building with a particularly beautiful floor set with large flat flagstones, apparently a Viking longhouse with curved walls. The hoard of coins may have been buried under the floor of the longhouse late in the 11th century.

Archaeological investigations carried out in connection with the extension of the churchyard to the south in the 1970s uncovered a wealth of settlement remains throughout the area. Here 12 graves from the Viking period were discovered outside the old churchyard. The graves were lying parallel and positioned east to west. The dead, all young women and men, had different objects in their graves, including silver rings, knives, a leather pouch with lead weights, a bronze ornament in an Irish style, strings of pearls and a late 9th century Kufic Arab coin – the only one of its kind in the Faroe Islands. These graves are obviously not just anybody's.



Brooch found in the Junkarinspøttur, Sandur. Per á Hædd. (Føroya Fornminnissavn)

### Junkarinsfløttur

When the cliffs to the north of the church site eroded in summer 2000, cultural layers up to 2 m deep and stone formations were uncovered on an 80 m stretch along the slope by *Junkarinspøttur*. These cultural layers, which dates from the periods 800–900 to 1200, contain fragments of locally made earthenware, imported soapstone pots and ironware. In the lowest layer of the cliffs a decorated bronze brooch was found. The brooch has been dated to the 10th century.

Many animal bones have been found. The sandy ground is ideal for bone preservation and for this reason even the smallest bones, such as fish bones, have been well preserved. The people exploited all of nature's resources. They supported themselves by fishing and sheep farming. Birding and pig farming were of great importance.

This was a significant dwelling place, probably a large farm, from the time of the settlement of the islands right up to the 13th century and therefore the church was not an isolated building. Thus the area around the church in Sandur has, historically as well as archeologically, some of the greatest potential for interesting interdisciplinary research in the Faroe Islands.

On the eastern side of the bay *Sandsvágur* you will find the old settlement site *á Sondum*, partially eroded by the ocean, which is a clear sign of the subsidence

that has been taking place since the islands were first settled. Many archaeological remains have been found on the slope, indicating that it was inhabited in the Middle Ages, back to the Viking Era.

Søltuvík is uninhabited today, but there are remains of both earlier and later settlements. At *Yviri í Húsi* archaeological investigations confirmed a settlement active in the Middle Ages and Viking period. The site was possible an *ærgi* – a summer dwelling outside the village where cattle were cared for.

### Skopun

The old travel and transportation route between Streymoy and Sandoy passed through Skopun to Sandur. Skopun is a new outlying village and the village's development from the beginning of sloop fishing in the 1870s until today can be seen clearly. According to an old legend, a farmer by the name of Álvur once lived here in ancient times.

### Elinarhús

A small ruin called *Elinarhús* is situated close to *Lítlavatn*, around 85 m above sea level. According to legend, Elin herded cattle here and was a maid at Servin's farm in Húsavík. Servin was convicted at the *Millum Vatna* governing assembly as the *løgmaður* lived in Dalur at that time.

### Skálavík

Between the *á Molini* trading post and the beach there was a mound called *Miðting*, where archaeological excavations in 1969 uncovered the site of a house dating from the late Viking Era or early Middle Ages.

The ancient church site was *Norðuri á Bakka* up until 1891. The cemetery was reploved in 1894-95. At one end of the churchyard, called *Pokunarkirkjugarður*, lie buried those who died of smallpox in the 18th century. According to legend, there was a church known as *Brandanskirkja* at *Brandansbakki* to the north of the old churchyard.

### Húsavík

#### The Lady of Húsavík

Guðrun Sjúrdardóttir, the Lady of Húsavík, was from Bergen in Norway, but was of Shetland origin. She possessed large property of land in Norway, the Shetlands and on the Faroe Islands. She died in around 1400. Her main farm in Húsavík had four surrounding a paved courtyard. The remains of the farm can still be seen.

Old stone houses, outhouses, down by the shores of *Tumbakki* have been rebuilt. Ashes and relics were found indicating earlier settlement. According to legend, there were once 55 houses at *Túngarðar* in Húsavík.

### Í Haga

The site *í Haga*, was inhabited from the Middle Ages until the mid-19th century. South of *Storá* there are *Grandhústoftir* and *í Kvíggjagili*, from which – according to legends – people moved after the Black Death in 1350.

### Dalur

The old watermill next to the infield a little way up in *Storá* is protected by the Faroe Islands' Museum Association.

### Skarvanes

The oldest settlement, *á Toftum*, is said to have been built north of the river, but people moved south of the river because of "trolls" and the Black Death. Archaeo-



*A Norwegian coin from the coin-hoard found in the churchyard in Sandur. Danmarks Nationalmuseum. (Føroya Fornminnisavni)*

logical excavations undertaken within the village have dated the settlement back to the early Middle Ages. The watermill is listed. The name *Bønhúsakki* indicates that there was once a small church in the village.

### **Skúvoy Ólansgarður**

According to legend, Sigmundur Brestisson, who brought Christianity to the Faroe Islands in around 1000, built the first church in the Faroe Islands at Ólansgarður on Skúvoy. There was a churchyard here that was abandoned after the Black Death. Today, there is a large tombstone carved with a cross in Ólansgarður. The stone is called Sigmundarsteinur. Around 100 years ago, the whole cemetery was re-plowed and eleven cross-slabs (nine whole and two in small pieces) were found with carvings of Latin and Celtic crosses. Similar cross-slabs have been found in the Hebrides and Ireland. The slabs are preserved at the National Museum of the Faroe Islands in Tórshavn.

### **Stóra Dímun**

According to the *Færeyinga saga*, Sigmundur Brestisson had his stronghold on Stóra Dímun. It was here, that he killed Øssur, who had stolen his father's property. The small church in Dímun, which was pulled down in the 1920s, was the last privately owned church in the Faroe Islands.



*Archaeological excavation at Junkarinspøttur. Símun V. Arge. (Føroya Fornminnisavni)*

## **Bird hunting on Sandoy, Skúvoy and Stóra Dímun**

When the first people settled on the islands of Sandoy, Skúvoy and Stóra Dímun, the large bird population were an important part of their lives. In addition to meat and eggs, the birds' feathers and down were valuable. When possible, people used to pull puffins and young Manx shearwaters out of their burrows, but the greatest challenge lay in catching guillemots, large flocks of which would settle on the steep bird cliffs to the west that are up to 400 m high in places.

A drawing by Born from 1791 depicts *fygling* (catching guillemots with fowling rods while the birds were resting on the cliff face). Some men were lowered down on ropes, whilst others came ashore from boats. The same method is used today to collect guillemot eggs. It is an exciting – but also highly dangerous – way of catching birds. To the far left of the drawing, you can see a man catching puffins with an old-fashioned fowling rod of a type that has been used since the 17th century. The bird catch was particularly good in 1920 when men from Skúvoy captured 70,000 guillemots and 45,000 puffins.

Since fulmars arrived in the Faroe Islands in the 19th century, their numbers have risen considerably and they are now the dominant bird species on the bird cliffs. Unlike other birds that leave the cliffs once the young fly from the nest, fulmars remain. It is thus possible to catch the birds all year. Fulmar eggs are collected in the summer. The largest bird capture takes place at sea at the end of August, when the fulmars leave their nests and sit on the surface of the ocean. They are so fat that they cannot lift themselves up to fly away from the boats. Large numbers are therefore caught using fowling rods.

Rats have eradicated storm petrels, Manx shearwaters and puffins from many islands, however, there are no rats on the islands in the Sandoy area.

*Drawing from Borns map 1791.*



## Gróthúsvatn

The lake *Gróthúsvatn* is situated out near the ocean to the west of the village of Sandur. The lake is about 1km long, 200 m wide and just 1.5 m deep.

The lake and the surrounding area are home to abundant plant life. You can see *sedge*, *cotton grass*, *bulrushes*, *angelica* and *buttercups* are the most common plants around the lake. Out in the water you will find *quillwort*, *shoreweed*, *bur reeds* and *water milfoil*. Rare flowers found include *red orchids*, *bird's foot trefoil* and *sundew*. Some plants are only found in and near *Gróthúsvatn*.

In the 1970s, *Norwegian water lilies* were planted in a small lake nearby and they are flourishing.

Several of the plants growing near *Gróthúsvatn*, are threatened with extinction. This is a good reason for being careful when walking in the area.



Red orchid. Sóley Hansen. (Ferðaráð Føroyar)

## Mølheyggjar

Most beaches in the Faroe Islands are characterised by cliffs and rocks. There are few sandy beaches and the village of Sandur has the islands' only sand dunes, called *mølheyggjar* in Faroese, hence the area's name.

*Mølheyggjar* is one of the few areas of nature to be protected in the Faroe Islands. The idea is to allow the area's natural plant life to flourish and to preserve plants, animals and geological phenomena. We therefore ask for care and consideration when visiting the area.

The plants help stop the sand dispersing. The plant life in the dunes becomes more varied the further you go inland, as the conditions are less influenced by the sea and thus more agreeable to the plants.

The first plant you see as you walk inland from the sea is *sea rocket*, one of the Faroe Islands' rare seashore plants. *Sea purslane* grows higher up the beach. The two plants grow quickly and are both able to survive the harsh conditions near the sea.

Several different species of plants are found in the dunes, where the plants grow closer together and the variety of growth is more abundant. In addition to the tall grasses such as *marram grass*, *lyme grass* and *couch grass*, there are also *goose grass*, *camomile grass* and the rare *lovage*.

After you have passed *Mølheyggjar*, you might see *red orchids*, *cleavers* and long *bracted orchids*.

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## Destination Viking – Sagalands

The international project Destination Viking Sagalands began in 2003 and came to an end in 2005.

The project was EU financed via the NPP – the Northern Periphery Programme. ([www.northernperiphery.net](http://www.northernperiphery.net))

Seventeen partners from six European countries – all with historical links to the Icelandic sagas – participated in the project.

Føroya Fornminnissavn (The National Museum of the Faroe Islands) and Ferðaráð Føroya (The Faroe Islands Tourist Board) selected Sandoy, Skúvoy and Stóra Dímun for inclusion in the project because of the wealth of sagas and history connected with the islands and because of their appearance in the *Færeyinga Saga*.

Local councils and private individuals, especially from Sandoyar Sýslu Ferðalag (Sandoy Tourism Organisation), have all contributed greatly to the project.

### Participating countries and partners

1. Viking Trail Tourism Association (VTTA) in cooperation with Parks Canada (L'Anse aux Meadows and Norstead Village)
2. Narsaq Museum in cooperation with Gardar Foundation and Qaqortoq Museum
3. Westfjords Development Agency (Gisla Saga)
4. Dalabyggd Municipality (Eiríksstaðir)
5. Grettistak (Gretti's Saga)
6. Institute of Regional Development (lead-partner)
7. Borgarfjörður Cultural Centre (Snorri and Egil's Saga)
8. Reykjanesbær Municipality (The Vikingship Icelfarer)
9. Skeiða- and Gnúpverjahreppur (Thjórsárdalur Valley)
10. The National Museum of the Faroe Islands, The Faroe Islands Tourist Board (Færeyinga Saga)
11. Shetland Amenity Trust
12. Orkney Islands Council (Orkneyinga Saga)
13. Manx National Heritage (Isle of Man, ass. Partner)
14. Karmøy Municipality (Avaldsnes, ass. partner).
15. Lofotr – the Vikingmuseum at Borg
16. Trondenes District Museum
17. Gene Fornby (Iron age farm)

Seven partnermeetings have been held in: 1. Iceland, 2. Northern Norway, 3. Orkney, 4. Southern Greenland, 5. Northern Sweden, 6. The Faroe Islands and 7. New Foundland.

The project has set up networks and established the following joint efforts:

- The website [www.sagalands.org](http://www.sagalands.org)
- Exhibitions of writing and pictures from all the project areas
- A book describing the project and the partners' roles within the project
- Map of the Saga countries

The Faroese part of the project aimed at:

- boosting historical tourism and the create historical tours
- to make archaeological excavations and historical sites attractive to tourists.
- erecting signs at historical sites and to produce a historical map featuring the sagas.



Map with the partners in the project, D.V. Sagalands. (Snorri Debes)

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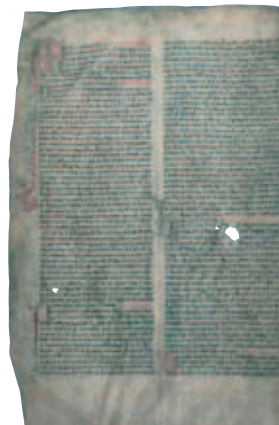


Mentanargrunnur Landsins



## Settlement and Færeyinga Saga.

"A man known by the name Grímur Kamban...", thus begins *Færeyinga Saga* in *Flateyjarbók*. He was said to be the first person to settle on the Faroe Islands in the early 9th century. His grandson was amongst the first settlers in Iceland in 874. The most renowned family in the Faroe Islands were the *Gøtuskeggjar*, who were descendents from *Eyð hin Djúphugða*.



Page from Flateyjarbók, Færeyinga Saga. (Stofnun Arna Magnússonar)

#### Færeyinga Saga

Tróndur í Gøtu had the reputation for being a clever man. His cousins, the brothers Brestir and Beinir, lived on Skúvoy and ruled half of the Faroe Islands. The other half was ruled by Havgrímur í Høvi from Suðuroy. In a battle on Stóra Dímun the brothers and Havgrímur were killed.

The brothers' sons Sigmundur and Tórir were 9 and 11 years old, when they witnessed the deaths of their fathers. Tróndur took the boys to Gøta. But short after he sent the boys as slaves to Norway. The boys became lost in the mountains and sought refuge with the outlaw Tórkil Turrafrost, known as Úlvur. The boys lived with Tórkil and when they left, the daughter of the house, Turið, was carrying Sigmundur's child.

After some years during which Sigmundur and Tórir joined Viking expedition, they decided to return to the Faroe Islands to avenge their fathers' deaths. Sigmundur settled on Skúvoy with Turið and their daughter Tóra. Relations with Tróndur were peaceful. When Ólavur Trygvason became king of Norway, he gave Sigmundur the task of bringing Christianity to the Faroe Islands and of bringing the islands under the rule of the Norwegian crown.

Sigmundur killed Havgrímur's son, Øssur, and Tróndur made Øssur's son, Leivur, his foster son. Tróndur and his men attacked Sigmundur's farm on Skúvoy. Sigmundur, Tórir and a third man escaped and jumped into the ocean to swim to Suðuroy. Only Sigmundur arrived alive in Sandvík, where he was murdered by Tórgrímur Illi. Tróndur now ruled over the islands alone.

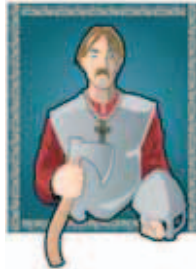
Leivur and Tróndur decided to sail to Skúvoy to seek the hand of Sigmundur's daughter, Tóra, in marriage. She agreed if Leivur could swear that he had had no hand in her father's death and agreed to find the guilty party. Tróndur went to Sandvík and found Tórgrímur Illi, who was convicted and hanged. Leivur and Tóra lived on Skúvoy, and peace reigned as they allowed their son, Sigmundur, to be brought up by Tróndur in Gøta.

Conflict broke out again when Tróndur's nephew, Sjárður Tollaksson, on behalf of his brother went to Skúvoy to propose to Sigmundur's widow. In the end, Leivur Øssursson killed the last of the *Gøtuskeggjar* family, and Tróndur died of grief.

## From Færeyinga Saga

### The Viking chieftain Sigmundur Brestisson

Sigmundur, the fair and strong chieftain's son from Skúvoy, became the toughest Viking in the service of the earl Hákon Jarl and his sons. He married Turid and lived on Skúvoy, while his stronghold was on Stóra Dímun. On the orders of Olav Trygvason, King of Norway, he announced the arrival of Christianity at the parliament in Tórshavn, in year 1000 A.D., but was opposed by Tróndur and his men.



### Sigmundur kills Øssur Havgrímsson

The Færeyinga Saga relates how Øssur was brought up in Gøta by Tróndur í Gøtu after the battle at Stóra Dímun. He became a rich man and took over all the farms and property that had been owned by Brestir and Beinir and he strengthened the fortress on Stóra Dímun. Sigmundur returned from Norway to avenge his father and to reclaim his property.



During an attack on Øssur at Stóra Dímun Sigmundur climbed up the walls of the fortress with the aid of an axe and killed Øssur, whose son Leivur also was brought up by Tróndur in Gøta.

### The last battle on Skúvoy

One night Tróndur sailed to Skúvoy and attacked Sigmundur's farm. When Tróndur set fire to the farm, Sigmundur, Tórir and Einar Suðringur escaped to the north side of the island. In the darkness Sigmundur jumped over a ravine and cut off the head of Steingrímur, who was standing beside Tróndur. He jumped back over the ravine, but lost his sword and was defenceless. All three men then decided to dive into the sea.



### Sigmundur swims to Suðuroy

Sigmundur Brestisson, Tórir Beinisson and Einar Suðringur swam from Skúvoy in an attempt to reach Suðuroy. Only Sigmundur made it all the way across and crawled onto the shore at the ravine *Sigmundargjógv*, in Sandvík. The next morning he was killed by Tórgrímur Illi (Tórgrímur the Evil) and his sons. Sigmundur was buried at his church on Skúvoy.



### Tróndur í Gøtu

Tróndur was clever, cunning and rich. He knew magic and could carve runes. He and his cousins, the brothers Brestir and Beinir, were descended from Óluva, who was the daughter of Tórstein Røde, King of Scotland, and the granddaughter of Eyð hin Djúphugða (Eyð the Profound). Tróndur has been cast by many in the role of the evil villain fighting against the good, Christian Sigmundur. However,



it may have been more of a power struggle for the islands. Sigmundur Brestisson wanted to bring the Faroe Islands under the Norwegian crown, while Tróndur í Gøtu wanted the Faroe Islanders to rule the islands.

## Faroese Boats

Faroe Islanders have always needed to sail.

The Faroese rowing boat has its origins back in the time of the Vikings and first settlement of the islands, but it has evolved and adapted to its surroundings and to the demands made of it.

Boat builders through the ages have striven to create a strong seaworthy boat, easy to row and easy to sail. The boat sits high in the water and copes well in strong currents and breakers.

The materials for boat building were scarce and expensive. Every piece of wood was carefully selected and well suited to its task. Sometimes driftwood was used.

In order to save materials, to make the boats lighter and to make rowing easier in head winds, the oars are long and narrow.

Originally the boat had one large square sail – wide at the bottom and narrow on top – with the mast set midship. However, in the 19th century, lugsails were used on the foremast and a smaller spritsail on the aft mast.

The usual boat sizes were:

(average length):

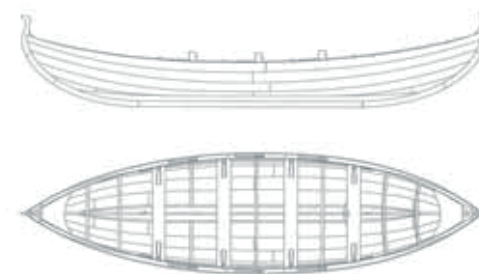
tríbekkur	8 alen*	approx. 5 m
tristur	9 –	– 5.6 m
fýramannafar (4-man)	10 –	– 6.2 –
seksmannafar (6-man)	11 –	– 6.9 –
áttmannafar (8-man)	12 –	– 7.5 –
tíggjumannafar (10-man)	13 –	– 8.2 –
seksæringur (12-man)	14 –	– 8.8 – or more

\*One alen is 0.6277 metre.

The small boats were used for fishing in the fjords, while the larger boats (6 and 8-man) were used for ocean fishing. Boats were used for bird, whale and seal hunting, transportation of sheep, peat and passengers (such as civil servants, priests, doctors and midwives) and to carry post.

In 1920, the boats were fitted with engines, which meant a change in construction. Boat builders made the boats stronger and larger so they could be used for more demanding fishing activities around the islands and off the coast of Greenland.

The Faroese rowing boats have had considerable importance in the development of the society and are a valuable reminder of bygone days. Whilst the boat still remains a living part of faroese culture it also functions as a leisure boat and is used in national rowing competitions



Drawing of a fýramannafar (Eiði 1846). Andras Joensen. (Føroya Fornminissavn)



## Literature

The poet Billa Hansen (1864–1951) from Sandur travelled to Copenhagen to train as a teacher and became part of the Faroese nationalist movement in Copenhagen, where she was the only woman to have a poem included in the book of Faroese songs *Føriskar vǫsur* in 1892.

In 1894 M.A. Winther (1871–1923) and Jóhan H. Poulsen arranged the first popular political meeting við *Tnðir*. In his works M.A. Winther championed the cause of the less fortunate.

Jóannes Dalsgaard (1895–1980) from Skálavík collected and published oral tales and legends. His brother Hans Dalsgaard (1899–1970) wrote short stories. At a time when the disabled often suffered mockery and were patronised, he was amongst the first to depict a disabled person with understanding and love (Nelson).

Hans Jákup Jacobsen (1901–1987), who wrote under the name Heðin Brú, is known for his short stories and novels. *Føðgar á ferð* (The Old Man and His Sons) was extremely popular from the day it was published. The novel describes the lives and thoughts of people in a society changing from an agrarian economy to one based on industrialised fishing.

Kristian Osvald Viderø (1906–1991) gave up his work as a clergyman and travelled to the Middle East. He wrote about his experiences in *Ferð mín til Jorsala* (My Journey to Jerusalem).

Dagmar Joensen-Næs (1895–1983) was the first woman to write and publish novels on the Faroe Islands. The novel *Rannvá* is based on an old tale from Skúvoy and is about a girl who was the island's only survivor after the Black Death.

Mourits Mohr (1918–1956) was a humorous writer from Sandur, who wrote plays and poetry. He created the odd couple *Læars & Anni Lena*, much to the enjoyment of readers in the 1940s and 50s.

Bergur Djurhuus (1919–1946) from Sandur was, together with Mourits Mohr, part of the youth association's work in the village and in Tórshavn. He wrote several short stories that were published after his death.

Hugin Frói (1904–1988) is the pseudonym for the poet Eisenberg Hentze from Sandur, who was also active in the youth association's work. In addition to poetry, he also wrote songs and traditional ballads.

Edvard Hjalts (1878–1950) *Sands søga* is one of the oldest local history books for the district. Petur Andreassen (1906–1988) wrote *Skúvoyar søga* on Skúvoy and the above-mentioned Kristian Osvald Viderø wrote about all the villages on Sandoy, Skúvoy and Stóra Dímun.

Ólavur Clementsen (1935–) has published *Søgur og skemt av Sandi*.

Oddfríði Marni Rasmussen (1969–) is a young poet and zealous commentator on Faroese culture.

Durita Holm (1975–) wrote the book *Ferðin um bláu gongustjørnuna*, in which she writes about the three years she spent sailing on her boat *Salka Valka*. After a long stay in Spain, she also wrote *Á smølum andalusiskum gøtum*, a book about Spanish society and culture.

The parish priest Jákup Reinert Hansen (1955–) has after many years' research published a book about the rural dean Jákup Dahl, who was an important figure in the Faroese church.

The museum association in Sandur *Sands Fornminnafelag* publishes the annual magazine *Kvernin* featuring articles about villages, families, people and local news.

## Ballads and Faroese chain dance

The Faroese chain dance with the narrative ballads are distinctive features of Faroese culture.

The oldest ballads date back to the 14th century. The identities of the poets are unknown and the events narrated often take place in strange places in the Nordic region and Europe. Some tales go all the way back to the 5th century.

The most famous ballads are the *Sjúrdarkvæði*, which have more than 600 verses. In all, the Faroese narrative ballads comprise some 70,000 verses.

The ballads were first written down in the mid-17th century. However, most of the work in this field did not begin until the 19th century when a large number of ballads were collected on Sandoy. The ballads were collected in *Hentzesavnið* (18 songs and ballads written down in 1817–18) and in *Sandoyarbók* (93 ballads with a total of 10,000 verses written down in 1821–31). The ballad collector Jóannes í Króki arranged for ballads sung by people to be written down.

In 1994 the Museum Association of Sandur and the University of the Faroe Islands held an international conference on songs and ballads on Sandoy. Researchers from the USA, Europe and the Nordic region came to the village of Sandur for lectures on ballad research and at the same time a memorial stone to Jóannes í Króki, the collector of ballads, was unveiled in the village. Later the same year, *Hentzesavnið* and *Sandoyarbók* were returned to the Faroe Islands after being housed in the Royal Library in Copenhagen since 1872. They are now in the care of the national archive for the Faroe Islands.

The farmer Tróndur á Trøð (1846–1933) from Skálavík was known for being a particularly good lead singer of ballads. He wrote his own ballads and in 1865 he began to write down the ballads he had learnt from his father. This collection of ballads is in the care of the National Archive for the Faroe Islands.

When V.U. Hammershaimb created a written form of Faroese at the end of the 19th century, the Faroese ballads provided the basis for his work.

There are two dance associations on Sandoy who are part of the effort to keep the Faroese ballad tradition alive. The associations are *Stígum fast* in Dalur and *Leikum Fagurt* in Sandur. The dancing mostly takes place during the winter between Christmas and Lent, a period called “dancing time”, and often at large parties, weddings, small festivals and occasionally after a pilot whale hunt.

Faroese chain dance. Jens Kristian Vang. (*Ferðaráð Føroya*)



## Art

The first Faroese artist we know about was Dídrikur á Skarvanesi (1802–1865). He was a farm hand in Skarvanes, and it is a mystery how he obtained the materials he needed to paint. The Faroe Islands' Museum of Art *Listasavn Føroya* has five pictures, which he called *mánadúgvur* (moon doves) and which depict birds in all the colours of the rainbow.

There are three wooden reliefs at the church in Skálavík: one shows Samson and the lion, another shows Balaam and the donkey and the third shows the apostles. The reliefs were carved by the farmer Tróndur á Trøð and are unique in Faroese ecclesiastical art. Near to the church, there is a bust of the author Heðin Brú, carved by the sculptor Fridtjof Joensen (1920–1988).

The Danish artist Sven Havsteen-Mikkelsen painted the altarpiece in Húsavík church. The title of the work is Emmaus and it depicts Jesus after the resurrection with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. At the harbour jetty in Húsavík you can see a concrete relief with whales, mermaids and other sea creatures. It was created by the artist Tróndur Patursson (1944–) from Kirkjubøur in his younger days.

A memorial for sailors who lost their lives at sea has been erected in Skopun. The stone is one of the major works of the sculptor Janus Kamban (1913–) from 1954.

In 2005, Skopun church received a new baptismal font made from tin, created by the Faroese artist Helgi Joensen, who lives in Stavanger.


Frimod Joensen (1915–1997) was born in Sandur. He was encouraged to paint by the Danish artist Gudmund Hentze and within the Nordic region became a well-known painter in the naive style. His choice of subjects is varied and radiates a love of life.

The textile artist Súsán í Jákupsstovu (1946–) works primarily with weaving. You can see her ecclesiastical textiles in beautiful green colours with subjects from *Mól-heyggjar* in Sandur church.


Sofus Olsen (1914–2006) from Sandur was responsible for the construction of the art museum *Listasavnið á Sandi*. It was designed by the architect J.P. Gregoriussen. The collection of paintings donated by Sofus Olsen includes the works of well-known Faroese artists. The museum is a milestone in the history of art in the Faroe Islands.



*Moon Doves (Mánadúgvur) Dídrikur á Skarvanesi. (Listasavn Føroya)*


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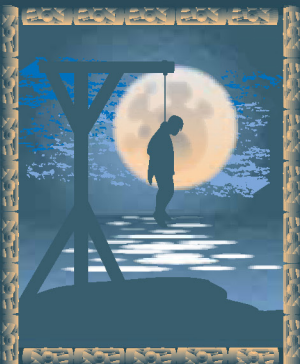
Haraldur Kálvsson



Kálvssynir drukna



Óli seyðamaður



Gálgin



Sigmundur loypur í havið



Annika í Dímun



Huldumaðurin á Gullsteini



Nykurin



Kópakonan