

Iceland

Description

We were in Iceland in August with a group of friends (none of which are yarn-aholics). Most of our activities revolved around the great outdoors. August *is* the summer in Iceland but it is still cold; just not really cold enough for snowmobiling and glacier hiking. It's still doable of course but to truly get the best experience you should go in winter. Have fun. I won't be there. August was still a bit too cold for this gal from Texas. We had fun though. I wore lots of crocheted scarves and cowls! It's possible they made up 1/2 my suitcase contents. Hee, hee! Lots of great food, cocktails, friendly people. Good times!

And of course, for me anyway, a trip to the local yarn store. It was located in completely the opposite direction from where our path took us into the city center. Nice to explore a different area and it is very close to the botanical gardens and a nice small museum dedicated to one of the major sculptors of Iceland, Ásmundur Sveinsson.



<http://www.storkurinn.is>

The store, Storkurinn, has a great selection of yarn from all over the world. And the woman who helped me was so nice, very helpful and speaks way more English than I speak Icelandic. And they had a nice comfy sofa for my husband Tom to sit on while he waited for me. Yay.

The Icelandic yarn they focus on is different than what I had seen at the stores selling "Icelandic" products in the city center. I came home with yarn from three dyers. I didn't meet these folks but found out a bit about them from the lady at the shop and then went to their websites for more information.



Gudrún Bjarnadóttir at [Hespera](#) gathers plants and uses them to dye her fiber. I brought home a box/kit with six 25g cakes of yarn. There is a pattern included in the box but it's for knitting, so I'll find something else.

I also purchased a separate 50g skein. The plants used for the dyes are listed on the packaging. Being an avid gardener, I was excited to find this. These are single ply and feel much softer than the lopi yarns I saw elsewhere.



The yarn I found dyed by [Hélène Mågnússon](#) is made using the first shearing of the Icelandic lambs that she then sends to Italy to be spun into lace weight yarn. The colors are inspired by the countryside of Iceland. Her website also lists several knitting tours of the country that sound pretty fun.



The last two skeins of yarn I brought home, I purchased mainly because they were a thicker weight and the sample piece they had made was oh so soft! not angora or alpaca soft mind you but soft for icelandic wool. In looking up information on it, I found out a couple of things. Leader sheep are those that, yep you guessed it, lead the herd around. I didn't manage to find out why that makes their fleece more special but here are a couple of links that I found about the folks who actually handled the yarn I bought; [Uppspuni](#) who spun and dyed it, [Forystuf](#) a leadersheep research center and [Icelandic Lamb](#) is a company that promotes all things lamb.

The icelandic sheep has been bred to be very tough but they don't spend the entire winter out there in the snow and ice. They spend much of the year roaming at will anywhere their herd takes them, mingling with each other, eating what sheep eat and enjoying nature. At a given time of year (I'm not positive but I think it has something to do with temperature and forecast), all the sheep are rounded up into corrals no matter where they are and who their humans are. The humans then travel to all the different corrals (sheepfolds in farmspeak) and collect those that belong to them. They are sheltered at their respective farms during the most brutal part of the year and then turned out again to roam when temperatures increase (and, I would guess, after shearing). One of our guides told us that it's a huge family event, the gathering of the sheep; one that brings people back to the homestead to help and reconnect.

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Date Created

September 27, 2018

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