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Canopy By Hilton Comes to Reykjavik

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*PHOTO: Canopy by Hilton sees an ideal setting for its new brand in Reykjavik.
(Courtesy of Hilton)*

This seems to be the year when Iceland [has moved from its place as a quirky vacation choice](#) to a fully fledged mainstream destination. The latest figures show that overnight stays in hotels increased by 21 percent in February to 194,800 stays; 87 percent of them by foreigners. There's already a pinch in capacity being felt, so the news yesterday that a [Canopy by Hilton](#) will open in Reykjavik's city center early next year should be well received among the country's tourism officials.

Hilton is entering Iceland with its newest brand, which just debuted as Hilton's first "lifestyle" brand. The 115-room Canopy Reykjavik | City Centre is expected to be the first hotel globally to open in the brand's portfolio, which launched in October 2014.

"Iceland has grown in stature as a destination, owing to the efforts of Icelandair, which has improved the country's connectivity and visibility as a global destination," said Patrick Fitzgibbon, senior vice

president, development, Europe & Africa, Hilton Worldwide. Visitor numbers to Iceland have more than tripled in the last 15 years, and Canopy Reykjavik | City Centre will add fresh momentum to the city's vibrant travel scene."

In 2007, Hilton Worldwide opened the Hilton Reykjavik Nordica, which has been managed by Icelandair Hotels, a subsidiary of Icelandair Group. The same partnership is in play for the new hotel. The hotel, now under construction on Hverfisgata St, will have an open, light lobby and relaxing public spaces. A rooftop bar and restaurant will serve drinks and food throughout the day, while guests can also visit a bistro, sampling fresh, local produce while taking in the city sights.

Spreading the Wealth

Iceland sits 2° south of the Arctic Circle. This location entitles summer visitors to 24 hours of daylight and winter visitors to an equal amount of night plus the Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights. Winter visitation, probably driven by the Northern Lights, increased by 27.5 percent between September 2013 and May 2014. [Inspired by Iceland](#), a public private partnership between the government, the city of Reykjavik, and more than 100 local travel companies, works to promote the country in wintertime.

The night skies are being most fully utilized by the [Hotel Ranga](#), which recently added an astronomical observatory. The roll-off roof observatory houses two 11-inch computerized telescopes (making it the most advanced observatory in Iceland) with a capacity to be viewed by 30 people at once. By night the telescopes can be used to view Jupiter, the rings of Saturn, and Mars as well as Uranus and Neptune. The observatory is free for guests of the hotel. Ranga's own stargazing expert, Saevar Helgi, gives lectures for groups.

Reykjavik is the capital of Iceland's tourism, as well as its government, and as such it offers a sophisticated urban gateway with a thriving arts scene, hot mineral baths and several Michelin-starred restaurants. Reykjavik is home of more published authors per-capita than anywhere else in the world. Last September there were even more when some 350 active and associate members of the [Society of American Travel Writers](#) held their annual convention in the city.

Iceland, inside and outside of Reykjavik, is a destination for nature and adventure lovers. Its volcanic landscape is rife with thermal springs and glaciers. In May, Iceland's second largest glacier, Langjokull, opened to the public, allowing visitors to travel through it via a long 500-yard tunnel.

A country as fragile as Iceland needs to carefully manage its tourism. Getting a healthy, evenly spread flow of visitors throughout the country would help alleviate some environmental concerns and distribute the wealth more broadly. Thus the campaign Inspired By Iceland was built around a secret tour of Iceland, as curated by 100,000 "online tour guides."

These online guides contributed suggestions and secrets tips about Iceland to create an itinerary for Seattle's Jennifer Asmundson (the winner of Secrets Facebook competition run by ITB) who made a seven-day tour across the country doing off-track experiences, as recommended by Icelanders and tourists from all over the world. Her visit resulted in a film at. The film is the latest installment of the Share the Secret campaign, which is part of Inspired by Iceland.

[Iceland ProCruises](#) also launched a new Iceland Circumnavigation trip this month. The company, which runs cruises to Iceland and Greenland, will sail the 224 passenger super yacht Ocean Diamond on a series of seven 10- and 11-day cruises priced from \$1,367 per person double, departing from Reykjavik. The cruise will use zodiacs to explore the coastlines up close. Iceland ProCruises is part of the Iceland ProTravel family.