INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

→ The world through your viewfinder

FAROE ISLANDS eroadbook update 2020

English Version



WHERE TO GO What to photograph THE FAROE ISLANDS



2020 Edition

CONTENTS

THE FAROE ISLANDS



- 04 EDITORIAL
- **05** TOURISM REGULATION IN THE USA
- 07 TOURISM REGULATION IN THE FAROES
- 08 TICKETED HIKES 1/2
- **09** TICKETED HIKES 2/2
- **10** VOLUNTEER CAMPAIGNS
- **11** SOME THOUGHTS I HAVE
- **12** NEW DIRECT AIR ROUTE
- **13** DIRECT AIR ROUTES (MAP)

EDITORIAL

THE FAROE ISLANDS

Tourism in the Faroes is developing fast. Perhaps too fast?

Tourists cause all kinds of damage, both ecological and social, affecting paths, wild fauna (particularly birds in the case of the Faroes), and the way of life of the native population, who aren't really used to living among hordes of tourists, with all the resulting housing complications for locals—an extremely sensitive subject in the Faroe Islands.

It makes for a curious paradox when towns and countries like the Faroes, fully aware of these harmful aspects, continue to vigorously promote themselves on social media.

The reason is always the same: **economics**.

You might be surprised to learn that, contrary to other countries, the **Faroe Islands** have always managed very well without tourist income. The economy has flourished for decades (thanks mainly to fishing), the unemployment rate is tiny, and the standard of living is very high.

So why so much self-publicity for a territory covering just 1,400 km2 (540 sq. miles) with a fragile ecosystem, whose inhabitants wish only to live a tranquil existence? I have no answer to this question.

When I visited the **Faroe Islands** for the first time, in January 2017, I met only a handful of foreign visitors. It was heaven! And I took full advantage of my encounters with local people, who were delighted to proffer tips, and even invited me in for coffee.

It was interesting to note that, already in 2017, not only were the Faroese **quite aware** of the damage caused by tourism in neighboring Iceland, but they knew that very soon the storm would be coming their way (no doubt borne by the Gulf Stream). I sensed a touch of concern but no real need to panic. A little organization was all that was needed!

Organization is all very well, but of what sort? Visitor flows are very complicated to manage. It's true that the size of incoming airplanes is limited by there being just one (short) runway, at **Vágar** Airport. But with thirty flights landing daily, each carrying up to 150 passengers, that's a potential 4,500 tourists arriving every day—the equivalent of 10% of the islands' population!



TOURISM REGULATION IN THE USA

THE FAROE ISLANDS

The American example

The USA has introduced a fair solution for certain highly fragile sites: a lottery, costing only a few dollars. If you wish to visit the extraordinary site in Utah known as **The Wave**, you need to win one of the twenty "Golden Tickets" (hello Tim Burton) made available daily, without which you cannot access the site.

But although we should congratulate our American friends for having chosen such a democratic means of accessing its natural treasures, this example is an exception, since this rare, isolated site is reachable only after a two-hour hike through the desert, providing a sort of natural protection. We should therefore consider it a counterexample.

However, it is worthwhile remembering that you can access all of the National Parks in the United States with an ANNUAL PASS called **AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL**, costing \$80.



Photo : ontheluce.com



THE WAVE (USA)

TOURISM REGULATION IN THE FAROES

THE FAROE ISLANDS

The simplest solution: ticketed entry.

The simplest solution to implement, and the most economically advantageous (for the host country, not the visitor!) remains ticketed entry, making this solution the one generally chosen.

The Faroe Islands have gone down this road by making visitors pay to access the most popular sites. This is justified by the fact that, as I mention in the guide, almost all the land in the Faroes is privately owned. A farmer can legitimately demand a recompense for maintaining their land and ensuring it is suitable for access by visitors.

This is also justified by the need to limit the number of tourists to sensitive ornithological sites (such as on Mykines).

The policy is less justifiable when paths, fences, cairns, and so on are maintained by volunteers in annual spring campaigns (even if they do have a cost) or when nothing at all has been done to improve visitor access (such as at Villingardalsfjall). But I do not have a sufficient overview of the issue to be able to judge.

Be that as it may, we are—regretfully—seeing a profusion of gates and moneyboxes, and soon even electronic barriers connected to a card payment terminal (Saksun Lagoon).

Something is lost of the frisson of adventure, the rapture of immersion in wild nature, when you have to take out your credit card in the middle of a hike!

Photo: Vincent Desjardin ©



Johan, the **Saksun** farmer is exasperated by the behavior of tourists who shamelessly step over his fences in search of the image which will earn a maximum of "likes" on Instagram.

(I chatted about this with him in 2017).

TICKETED HIKES 1/2

THE FAROE ISLANDS

As one might expect, it's the most popular hiking paths that are now ticketed (which I suppose makes sense).

Here is what I hope is an exhaustive list, but please do check the following page before you travel: *visitfaroeislands.com*



HIKE AROUND THE LAKE (TRÆLANÍPA / BØSDALAFOSSUR)

You have the choice between a guided tour and an open visit. Guided tour: **450 DKK / €60 / \$67** Open visit: **200 DKK / €27 / \$30** More information: *tralanipan.fo* Payment: cash or card

SAKSUN LAGOON

This hike crosses private land and is now ticketed. There is an electronic gate at the entrance. Open visit: **75 DKK / €10 / \$11** Payment: card

DRANGARNIR ROCKS

The hike to the Drangarnir rocks crosses private land and is now no longer free to access. You can't go there without a certified guide. There is a gate clearly indicating this, and the farmer keeps a close eye on his property. Guided tour: **450 DKK / €60 / \$67** More information: *hiking.fo*

TICKETED HIKES 2/2

THE FAROE ISLANDS

CLIMBING VILLINGARDALSFJALL AND ENNIBERG

The hike beginning at the village of **Viðareiði** up to **Villingardalsfjall** mountain is now ticketed. I suppose that the mountain must be private property? There do not appear to be any particular facilities.

Be aware that you should not venture as far as **Cape Enniberg** without a guide.

More information: *hiking.fo* Open visit: **200 DKK / €27 / \$30** Payment: put your money in a letterbox next to the gate.

MYKINES LIGHTHOUSE

The hike to **Mykines lighthouse** is now ticketed (with obligatory guide) from **1 May to 31 August** in order to protect the birds. Guided tour: **100 DKK / €15 / \$16** Payment: by card on the boat. More information: *mykines.fo*

GJOGV PATH

Open visit: **50 DKK / €7 / \$7.5** Payment: put your money in the le

Payment: put your money in the letterbox beside the steps leading to the viewpoint.

VOLUNTEER CAMPAIGNS

THE FAROE ISLANDS

If you like, you can take part in one of the landscape maintenance campaigns that have been such a success.

Every April (usually the last weekend), the **Faroe Islands** close their doors in order to do a little maintenance. The only tourists allowed are those volunteering to help with the maintenance of various sites.

2020 campaign

1 – MYKINES 2 – GÁSADALUR 3 – MIÐVÁGUR (TRÆLANÍPA) 4 – GJÓGV 5 – KLAKSVÍK (KLAKKUR) 6 – KIRKJUBØUR 7 – NÓLSOY 8 - DALUR – SKARVANES 9 - SUÐUROY (HVANNHAGI & EGGJARNAR) 10 - ELDUVÍK

For more information and to sign up: visitfaroeislands.com/closed/projects/



The red team in Miðvágur (Trælanípa). Photo: Ólavur Frederiksen

3 - MIÐVÁGUR (TRÆLANÍPA)

In Miðvágur, the path leading out to Trælanípa, also called the 'hanging lake', was maintained and existing infrastructure was expanded.

SOME THOUGHTS I HAVE

THE FAROE ISLANDS

My humble opinion on the matter.

Most of the feedback that I have received (and I have received a lot) rejects the idea of these "hiking tolls", mainly because there are so many and the prices are sometimes excessive.

Quite apart from the financial impact of this policy (a couple with two children would have to pay the sum of \$100/€90 to hike around the lake!), it spoils a primitive pleasure, namely the feeling of wandering freely.

It would seem more efficient—and it would be better accepted—to implement a single tax for the whole country, a kind of "**Nature passport**" such as exists in the **USA**. This passport would remunerate everyone involved in protecting the environment and maintaining the landscape (including the volunteer campaigns), as well as the farmers whose properties require access.

I think that tourists would happily pay €80/\$89 (a similar pass in the USA costs \$80) to gain access to all hiking routes, while of course limiting access to sensitive areas such as Mykines, and respecting private land as much as possible.

Given that the Faroes received 300,000 visitors in 2017, this would earn a comfortable annual income, allowing the landscape to be maintained, and even enabling the recruitment of a number of Faroese Park Rangers to inform and educate visitors and pass on their passion for these lands, while keeping a watchful eye on things.

What are your own thoughts?



NEW DIRECT AIR ROUTE

THE FAROE ISLANDS

VAYS

0000000000

00000

TOLAN

OY-RCJ

A new direct air route from PARIS to VÁGAR by Atlantic Airways commenced on 1 July 2019.

This route will speed things up considerably for those traveling from France. Previously, one had to change planes in **Copenhagen**, meaning that even the fastest journey took seven hours each way.

Moreover, the cost has been cut by over 50%, from around €600/\$670 to as low as €250/\$280 return. What a bargain!

French travelers won't be the only ones to benefit, for there were previously only four European countries served by a direct flight:

DENMARK (Aalborg, Billund, Copenhagen) SCOTLAND (Edinburgh) SPAIN (Barcelona, Palma de Majorca, Canaries) NORWAY (Bergen)

With the addition of this new air route from **Paris CDG** (a major international transport hub), travelers from **Belgium**, as well as many from the **Netherlands** and **Germany**, will be able to take a high-speed **Thalys** train to **Paris**, while those coming from London can hop on a **Eurostar**.





Bon voyage !

FAROE ISLANDS

eROADBOOK UPDATE

This eROADBOOK UPDATE was written and produced by MICHAEL LEVY © English translation by Roland Glasser © Photographs and maps by Michael LEVY © The entire content is protected by copyright.

Any reproduction is strictly prohibited.

æ

ISBN 979-10-92378-03-0

Dépot légal BnF août 2019

