

Faroe Islands

The forgotten Faroes are just a short flight from the UK, yet they're way off the standard traveller's radar. Adrift in the frothing swells of the north Atlantic, this mysterious 18-piece jigsaw puzzle of islands is at once ancient and very modern. Multicoloured cottages and grass-roofed wooden churches add focus to the grandly stark, treeless moorlands. Timeless networks of cairn-marked footpaths crisscross craggy layer-cake mountains. But even the tiniest once-inaccessible hamlets are now linked by a remarkable series of road-tunnels. And even as you bob around the dramatic fjords on a 70-year-old wooden sloop, your mobile phone is never likely to lose its signal.

The Faroes are a paradise for fell-walkers and ornithologists who accept the pyrotechnically unpredictable climate. Designer-mown by shaggy sheep, fields are blissfully bouncy under-foot. Pastures gleam with the greener-than-green hue of divine billiard tables. Peeping puffins, dive-bombing skuas and wheeling fulmars glide over dizzying chasms. Wave-battered headlands end in plunging cliffs that are as breathtaking as the wild winds that threaten to blow unwary hikers off them.

The proud, stoical Faroese character has been forged from Viking blood, Christian piety, Scandinavian openness and an awe for the humbling nature that's all around. Few communities this small are so alive with art and the Faroes' incredibly vibrant music scene is nothing short of astonishing. So even if the weather proves uncooperative, this self-assured little demi-nation is likely to surprise and delight even the most cynical traveller.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 1393 sq km
- **Capital** Tórshavn
- **Currency** Danish krone (Dkr); €1 = Dkr7.45; US\$1 = Dkr5.91, UK£1 = Dkr10.82, \$A1 = Dkr4.42, CA\$1 = Dkr4.88, NZ\$1 = Dkr4.14, ¥100 = Dkr5.73
- **Famous for** puffins, wool, whales, Viking sagas
- **Official Languages** Faroese, Danish
- **Phrases** *góðan dag* (hello), *takk* (thanks), *farvæl* (goodbye), *orsaka meg* (excuse me)
- **Population** 48,379
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 298; international access code ☎ 00
- **Visa** Not required for citizens of the EU, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (see p140)



HIGHLIGHTS

- Bob beneath the towering bird cliffs on magical boat tours from **Vestmanna** (p128) or from **Gjógv** (p130), the Faroes' prettiest village.
- Gasp at incomparably powerful panoramas of cliffs and headlands viewed from **Kallur lighthouse**, **Viðareði**, **Eiðiskollur**, **Beinisvørð** or **Glyvraberg** (p133).
- Drive and hike around the charming villages of **northern Eysturoy** (p129).
- Potter amongst puffins on peaceful **Mykines** (p127).

ITINERARIES

- **Two nights/three days** Head straight for Vestmanna for a boat ride along the spectacular bird cliffs. If driving, continue to charming Gjógv with side trips to Saksun and Eiði outbound, Funnin-gur, Elduvík and Kirkjubøur on return. Spend the last night in Tórshavn strolling the historical Tinganes district and exploring the lively pubs.
- **Ten Days** Fly in on a Friday and take the boat the next morning out to the puffin island of Mykines. If bad weather doesn't prevent your escape, take the Sunday helicopter to the capital Tórshavn. Visit the old town, flit up to the Vestmanna Bird Cliffs, explore northern Eysturoy then head for Klaksvík, the launching point for day-trip excursions to Kalsoy and the weather-dependent mail-boat trip to Fugloy. On Friday buzz by helicopter to Froðba on Suðuroy, explore for a day or two then return back to Tórshavn by ferry.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Theatrical meteorology is part of the Faroes' fascination. Torrential downpours, swirling fogs and vicious storm-force winds are conjured up from nothing as though they were the outcome of witches' spells. Then miraculously the sun bursts through to paint the towering cliffs in dazzling crystal-clear brilliance. Rainfall is very common (280 days per year on average) but unpredictable and often highly localised.

June to August is by far the best time to visit the Faroe Islands. Days are dreamily long and the weather is comparatively passable, though don't expect anything

near Mediterranean heat: July temperatures average only 11°C. In winter, time stands still as daytime darkness, closed hotels and shuttered museums add to the stormy sense of a land forgotten. While never fearfully cold (January average 3°C), it can snow as late as May.

HISTORY

According to Irish missionary Brendan, Celtic monks were already living in eremitic seclusion on the Faroes by the 6th century. Their isolation was ended from around AD800 when the first Norse farmers arrived. The farmers' independence dwindled with the often forceful imposition of Christianity, and the isles became part of the Kingdom of Norway in 1035. The first bishops' seat was established in Kirkjubøur.

The Faroese parliament (Løgting) lost further influence after Norway fell to Denmark in 1380. Between 1535 and 1856, all trade was governed by the Danish monopoly for which the great stores of Tinganes were developed. The only Faroese to gain temporary trading rights was Magnus Heinesen in 1579, who built Skansin Fort in Tórshavn to protect his ships from pirate attacks.

In 1849 the Danish parliament incorporated the islands as a 'county' of Denmark. This provoked strong independence movements, which were re-ignited by the

British occupation of the islands during WWII (see Flag Day box, p136). In 1948 the Danish compromise was to upgrade the Faroes' status to the 'self-governing community within the Kingdom of Denmark' which it remains today. This gave the Faroese legislative power over their own affairs. When Denmark joined the EEC (now EU), the Faroes refused to follow. This smart move protected their fishery-based economy from ruthless EU competition. Following a sharp recession, bank defaults and a population drain in the 1990s, the economy has rebounded impressively in recent years.

PEOPLE

The majority of Faroese are of Nordic Viking origin. They share the reserved politeness of their Scandinavian neighbours, but if you spend some time here you'll discover a rich vein of hospitality. Over 35% of the Faroese population live in the capital Tórshavn at least on weekdays. But on summer weekends many return 'home' and suddenly village populations grow up to fivefold. That explains why villages comprising 40 perfectly-maintained homesteads have official populations of less than 10.

RELIGION

Christianity is fundamental to Faroese culture; 84% of the population belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church with around 10% Plymouth Brethren and a small minority of Roman Catholics.

ARTS

William Heinesen and Heðin Brú are the internationally best-known Faroese writers. However, before written Faroese developed (after 1846) the language had been kept alive through a strong tradition of oral epic poetry (*kvæði*) recited as accompaniment to the classic stomping ringform 'chain dances' which are still a mainstay of summer Ólavsøkan festivities. Today the range of Faroese musical talent is nothing short of astonishing with numerous festivals and a vibrant recording industry. Some of the Faroe Island's best known performers of the moment include Teitor (melancholic folk songs), Eivør Páldóttir (jazz/folk inspired ballads) and

the uncategorisable band Clickhaze (who launched Eivør's career). Don't miss an opportunity to see ultratalented blues hero Uni Deboss (formerly of Gogo Blues) or the spine-tinglingly brilliant Búi Dam (a kind of Faroese Tom Waits). Makrel play a wistful rock that's reminiscent of James, gruff-voiced Petur Pólsen has moments of Pink Floyd-style inspiration, while highly political thrash-punk combo 200 (www.tveyhundrad.net/FO/eng.php) belt out 1976-style two-minute rants screaming for Faroese independence. Select and listen to CDs over an espresso at Leikalund (p131) or choose from hundreds on www.tutl.com (Dkr20/38 per CD delivery fee in Europe/globally).

Death haunts the powerful canvasses of the islands' most celebrated artist, Sámal Joensen-Mikines, reflecting the harsh life experienced by earlier Faroese generations; you can see his works on display in the National Art Gallery (p121). Numerous modern artists including Astrid Luihn and Zacharias Heinesen prefer brighter Faroese landscapes with an abstract edge and such works feature heavily in the numerous small galleries that abound all around the islands. Dramatic glassworks by Trøndur Patursson illuminate the church of Gøta, while Hans Pauli Olsen's bronze sculptures adorn Tórshavn's park Viðarlundin.

ENVIRONMENT

The Land

Adrift between Iceland and Scotland, these 18 treeless, grassy islands are the remnants of a flatcapped volcanic continent that covered the Atlantic region 100 million years ago. Ice ages have since sculpted characteristic fjords while the sea has etched out numerous sheer cliffs and chasms. The highest peak is Slættaratindur (882m) on Eysturoy.

Wildlife

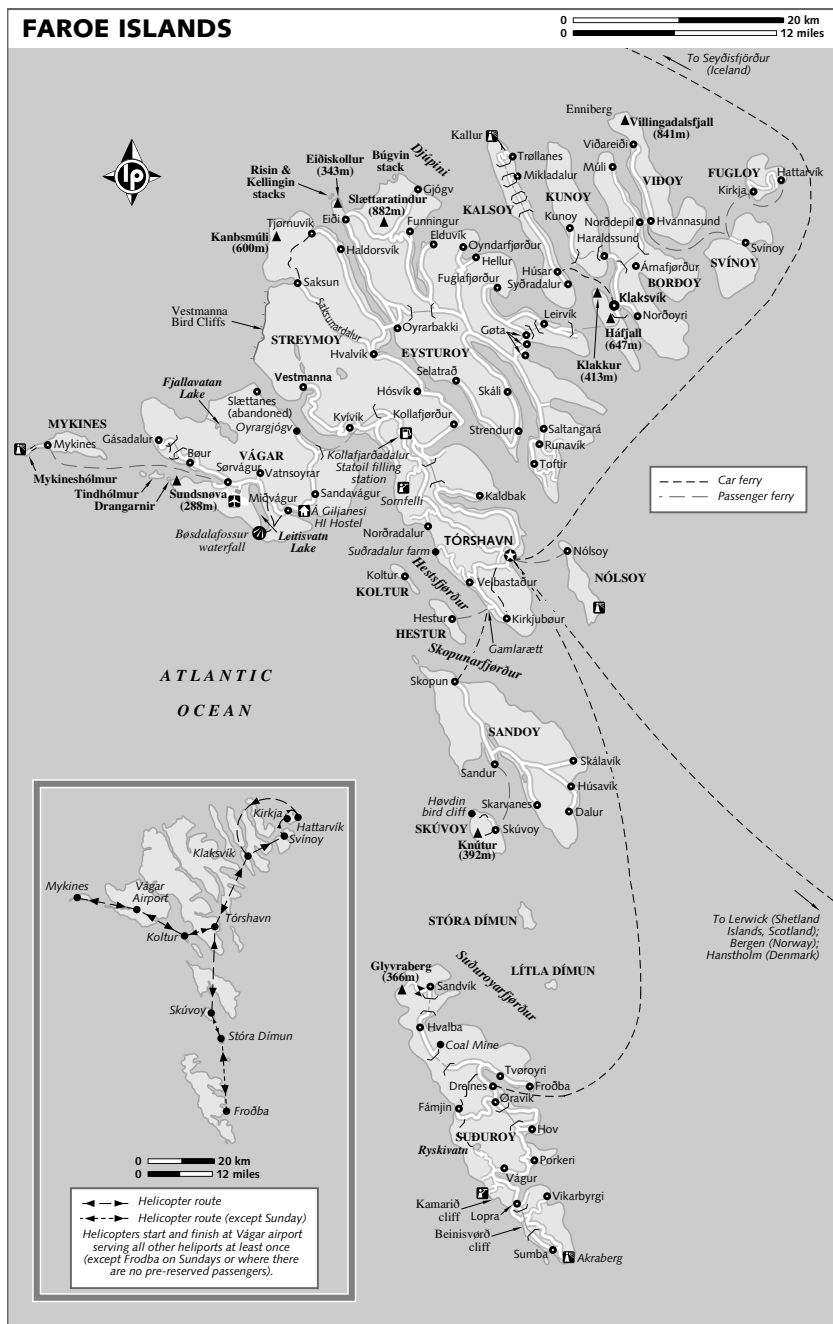
More than 100 species of birds find summer nesting homes on the Faroe Islands. The coastal cliffs teem with fulmars (*havhestur*), guillemots (*lomvigi*), razor-bills (*álka*), various gulls and loveable puffins (*lundí*). Gannets (*súla*) are easiest to spot on Mykines. Ubiquitous oystercatchers (*tjaldur*, the national bird of

HOW MUCH?

- **Woollen slippers** Dkr120
- **Sheepskin jacket** Dkr2600
- **Cuddly toy puffin** Dkr500
- **Medium-sized Faroese flag** Dkr200
- **Faroese sweater** Dkr750-1200

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of blýfritt (unleaded petrol)** Dkr8.96
- **1.5L bottle of water** Dkr20
- **33cl bottle of Black Sheep beer (in a pub)** Dkr30
- **Souvenir T-shirt** Dkr150
- **Street snack of fish and chips** Dkr40



the Faroe Islands) nest on clifftop moors amid the alien warbles of longbilled snipe (*mýrisnípa*) and the dive-bombing antics of predatory great skua (*skúgvur*) and Arctic skua (*kjógvi*), best seen on Skúvoy. Nólsoy has a big colony of storm petrels (*drunnhvíti*).

Ubiquitous sheep, the commonest land mammal, have helped shape the islands' distinctively bare, green appearance. Pilot whales are the best-known inhabitants of Faroese waters (see Grindadráp box, p127) along with various other species of whales, plentiful saltwater fish, extensively farmed trout and salmon plus a few seals, considered to be the reincarnations of ancestral spirits.

Environmental Issues

The marine environment of the Faroe Islands is relatively clean though intensive fish farming (causing water pollution) and dwindling wild fish stocks are significant problems. Visitors should be particularly careful not to disturb nesting birds by walking carelessly through their breeding grounds.

FOOD & DRINK

Traditional Faroese cuisine is a decidedly hearty affair, built around fish, lamb and potatoes. Wind-drying is a classic method of preservation; *turrur fiskur* (dried fish) and *skerpikjót* (dried mutton) are Faroese specialties. Traditionally no part of the sheep goes to waste. *Sevðahovd* (sheep's

head) is a delicacy that you might find peering at you from supermarket freezers. Other tourist-frightening staples include baked puffin and *grind og spik* (whale meat and blubber): availability is sporadic and seasonal. Grill-booths and some petrol stations sell hot dogs and burgers. Some offer British-style fish and chips. Vegetarian options are extremely uncommon.

Towns have supermarkets supplemented by small kiosks selling essential groceries until 11pm. Fruit and vegetables are expensive, and fish isn't popular in restaurants: locals catch their own and typically see meat as a going-out food. Only the capital, Tórshavn has much of a selection of dining options, though rural hotels serve set meals and several towns have pizzerias.

Alcohol has only been fully legalised in the Faroe Islands since 1992. It is served at bars, cafés and restaurants and sold (weekdays only) through brewery depots and *rúsdrekkasøla* (state liquor stores), never from grocery shops. The best of several local beers is the rich, dark Black Sheep brew.

TÓRSHAVN

pop 18,100

Named after the Norse god Thor (the god of thunder), Tórshavn is one of the world's smallest capitals, although it's home to over a third of the Faroese population. Behind the harbour and a charming if tiny old-town core lies a compact commercial centre that comes merrily to life on summer weekend nights. Behind this, the town's newer housing and anonymous light-industrial warehouses sweep up towards an inspiringly barren ring of moorland hills.

HISTORY

Due to Tórshavn's central location, the Faroes' first Ting (parliament) was set up here in AD 1000, but poor soils meant that the town remained relatively small until 1856. However, once the Danish trading monopoly was replaced by free trade, Tórshavn rapidly evolved into the islands' main trading hub. It has been growing ever since.

FAROESE CHURCHES

Even the tiniest villages are built around a small, tar-painted, wooden church with a fragrant if plain interior. Most are unpretentious constructions, often with turf roofs. Many were originally erected from driftwood between 1829 and 1847. As the safe return of the fishermen was the biggest worry of traditional Faroese society, churches were typically positioned overlooking the harbour. This permitted worried believers to keep a watchful eye on the sea during services. Even today, model ships are suspended within Faroese churches as a charm to encourage divine boat protection.

ORIENTATION

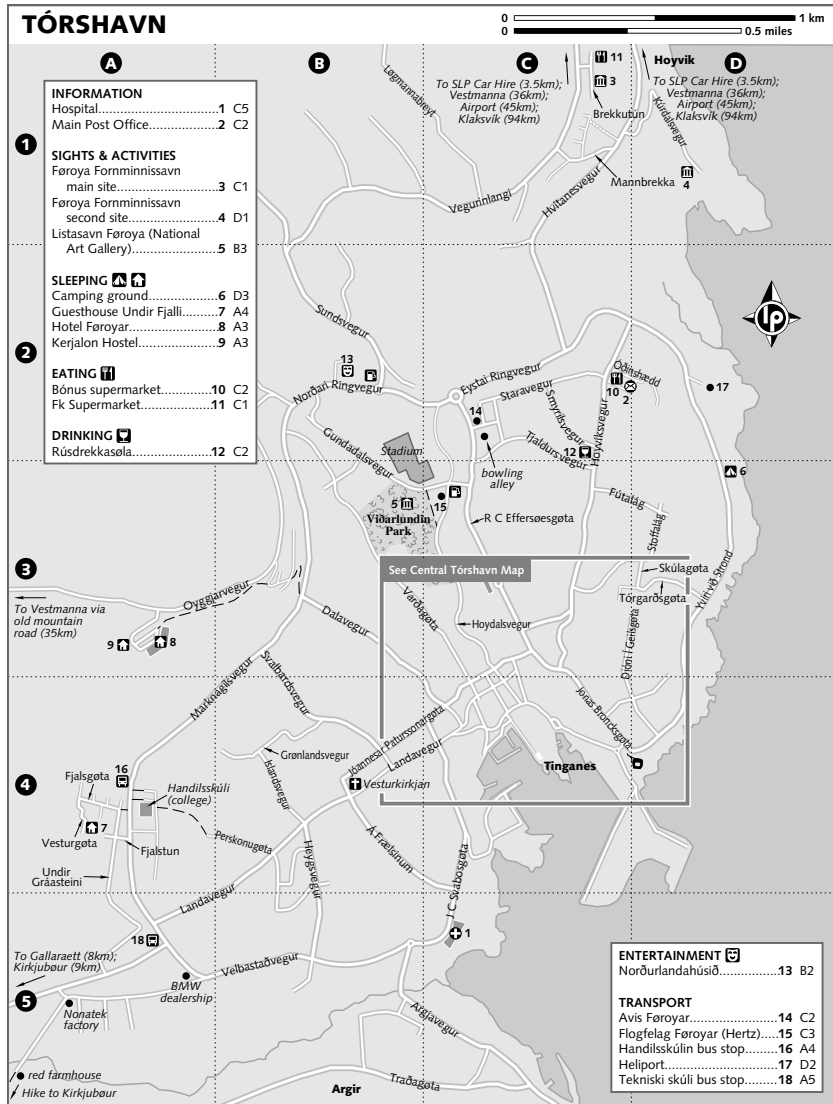
The Eastern Harbour/ferry terminal is separated from the Western Harbour by the dinky little Tinganes peninsula (old town). Most shops, restaurants and facilities lie directly behind in the area surrounding partly pedestrianised Niels Finsensgøta.

INFORMATION

Internet Access

Býarbókasavnið (Town Library; Map p122; ☎ 302030; Niels Finsensgøta 7; 🕒 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat)

Føroya Landsbókasavn (National Library; Map p122; ☎ 311626; www.flb.fo; JC Svabosgøta 16; 🕒 10am–8pm Mon–Wed, to 5pm Thu–Fri)



Tourist Office (Map p122; per hr Dkr40) Two internet computers available.

Left Luggage

Big/small lockers (Dkr30/20 for 24hrs) At the Farstodín transport terminal.

Medical Services

Emergency Dental Service (☎ 314544; 🕒 1–2pm Sat & Sun) At the hospital.

Hospital (Map p122; ☎ 313540; JC Svabosgøta) Has a casualty ward.

Emergency Medical Service (☎ 310033) Operates between 4pm and 8am.

Money

Outside banking hours, Hotel Hafnia (Map p122) and the tourist office will exchange cash. ATMs dole out cash till midnight:

Føroya Banki (Map p122; Niels Finsensgøta 15)
Føroya Sparikassi (Map p122; Tinghúsvegur 49)

Post

Central Post Office (Map p122; Posthúsbrekka) Within the new, art-decked City Hall (Snarskivan) building.

Main Post Office (Map p122; Óðinshædd 2)

Telephone

Telecom Shop (Map p122; Telebúðin; Niels Finsensgøta 10) Sells SIM cards.

Tourist Information

Tourist Office (Kunningarstovan; Map p122; ☎ 315788; www.visittorshavn.fo; Mylnugøta; 🕒 9am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat) Assists with accommodation and tour bookings, sells maps and transport timetables and offers great free brochures including the handy *Tourist Guide: Faroe Islands*. Opens an hour earlier in summer. Within the same atmospheric 1860s building is the city's top bookshop, **HN Jacobsens Bókahandil** (Map p122; ☎ 311036).

National Tourist Board (Map p122; ☎ 316055; www.tourist.fo; Undir Bryggjubakka 17; 🕒 8am–4pm Mon–Thu, to 3pm Fri) Deals more with research and publications. The staff is very knowledgeable about regional attractions.

SIGHTS Old Tórshavn

The city's tiny but charming historical core is **Tinganes**, a little peninsula delightfully jumbled with pretty turf-roofed cottages and historic red-painted stone-and-timber buildings. Most date from after the devastating 1673 fire. Guides can explain the history of each structure but random

strolling is enough for most visitors. The church **Havnarkirkja** (Bringsnagøta; Map p122) has a distinctive clock tower that peeps above a photogenic row of colourful old **wharf buildings** (Undir Bryggjubakka). Beyond the desert of asphalt that surrounds the modern transport terminal, lie the turf-softened bastions of the ruined **Skansin Fort** (Map p122; admission free; 🕒 open all times). It's topped by a little **lighthouse** and four 18th-century cannons. Although rather underwhelming, a five-minute visit is justified by the patchily attractive views.

Føroya Fornminnisavnn

The excellent **Føroya Fornminnisavnn** (Historical Museum; Map p120; ☎ 310700; www.natmus.fo; adult/child Dkr30/free; 🕒 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 2–5pm Sat & Sun mid-May–mid-Sep) is split between two sites in Hoyvík, 3km north of the centre.

The **main site** (Brekktún 6) beautifully displays Faroese artefacts from the Viking Age to the 19th-century with helpfully illustrative photos and notes. In the downstairs treasure room, the 15th-century Kirkjubøur pew-ends include a much photographed carving of the Virgin Mary meeting Elisabeth (mother of John the Baptist). With their halos entwined, the saintly ladies appear to be snogging!

At a wonderfully peaceful **second site** (Kúrdalsvegur) is a superbly preserved 1920s farmstead complete with bell telephone, chuntering grandfather clock, and a full set of turf-roofed outhouses. It's all the more delightful due to its bucolic setting on a low grassy bluff lush with juicy marsh marigolds. It feels a world away from the city yet it's just 300m off major Hvítanesvegur where red buses Nos 2 and 3 drop you off.

Other Museums & Art Galleries

The child-friendly **Náttúrgripasavn** (Natural History Museum; Map p122; ☎ 352300; www.ngs.fo; VU Hammershaimsgøta 13; adult/child Dkr20/free; 🕒 10am–4pm Tue–Fri & 3–5pm Sat & Sun Jun–Aug, 3–5pm Sun Sep–May) has an informative geological section, a minuscule botanical garden and a gigantic whale's skull.

Viðarlundin, a wonderfully wild park where trees and sculptures mingle, leads to the bright and airy **Listasavn Føroya** (National Art Gallery; Map p120; ☎ 313579; www.art.fo; Gundadalsvegur 9; adult/student/child Dkr60/40/free; 🕒 11am–4pm Mon–Fri, 2–5pm Sat & Sun). Its excellent collection of Faroese modern and contemporary art

includes moving, death-haunted canvases by the great Sámal Joensen-Mikines, allegorical cartoons by William Heinesen and Tita Vinther's entertainingly woolly *Rain*.

Intimate private galleries including **Focus** (Map p122; ☎ 315251; Gríms Kambansgøta 20; 🕒 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 4-6pm Sat), **Glarsmiðjan** (☎ 216623; Dr Jakobsensgøta; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) and **Lydersen** (☎ 213303; JC Svabosgøta; 🕒 by appt) are great places to peruse and potentially purchase more Faroese art.

Wooden Sailing Boats

Moored in the harbour are two beautiful antique wooden sloops, **Westward Ho** and **Norðlýsið** (☎ 218520; www.nordlysid.com). On Tuesday and Thursday in summer Norðlýsið offers **fishing trips** (adult/child Dkr250/125; 🕒 7pm) and three hour **cruises** (adult/child Dkr200/100) leaving at 9am.

Nólsoy Island

pop 268
The car-free village of Nólsoy isn't especially picturesque but makes a strikingly peaceful contrast to bustling Tórshavn,

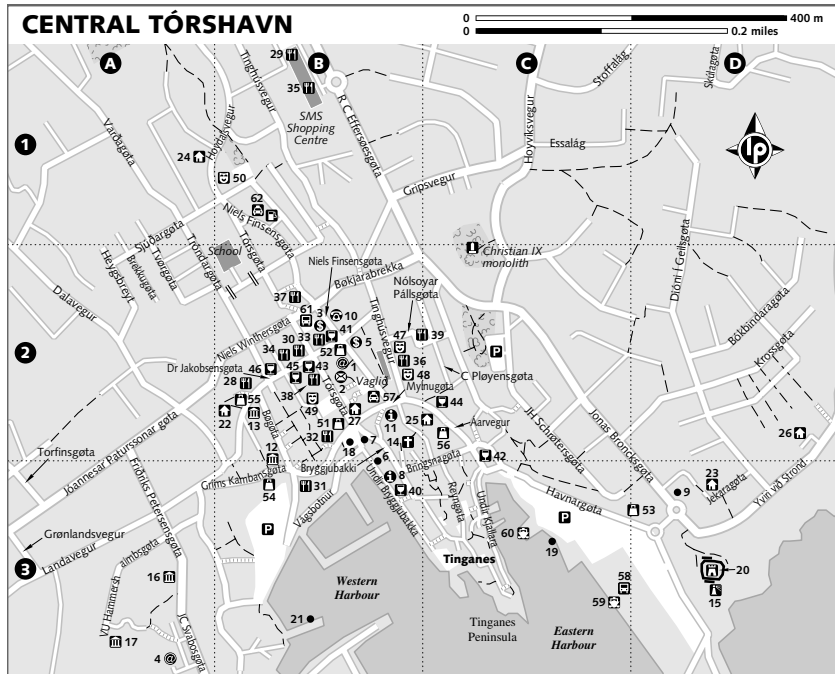
whose Tinganes peninsula looks particularly beautiful as you pass by on the ferry *Ritan* (Dkr35, 20 minutes, three to five daily). Around an hour's walk from Nólsoy village, a colony of storm petrels is claimed to be the world's biggest. They're best observed at dusk. Guided **bird tours** (☎ 327175; Dkr300) including basic accommodation are organised through the village hostel-café called Kaffistovan. The village celebrates a big **Ovastevnu festival** in mid-August.

SLEEPING

The limited accommodation options can get booked up early especially when the Smyril Line stopover crowd's in town. Tour agencies (p140) can arrange private rooms and apartments.

Budget

Camping ground (Map p120; Yviri við Strond; camp sites per adult Dkr60; 🕒 mid-May-mid-Sep) This basic site overlooks a wind-battered, rocky beach and has musty little shower blocks. Book through the tourist office.



Bládypi (Map p122; ☎ 311951; bladydi@hostel.fo; Dr Jakobsensgøta 14-16; dm/s/tw/tr/q Dkr170/350/550/750/950, with bathroom s/tw/tr Dkr500/700/900; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11am & 4-8pm Sat-Sun;n) Bright, friendly and wonderfully central, rates here include an excellent breakfast. Guesthouse and dorm rooms alike are neat and well equipped. Dorms share spacious sitting areas and an equipped kitchen but double-check the under-mattress slats before crashing (literally) on the bunkbeds. Reception hours are limited.

Kerjalon Hostel (Map p120; dm Dkr165-195; ☎ ☒) This pleasant, unmanned hostel has a good kitchen and coin-laundry but is inconveniently located beside the hilltop Hotel Føroyar, which handles all bookings and check-in. Central Tórshavn's 3km away by road and 25 minutes on foot using the shortcuts. All guests seem to heartily ignore the long list of authoritarian rules.

Midrange

Hotel Streym (Map p122; ☎ 355500; fax 355501; www.hotelstreym.com; Yviri við Strond 19; s/d Dkr595/795; reception 🕒 6.30am-10pm) This semismart business hotel has modern décor, retro scoop-seats and good doubleglazing to reduce road noise. The neat, spacious rooms

have desks and are better than those at most top-end options. Rear-facing singles are smaller but quieter.

Guesthouse Skansin (Map p122; ☎ 500606; skansin@hostel.fo; Jekaragøta 8; s/d Dkr440/550, with private bathroom Dkr500/700) Of a mixed bag of well-kept rooms with fridge and TV, the best are those at the top, notably corner-room number 23 which has extensive harbour views. Shared cooking facilities.

Hotel Bólið (Map p122; ☎ 354900; www.bugv.fo/sida16 in Faroese; Niels Finsensgøta 51; s/d Dkr380/480-550; ☒ ☒) Above the Smúkkuhjørnið jewellery shop, this handy if style-challenged eight-room guesthouse is more B&B than hotel. Phone ahead to arrange arrival times.

Guesthouse Undir Fjalli (Map p120; ☎ 320527; www.undirfjalli.com; Vesturgøta 15; s/d Dkr490/590; 🕒 Jul-mid-Aug) Functional, ensuite student accommodation here is rented to tourists during the summer vacation. Take bus No 1 to Handilsskúlin.

Top End

Rates include breakfast and can drop by over 30% on winter weekends.

Hotel Hafnia (Map p122; ☎ 313233; www.hafnia.fo; Áarvegur 4-10; s/d/ste Dkr995/1195/1595; ☒ closed

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FAROE ISLANDS

FAROE ISLANDS

Christmas) Arguably Tórshavn's best hotel, the Hafnia has discreetly decorated rooms with satellite TV, telephone and minibar. The eyesore that is south façade is less discreet.

Hotel Tórshavn (Map p122; ☎ 350000; www.hotelortorshavn.fo; Tórsgøta 4; s/d/ste Dkr850/990/1500; ☹ closed Christmas) Formerly a bland modernist cube, the hotel's public areas are undergoing a stylishly modernist facelift. However, improvements have yet to reach the small, rather ordinary rooms.

Hotel Føroyar (Map p120; ☎ 317500; www.hotelforoyar.com; Oyggjarvegur; s/d/ste Dkr990/1190/1800) High above the city with super views towards Nólsoy, this turf-roofed palace has trendy touches, a swish reception area and an excellent restaurant serving sushi and scallops. In contrast the reasonably spacious rooms are slightly dowdy for the price. Taxis to town cost around Dkr70. Shuttle-buses run direct to the airport (adult/child Dkr150/75).

EATING

For a town of its size, Tórshavn's has a reasonable selection of dining options, mostly around Svørrisgøta or in upmarket hotels. Restaurants tend to be relatively expensive, but several pubs and cafés serve cheaper meals. Lunch buffets are great money savers.

Restaurants

Most restaurants keep tourists happy with at least one token fish option. Note that menus posted outside often show outdated prices while kitchens may close well before official closing times.

Toscana (Map p122; ☎ 311109; Nólsoyar Pállsgøta 13; mains Dkr170-220) Frank Sinatra's mel-low crooning caresses the Chianti-bottle candle-lamps in this cosy little Italian eatery. Toscana specialises in creative meat dishes with tastebud tickling sauces and super rich pastas (Dkr120 to Dkr140) that approach heavenly perfection. Portions are generous: our steak-and-gorgonzola spaghetti contained nearly a whole cow. Bookings advised.

Glitnir (Map p122; ☎ 322525 or 217575; Bøgøta; mains Dkr210-230; ☹ 6pm-10pm Mon-Sat) Gastro-nomic treats that are nibbled at zinc-and-cream furniture and washed down by wine in fish-bowl glasses make Glitnir the in-

timidating summit of Tórshavn's modernist chic. Curiously, the pub downstairs is a lacklustre local affair.

Merlot (Map p122; ☎ 311121; Magnus Heinasonargøta 20; mains Dkr178-228; ☹ 5pm-10pm Mon-Sat) The highly esteemed chef at Merlot flambées steaks in cognac and poaches salmon in Riesling. The somewhat staid décor comes much more to life in the evening candlelight.

Restaurant Hafnia (Map p122; ☎ 313233; Hotel Hafnia, Áarvegur 4-10; mains Dkr175-310) Huge, mouthwatering seafood buffets (served Tuesday and Thursday evenings in summer, Dkr225) are the greatest drawcard of this upmarket restaurant. Reservations are advised.

Marco Polo (Map p122; ☎ 313430; Svørrisgøta 12; mains Dkr155-215; ☹ lunch 11.30am-2pm) A notionally nautical theme puts the atmosphere slightly beyond that of a typical pub, but the real attraction is a superb-value lunch buffet (Dkr79).

Other recommendations:

Pizzacafé (Map p122; ☎ 350035; www.pizza.fo; Hotel Tórshavn; pizzas from Dkr55; ☹ noon-9.45pm) The capital's most appealing sitdown pizzeria serves beer though it's not on the menu.

Kliché (Map p122; ☎ 322404; www.kliche.fo; Grims Kambansgøta, 1st fl; mains Dkr169-200; ☹ 5pm-midnight) Creditable food and good harbour views undermined by simpering muzak and a lack of atmosphere.

Nan-Tong (Map p122; ☎ 318698; Tinghúsvegur 8, 2nd fl; adult/child Dkr155/55; ☹ 5pm-10pm) Small but tasty Chinese buffet above the cinema.

Rio Bravo (Map p122; ☎ 319767; www.riobravo.fo; Tórsgøta 11; mains Dkr155-185; ☹ 5pm-10pm) Wild west-themed steakhouse.

Quick Eats

For quickly made thincrust pizzas to go, head for **Pizza Kjallarín** (Map p122; ☎ 353353; Niels Finsensgøta; pizzas Dkr55-80; ☹ 5pm-midnight Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat).

Three fast-food outlets can be found at

Food Court (Map p122; SMS Shopping Centre).

Self-Catering

For supermarkets, **Miklagarður** (Map p122; SMS Shopping Centre) is the best stocked, though **Bónus** (Map p120; Óðinshædd) and **Fk** (Map p120; Dr Jakobsensgøta & Brekkutún) are marginally cheaper. Bakery-grocery **Frants Restorff** (Map p122; Tórsgøta; ☹ 7am-11pm) opens helpfully long hours.

DRINKING

Dividing-lines between cafés and pubs are somewhat blurred in the Faroes but where there's beer and live music, watch how the characteristic Faroese reserve crumbles. There's only one liquor store called **Rúsdrekkasøla** (Map p120; Smyrlisvegur; ☹ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Thu).

Cafés

Gallari Jinx (Map p122; ☎ 317101; www.jinx.fo in Faroese; Áarvegur 3; mains Dkr80-140; ☹ 11am-midnight) Perched behind big picture windows overlooking the main road, this narrow, artfilled diner-café morphs into a hip youth bar scene at night. The espressos are good while tsatziki or goat's cheese and pesto sandwiches offer salvation for hungry vegetarians.

Café Karlsborg (Map p122; ☎ 317464; Udir Bryggjubakka; ☹ 9am-8pm; pastries Dkr20-50) Exposed beams, a whitewashed 'rock' wall and plenty of endearingly kitschy knick-knacks make this Tórshavn's most atmospheric harbourside café. Sadly the cappuccinos are half hearted.

Café Kheops (Map p122; Niels Finsensgøta 11; bottom-less coffee Dkr12, beers Dkr30) The idiosyncratic copper-panelled bar just about saves this café pub from dull mediocrity.

Pubs

Café Natúr (Map p122; ☎ 312625; Áarvegur 7; meals Dkr49-69) The city's most atmospheric café-cum-pub is the hub of Tórshavn's raucous live scene at weekends. They serve a good range of brews and several great-value barmeads. The recommended if misnamed "Tortilla" is actually a filling burrito-and-salad plate.

Manhattan (Map p122; ☎ 319696; Svørrisgøta 15; beers Dkr25; ☹ 5pm-midnight, to 4am Fri & Sat) Gentle acoustic live music (mostly covers) is played here nightly in this cosy British-style pub.

Cleopatra (Map p122; Svørrisgøta 12; beers from Dkr25, cocktails Dkr55) This small bar tucked in the eaves above Marco Polo restaurant holds Wednesday night jazz jams.

Tórshøll Pub (Tróndargøta 24) Drinking in this smoky local dive is a daring social experiment. Occasional Faroese folk music.

Cippo (Map p122; Tórsgøta 11) Sports bar with pool tables and futsal.

ENTERTAINMENT

The events-listing pamphlet *Havnartíðindi* is available free from the tourist office.

Norðurlandahúsið (Nordic House; Map p120; ☎ 317900; www.nlh.fo; Norðari Ringvegur 10; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun) This modern, architecturally interesting cultural centre has a turf roof and a mini-Stonehenge in the car park. It frequently houses concerts, plays, exhibitions and conferences. There's a pleasant cafeteria.

Leikhúsið Gríma (Map p122; ☎ 318617; www.grima.fo in Faroese; Magnus Heinasonargøta 12) The Faroes' professional theatre troupes hold regular shows and cabaret performances.

Sjónleikarhúsið (Map p122; ☎ 311131; Niels Finsensgøta 34; adult/child Dkr300/150; ☹ Tue, Jun-mid-Jul) This community centre offers Faroese cultural evenings with chain-dancing, storytelling and a few local nibbles.

Havnar Bio (Map p122; ☎ 311956; Tinghúsvegur 8; tickets Dkr75) This two-screen cinema shows original films with Danish subtitles. Upstairs are **Eclipse** (Map p122; ☹ Fri night) and **Rex** (Map p122) the city's slightly sleazy nightclubs.

SHOPPING

Several shops sell souvenirs from knitwear to cuddly puffin toys. **Andreas Vágsbotni** (Map p122; Grims Kambansgøta) also stocks T-shirts and costumed dolls. **Helly Hansen** (Map p122; Havnargøta) has Faroese flags (Dkr200). **Sirri** (Map p122; www.sirri.fo; Áarvegur 10) produces elegant designer garments from organic, dye-free wool and local sheepskins. **Listir** (Map p122; Grims Kambansgøta) sells glass and woollen craftwork. **HCW Tórgarð** (Map p122; Niels Finsensgøta 9) sells CDs of local music.

Photocare (Map p122; Dr Jakobsensgøta 12) downloads digital photos to disk.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Ferries to Suðuroy and international destinations plus all long-distance buses depart from the Farstøðin transport terminal. The *Ritan* ferry to Nólsoy uses a different jetty.

Airport

Regular bus No 300 from the Farstøðin transport terminal drives via the airport (Dkr90, 55 minutes), see p126. **Airport Shuttle** (☎ 223073; www.shuttlebus.com; Dkr150) mini-buses will pick up from hotels and hostels on request at around 6.30am, 9am, 1pm and 3pm. Book a day ahead.

GETTING AROUND

Car

Parking is free in marked spaces but in the city centre, most are time-limited: look for a 'P' and the number of minutes or hours (*tíma*) of stay permitted. Display your arrival time using a parking disc, available free of charge from tourist offices and banks. For car rental agencies, see p141.

Public Transport

The three main routes of red city buses (Dkr10 per ride) each operate half-hourly on weekdays (hourly at weekends and evenings) from the central Steinatún stop. Bus No 2 loops anticlockwise passing close to the Hotel Streym, main post office, Føroya Fornminnisavni and Norðurlandahúsið and returning past the SMS Shopping Centre before finally heading south to Argir via the hospital. Bus No 3 does the same loop clockwise then heads west on Landavegur.

The main taxi companies are **Auto** (☎ 311234) and **Bil** (☎ 311444).

THE WESTERN ISLANDS

VÁGAR

If you fly into the Faroes you'll arrive on Vágur (*vow-whar*). Most travellers dash straight off to Tórshavn. But underrated Vágur itself has a spectacular cliffedged western coast that's most entertainingly viewed from the mini-ferry to Mykines (opposite), one of the Faroes most loveable if climatically treacherous getaways.

Airport

The Faroes' only **airport** (☎ 354400; www.floghavn.fo) has a **tourist information desk** (☎ 353300), cafeteria and ATM cash machine but no bank. Three minutes' walk west of the terminal, the architecturally dreary **Hotel Vágur** (☎ 332955; www.hotelvagur.fo; s/d Dkr635/855) can exchange cash at mediocre rates. The hotel's rooms are clean, motel-style affairs but its restaurant (lunch specials Dkr68, mains Dkr145-Dkr185, h11am-9pm) has fine food, appealing views towards Mykines and Vágur's only bar (beer Dkr25). Consider prebooking meals. The hotel rents low-tech **bicycles** (half-day Dkr75). These are handy for visiting Bøur but not headlight-equipped for the spooky tunnel to Gásadalur.

PUFFIN PERIL

A great thrill of early-summer hikes around Mykines is being entirely surrounded by thousands of quizzically cute puffins. An enormous colony remains, but the birds' recent behaviour has worried locals. Since around 2003, their young have been dying as parental puffins struggle to find sufficiently accessible fish on which to feed them. Should their young perish, puffins have no reason to linger on the cliffs so increasingly the birds have taken to 'disappearing' from July. The 2005 season was particularly catastrophic and resulted in the cancellation of age-old traditional puffin hunts during 2006. Global warming and herring-stock depletion is implicated.

Sørvágur

pop 970

Just 1km west of the airport, **Sørvágur** curves somewhat blandly around the eastern end of an attractive fjord. Its main attraction is the twice-daily summer boat service to Mykines (opposite) leaving from a harbour at the town's southwestern limit. That's near the petrol station/snack bar, some 150m west of the eccentric **Sørvágs Bygdarsavn** (☎ 333191; 13 Rossatrøðin; admission Dkr30; ☎ by appt), a tatty little museum in a conspicuous blue house.

For acceptable rooms, **Anita Góðadal's B&B** (☎ 332878; í Gerðinum 11; s/d Dkr350/540) can be booked through Greengate Incoming (www.greengate.fo); it has shared facilities. From the airport walk ten minutes downhill, fork left at the first junction, left again on Garðsvegur, then second left to the top.

AROUND SØRVÁGUR

Picturesque **Bøur** (pop 70) is a bayside huddle of old Faroese homes, several with turf roofs. An intimidatingly tall amphitheatre of *hamrar* (stepped cliffs) stands behind. The 4km trip from Sørvágur is amply justified by spectacular views of **Tindhólmur**, a serrated islet of vertical rock that rises from the frothing waves like a Tolkeinesque fantasy castle. Surreally sliced, Tindhólmur seems to have had its western half mistakenly erased in post-production. It's one of the Faroes' landscape icons.

Another 4km west of Bøur, **Gásadalur** (*gwa-sa-dal-wur*, pop 12) occupies an even

grander amphitheatre. The village homes are marginally less photogenic than those of Bøur but beautifully set with Tindhólmur as a delightful backdrop. Road access (no bus) is via a freakily pitch-dark 1½km tunnel. Alternatively a challenging hike via the former **postman's trail** (2½ hours) starts 700m south of the tunnel's eastern entrance. It passes perilously near the first cliff edge then zigzags very steeply up and over the cairn-marked, 425m **Skarð Pass**. Hiking offers superb views but there are loose sections and the route is dangerous in less-than-perfect visibility.

Miðvágur & Sandavágur

Sandavágur with its fanciful 1917 church is 2km from **Miðvágur**, with Vágur's banks, supermarkets and **tourist office** (☎ 333455, 219899; ☎ 1-3pm Mon-Fri). Between the two, **Á Giljanesi** (☎ 332900; fax 332901; www.giljanesi.fo; camp sites per adult Dkr60, dm/s/d Dkr160/250/380) is a no-frills hostel. Though prefabricated and rather cramped, it's good value with a decent kitchen and lovely bay views from even-numbered rooms facing Koltur's craggy rear-end.

AROUND MIÐVÁGUR

A leisurely but very rewarding 50-minute hike follows the eastern bank of lake **Leitisvatn** starting from the main airport road, 1.5km west of Miðvágur petrol station. Rich breeding grounds of oystercatchers, whimbrels and snipes lead to **Bøsdalafossur**, a unique waterfall where the lake water tumbles directly into the foaming seasurf below. For particularly inspiring views of the soaring cliffedged coastline, climb the raised rocks slightly to the east. A slightly boggy upper trail returns

directly to Miðvágur police station, offering some glimpsed views across the town towards a spindly rocky spire evocatively nicknamed the **Witch's Finger** (Trøllkonufingur).

Getting There & Away

For flight details see p140 and p141. Bus No 300 runs six to nine times daily between Tórshavn and Sørvágur (Dkr100, one hour) via the airport (Dkr90, 55 minutes) and Miðvágur. One or two daily buses will continue from Sørvágur to Bøur but only by advance request: call ☎ 215610 at least two hours ahead.

Avis and Flogrelag Føroyar (Hertz) have desks within the airport terminal but they are only manned when vehicles have been prebooked (Dkr150 airport supplement).

MYKINES

pop 12

Trafficless Mykines (pronounced *mitch-i-ness*) is one of the Faroes most charming villages. It's cupped deep within a beautiful green outfield, perched high above a sea-battered jetty where landing can be a minor adventure. Short yet awe-inspiring hikes lead up to sunset-facing bird cliffs. From there the hiking paths pass densely packed puffin burrows to a footbridge that crosses a 35m sea-gorge to **Mykineshólmur**. The walk to Mykineshólmur's 1909 lighthouse (allow three hours return) leads you past the Faroes' only surviving gannet colonies.

Combining snack-bar, basic shop and hostel, **Kristianshús** (☎ 312985; http://heima.olivant.fo/~mykines/indexgb.htm; mykines@post.olivant.fo; camp sites per adult Dkr50, dm/s/d Dkr120/220/440; ☎ May-Aug) can accommodate up to 30 people in

GRINDADRÁP

Hunting long-finned pilot whales (*grind*) is an age-old Faroese tradition called *grindadráp* (see www.whaling.fo). Pods of these whales are herded by boats into a shallow bay where local people stand waiting on the beach. They insert steel gaffs into the whales' blowholes then cut the jugular and carotid blood vessels with long knives. Catastrophic loss of blood pressure causes a rapid death. Hunts are limited by law to prevent wastage and are conducted within rules set by the International Whaling Commission. The method is considered the quickest, least painful way to kill whales. Nonetheless it results in frothing, blood-filled red fjord-water that's a photo-perfect gift to anti-whaling publicists. Anti-whaling campaigners are widely loathed here and many Faroese suggest that objectors could better direct their energy to more pressing concerns such as war and pollution. Pollution may actually be a greater danger to pilot whales than hunting – high levels of mercury and cadmium are now found in the meat reflecting humans' careless treatment of the oceans.

three sections. Rooms above its shop-cafeteria (prebooked 7pm dinner Dkr125) are truly tiny and share a minuscule toilet/shower. The attached cottage offers vastly more spacious if somewhat tattier rooms with shared kitchen facilities and sitting room.

Across the road, sleeping at the homestay-hotel **Yellow House** (☎ 332614; leonsson@kallnet.fo; 3-bed dm Dkr180; ☹ Jun-Aug) can be slightly more awkward to arrange as the owner-family is usually away in Tórshavn.

Helicopters from Vágur (Dkr145) should run Sunday, Wednesday and twice on Friday. From Sörvágur on Vágur, the mostly un-covered mini-ferry **Brynild** (☎ 333200; Dkr60; 45 minutes) should run at 10am and 4pm in summer (May to August). However, all transport is highly weather-dependent so it's quite possible to find yourself stranded among the puffins. For several days!

STREYMOY Kirkjubøur

pop 226

Sprinkled along the base of a craggy sea-facing bluff, Kirkjubøur (pronounced *cheer-chi-ba*) consists of roughly a dozen tar-blackened chalet homes, some with turf-rooves and whitewashed stone bases. For centuries this was the Faroes' religious and cultural centre. Behind the whitewashed AD 1111 **St Olav's church** lies the never-completed Gothic shell of **Magnus Cathedral**. Today its hefty basalt walltops are wrapped with protective black-metal cladding which convert the 13th-century ruins into a unique statement of contemporary art.

Built upon the 900-year-old foundation-platform of the long-disappeared bishop's palace is the beautiful turf-roofed farmhouse **Roykstovan** (Smoke Chamber; ☎ 328089; www.patursson.com; adult/child Dkr30/free; ☹ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-5.30pm Sun Jun-Aug or by appt). The exterior is colourfully detailed with 19th century pseudo-Viking carvings. Although a private home (in the Patursson family for 17 generations), two rooms are usually open to public viewing. Their driftwood timbers are scented with history and draped with fascinating artefacts, each telling its own story. By advance arrangement you can even organise a feast at the great banqueting bench fashioned from the life-saving plank of an 1895 shipwreck.

Bus No 101 (Dkr20, 30 minutes, several daily) from Tórshavn runs to Gamlarætt port, 2km northwest of Kirkjubøur. If you request in advance (☎ 343030) the 8.10am and 6.30pm services will make a diversion into Kirkjubøur for you. Alternatively from Tórshavn you could hike along the classic, very well-trodden mountain trail (two hours) that starts down við Sandá near bus No 3's southwestern terminus. **Berg Hestar** (☎ 316896; ☹ by appointment) will take groups the same way riding Icelandic horses. If coming by car the cliff-clinging side-trip towards Syðradalur farm offers some very appealing views over Koltur.

Vestmanna pop 1238

Deservedly the Faroes' biggest tourist attraction is a breathtaking two-hour **boat tour** (adult/child Dkr200/100, ☹ May-early-Sep) to the soaring **Vestmanna Bird Cliffs**. Boats bob beneath towering cliff faces, past spiky rock pinnacles and through narrow escarpments sometimes squeezing beneath tight stone arches. You'll spy the breeding areas of guillemots and razorbills as screeching fulmars and kittiwakes soar above like thousands of white dots.

Two companies **Lamhauge** (☎ 424155; www.sightseeing.fo) and **Skúvadal** (☎ 424305; www.puffin.fo) offer essentially identical tours using various sized boats to fit passenger numbers (minimum five). Each offers up to five departures daily, most reliably at 9am and 2pm (the most crowded). Both companies use the tourist harbour (former car-ferry port). 900m east of central Vestmanna's post office, banks and commercial port. The **tourist office** (☎ 471500; tourist harbour; ☹ 9am-5pm) sells Skúvadal tickets and books fishing trips with **Magni Blástein** (☎ 581582).

SLEEPING & EATING

Overlooking the tourist harbour, the super-neat six-room guesthouse **Krákureiðrið** (pronounced *kraka-rey-ree*; ☎ 424747 or 764747; jf.egilsnes@kallnet.fo; Niðarivegur 34; s/tw Dkr300/450) has excellent shared showers, a great kitchen and free internet access (with your own computer). The pleasant **Fjørðurkrógvín Restaurant** (☎ 471505; Tourist Office Bldg; set lunch Dkr60; ☹ 10am-6pm) also serves coffee-and-cake sets (Dkr38) to waiting trippers. You

can buy groceries from the **Shell Filling Station** (tourist harbour; ☹ 7.30am-11pm Mon-Sat, 9am-11pm Sun). Hidden down steps from the post office is the local pub **Bryggjam** (☹ 5pm-midnight).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Inconveniently timed public buses from Tórshavn (Dkr50, one hour, three to eight daily) require a change from bus No 300 (airport service) to bus No 100 at the Kollafjarðadalur Statoil petrol station (pronounced *kotla-furdla*). More conveniently, **Øssur Christiansen private buses** (☎ 217752; Dkr120 return; ☹ variable) and **Tora tours** (www.tora.fo; ☹ Wed & Sun, Jun-Aug) collect you from Tórshavn hotels, connect with boat trips and add some sightseeing on the way back.

When travelling by car, choose the starkly barren old mountain road (Rte10) and make brief detours to pretty Norðradalur hamlet and to Kvívík with its 1903 church and minimalist Viking longhouse ruins.

Northern Streymoy

Northern Streymoy's hotel-less villages make delightful detours by car but most visitors find they're not quite stunning enough to justify the awkward access by rare buses from Oyrarbakkí.

SAKSUN

pop 34

Over 10km of lonely moorland valley leads from Hvalvík to tiny Saksun. Ignore the scrappy look of the first houses and fork right. After another 1km you'll reach the solitary turf-roofed **church** dramatically perched high above a tidal lake, impressively ringed by crags and waterfalls. From road's end look back at the proud **19th-century farmstead** which has an almost medieval appearance. It's strictly private property but in midsummer hosts the **Dúvugarður Folk Museum** (☎ 310700; admission Dkr20; ☹ 2-5pm Fri-Wed mid-Jun-mid-Aug).

TJØRNUVÍK

pop 80

A gently satisfying 13km drive northwest from Oyrarbakkí passes a '**forest of cairns**, an impressive roadside **waterfall** and Haldlorsvík's unique **octagonal church** before following a cliffledge into Tjørnuvík.

Clasped tightly in a rocky claw of backing mountains, the village is a mostly modern huddle hiding just a few turf-roofed cottages. Great views across a black sand beach towards the distinctive sea stacks **Risin and Kellingin** (below), are even finer if you scramble northwest up the steep trail marked by white-painted boulders. Serious hikers could trek south across a partially treacherous mountain trail to Saksun (three to four hours).

NORTHERN EYSTUROY

Lovely landscapes, excellent short hikes and a range of rural lodgings, make this the best region to explore if your time in the Faroes is limited. Gjógv, Elduvík and Funningur villages are especially quaint. Buses do run occasionally (mostly weekdays only, by advanced request) but driving offers vastly more flexibility.

Eiði

pop 670

Architecturally undistinguished Eiði (pronounced *ay-ee*) rises steeply from a wide green isthmus. Behind a quirky 1881 **church**, the old village-core consists of tightly folded alleys hiding the turf-roofed little folk museum **Eiðis Bygdasavn** (☎ 423597; adult/child Dkr30/free; ☹ 2-4pm Wed & Sun Jun-Jul) that quaintly illustrates traditional Faroese lifestyles. Near the top of the village, the extensively renovated **Hotel Eiði** (☎ 423456; www.hoteleidi.fo; s/d Dkr450/650, with private bathroom Dkr600/800) displays the stylish abstract artwork of its charming owner. Eight of the rooms, notably single No 5, offer pleasant views toward the fjord also shared by its convivial restaurant (open noon to 2pm and 6pm to 9.30pm).

The main reason to visit Eiði is to hike 45-minutes from the village's uppermost road-end to **Eiðiskollur** (cairn-marked once you've climbed a small fence). The rewards are lovely headland panoramas and heart-stoppingly steep views down upon the classic twin sea-stacks **Risin and Kellingin**. Folk legends describe the pair as a giant and hag turned to stone while attempting to pull the Faroes over to Iceland! Non-walkers could view Risin and Kellingin using the free binocular stand 3km along the scenic Eiði-Gjógv road or by driving to Tjørnuvík (left).

From Oyrarbakki on the Tórshavn–Klaksvík route, bus No 200 (Dkr20, 25 minutes) runs to Eiði eight times every weekday and twice on Sundays.

Gjógv

pop 53

Tourists and local day-trippers alike rave about the picture-postcard beauty of Gjógv (pronounced *jek-v*) village. Divided by a dainty trickle of stream are knots of colourful and tar-blackened cottages. One such cottage is the delightful **Debesar Café** (www.gjogvadventure.fo; coffee & pancakes Dkr30; ☎ 10am–8pm May–Sep) that doubles as a souvenir shop and ticket office for highly recommended **boat tips** (Dkr150) around the towering cliffs to spiky **Búgvín Stack**. Once a few customers have assembled, the boat departs from within a distinctive deep cleft (*gjógv*) from which the village was named. The Debesar Café also sells village hiking maps (Dkr30). Proceeds supposedly support local environmental projects, though a map isn't really necessary for the Gjógv's most attractive short hike – a very obvious stroll past puffin burrows up the western cliffside.

Gjáargarður (☎ 211590; fax 423505; www.gjaarhostel.dk; camp sites per adult Dkr70 dm/d/tr Dkr200/550/700, d/tr with bathroom Dkr650/800; ☎ May–Sep) is an excellent turf-roofed hostel-guesthouse that looks something-like an overgrown Swiss chalet. Some dorm-beds are built cupboard-style into the caves as in traditional Faroese farmhouses. These are great fun for one person but claustrophobically over-cosy for two. Guesthouse rooms are comfy, rates include a great breakfast and the buffet meals are simply superb.

By advance request (☎ 505520) bus No 201 connects Gjógv to Oyrarbakki twice each weekday (Dkr40, 40 minutes) via the old village of Funningur, home to the Faroes' most photogenic turf-topped church.

Elduvík

pop 60

Facing Kalsoy's jagged northern tip, Elduvík is a dreamily cute snaggle of tar-blackened traditional cottages divided by the meandering mouth of the pretty Stórá stream. **Home Café** (☎ 444815; ☎ Jun–mid-Aug) offers simple coffee-and-cake sets (Dkr30) and has two basic homestay rooms (Dkr200 per person). School buses are the only public transport.

SOUTHERN EYSTUROY

This region offers few pressing incentives to hop off the Klaksvík–Tórshavn bus. However, if driving by you could stop in **Leirvík** to see the new **boat museum** (☎ 443347), or in the triple-centred village of **Gøta**, which is famous for its musicians. The little beach in southern Gøta (Suðrugøta) bursts into life during the superb **G! Music Festival** (see below for more information). Opposite the bank in central Gøtugjógv, the 1995 **Gøtu Kirkja** is a church with some superb contemporary glasswork, notably a towering modernist Passion window. Fronting the harbour in northern Gøta (Norðragøta) is an 1883 wooden church, which shields from view an unmarked, turf-roofed **Folk Museum** (Blásastova; ☎ 222717, 441440; Tróndargøta 31; adult/child Dkr30/free; ☎ 2–4pm Thu–Tue mid-May–mid-Sep).

Eysturoy's sprawling commercial hub, **Runavík**, has shops, banks and a hotel but limited appeal for tourists.

THE IMPROBABLE G! *Jón Tyril, founder of the G! Festival*

Everyone said it was impossible. Faroese weather and rock festivals couldn't go together. But that's art – doing the impossible. We'd already done the impossible musically with Clickhaze [Jón's seminal Faroese rock band]. So one day after playing Roskilde [the great Danish rock festival], we just decided to go for it. The G! logo came first. Just G! posters; no explanation. People were intrigued. The first year we had just six bands but about 1000 people showed up. Beautiful weather...it was amazing. That was 2002. By the time Europe [1980s Swedish band famous for *Final Countdown*] played in 2005, it was more like 10,000 people. Imagine! That's 20% of the whole Faroese population round this little beach. There were 50 boats, lights all twinkling in fabulous Gøta Bay. And thank goodness there was no wind; bad tides and a storm would have finished us off.

KLAKSVÍK & THE NORTHERN ISLES

KLAKSVÍK

pop 4794

Colourful fishing boats dot the busy, workmanlike harbour of the Faroes' second-largest town. Klaksvík hugs a steep-sided, elongated bay framing the rocky rump of Kunoy which can stay photogenically snow-dusted as late as early-June. As the regional transport hub, Klaksvík makes an obvious base for excursions in the Northern Isles despite a paucity of accommodation options.

Information

Alfa Bókahandil (☎ 455533; Nólsoyar Pálsgøta 2) Bookshop that sells postcards.

Føroya Banki (☎ 456377; Klaksvíksvegur 7) Bank with ATM.

Hospital (☎ 455463; Víkavegur 40–44)

Library (☎ 455757; Tingstøðin; ☎ 1–6pm Mon–Fri) Two computers with free internet access.

Tourist Office (Norðoya Kunningarstova; ☎ 456939; info@klaksvik.fo; Nólsoyar Pálsgøta 32; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri & 10am–noon Sat Jun–Aug, 10am to noon & 1–4pm Sep–May) Accommodation & tour bookings.

Norðoya Sparikassi (☎ 475000; Ósavegur 1) Bank with ATM.

Photo Care (☎ 457272; Klaksvíksvegur 70) Downloads digital photos to CD.

Post Office (☎ 455008; Klaksvíksvegur 2)

Telecom Shop (Telebúðin; Biskupsstøðgøta 3; ☎ 9am–5:30pm Mon–Fri)

Sights & Activities

Photogenic **viewpoints** abound around the harbour but for the best of all, hike for around an hour up the obvious, if occasionally slightly steep, trail to **Klakkur** (413m). The reward is a truly splendid panorama of both the city (especially magnificent as lights come on at dusk) and the fjord-rent drama of the surrounding islands.

Dragin, a 1940s wooden sailing boat, offers inspiring **sightseeing cruises** (www.dragin.fo; Dkr250, ☎ 6pm daily Jun–Aug) around the Kallur or Enniberg cliffs, weather and passenger-numbers permitting (minimum 10).

The finest feature of Klaksvík's museum, **Norðoya Fornminnisavni** (☎ 456287; Klaksvíksvegur 84; adult/child Dkr20/free; ☎ 1–4pm mid-May–mid-Sep)

is a nostalgic, fully preserved old pharmacy shoproom that operated until 1961.

Next door, **Leikalund** (☎ 457151; www.leikalund.com in Faroese; Klaksvíksvegur 82) is a marvellous bookshop café within a restored old wooden-beamed store that dates from the Danish trading monopoly days. There's no better place to listen to (and buy) CDs of Faroese music over a good espresso. Some weekend nights the atmospheric back-room hosts intimate live concerts. Unmissable.

Architecturally, the modernist 1963 church, **Christianskirkja** (Kirkjubrekka 6) attempts to evoke the ancient Magnus Cathedral at Kirkjubour (p128). Within there's a superb altar wall depicting the last supper and from soaring rafters hangs a full-sized rowing boat. Free-standing outside, the A-framed **belfry** has a wood-shingle roof and tolls to announce occasional concerts.

The **Føroya Bjór Brewery** (☎ 475454; www.føroya-bjor.fo; ☎ 8.30–5pm Mon–Fri) brews the Faroes' classic Black Sheep ale. Call well ahead (preferably a week) to arrange a free **tour** by appointment. These start from the brewery office, upstairs behind 15 Klaksvíksvegur.

Sleeping

Hotel Sjómansheim (Klaksvíkar Sjómansheim ☎ 455333; Vikarvegur 38; s/tw Dkr395/595, with private bathroom Dkr695/895) Klaksvík's only hotel is big, functional and understaffed but it's clean, handily central and some (pricier) rooms have great bay views. Rates include a substantial breakfast.

The **tourist office** (☎ 456939; info@klaksvik.fo) can arrange two **B&B rooms** (s/d Dkr350/450), some **self-catering apartments** (from Dkr500) and handles payments/bookings for the out-of-centre **camping ground** (Úti-l-Grov; camp sites per adult Dkr60).

Eating & Drinking

Hereford (☎ 456434; Klaksvíksvegur 45; mains Dkr160–225; ☎ 6–10pm Tue–Sun, closed Mon), above welcoming **Café 45** (beers Dkr30; ☎ 10am–10pm), is a convivial steakhouse that uses rough pine walls and wooden dining booths to create a traditional yet contemporary atmosphere. The predictably beefy menu also includes garlic snails and venison medallions.

Pizza 67 (☎ 456767; Klaksvíksvegur 22; dishes from Dkr50; ☎ 5pm–11pm) Klaksvík's predominantly takeaway pizzeria advertises 'Sex, Pizza &

Rock'n'Roll'. In fact their pizzas are highly disappointing and the rest boils down to six framed Elvis posters.

The **Hotel Sjómansheim restaurant** (lunch/dinner Dkr80/90, ☎ noon-2pm & 6-8pm) offers simple, filling set meals.

Hjá Jórur (Klingrugardur; ☎ 11am-11pm) The biggest and best of three bakery-cafés with

luscious cakes and a range of open-sandwiches. When sunshine obliges, outdoor seating faces Borðoyarvík Fjord, albeit across a major road.

An unmarked red door in a graffiti-muralled house leads you into **Roystkovan** (Klaksvíksvegur; ☎ 11am-11pm), a rough-edged, suffocatingly smoke-fugged pub: ideal for

meeting (and hopefully not fighting with) razzed-up seamen.

Supermarkets include **Fk** (Nólsoyar Pálsögata 12), **Bónus** (Stangavegur 10) and **Inn** (Klaksvíksvegur; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat). Late-night grocery **Kiosk Var** (Klaksvíksvegur; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Sat, 8am-11pm Sun) also serves hot-dogs.

Buy booze at **Rúsdrekkasøla** (Bøgata 38; ☎ Mon-Fri 2-5.30pm, Thu 2-7pm) or from beneath the brewery.

Getting There & Away

If you pick the right day, a helicopter can whiz you virtually anywhere else in the Faroes (see p140), with scenic hops to Fugloy costing a mere Dkr110. By bus, No 400 to Tórshavn (Dkr90, 1¼ hours, five to 11 times daily) uses the colourfully illuminated 6.8km Norðoya toll-tunnel via Leirvík.

Getting Around

Taxis (☎ 590000, 755555) lurk beside the bus stand. **John W Thomsen bicycle shop** (☎ 455858; Nólsoyar Pálsögata 26) rents mountain bikes (Dkr100 per day).

KALSOY

This long, thin succession of abrupt peaks is nicknamed the 'flute' for its many tunnel-holes. For a lovely half-day trip from Klaksvík take a Syðradalur-bound car ferry ride (Dkr35, 20 minutes, up to six daily) that connects with bus 506 (Dkr30, 40 minutes, up to three daily) to **Trøllanes**, then hike (45 minutes) to **Kallur lighthouse**. Views are truly spectacular, encompassing six different headlands. However it's a long wait for the next bus back and Trøllanes has neither shop nor accommodation. If you dare subjecting yourself to 25 minutes of heart-pounding sensory deprivation you could walk the totally unlit 2km tunnel from Trøllanes to quietly quaint **Mikladalur** village. Not for the faint hearted.

VIÐOY

Hvannasund

pop 270

The small, nondescript port of **Hvannasund** (pronounced kwana-sund) guards a cross-fjord causeway. It's the starting point for timewarp mail-box trips to Fugloy (right) and for **Alpha Pilot tour-cruises** (☎ 220849; Dkr250; ☎ 3pm daily, Jul-Aug) that circumnavigate Fugloy or round Enniberg (see above) according to currents and weather.

Viðareiði

pop 350

The boxy homesteads of Viðareiði (pronounced vee-ar-oy-ye) are scattered across a lovely green swale between perfectly pyramidal **Malinsfjall** (750m) and the soaring amphitheatre of **Villingadalsfjall** (841m). Especially when viewed from Fugloy (below), the resultant U-shaped valley looks like God's skateboarding ramp. Climbing part-way up Villingadalsfjall reveals some magnificent views across the headlands of Borðoy, Kunoy and Kalsoy. Climbing further you'll encounter steep scree but when fog and low clouds allow, experienced trekkers can scramble over the summit, along a knife-edge ridge and on to **Enniberg**, one of Europe's highest sea-cliffs.

For something much gentler just stroll to Viðareiði's dainty, 1892 **church** and pretty old jetty area at the western end of the village.

Presentable if windlashed, the central **Hotel Norð** (☎ 451244; fax 451245; s/d Dkr600/800; ☎ Jun-Aug) offers sweeping views from south-facing rooms. The expansive restaurant (mains Dkr175-205) has an eerily deserted Marie Celeste atmosphere when no groups are in.

Opposite Hotel Nord is a grocery store and four doors away the eight-table house-restaurant **Mastovan Elisabeth** (☎ 451275; mains Dkr155-185; ☎ noon-9pm) serves roasted puffin in season (July) if you prebook.

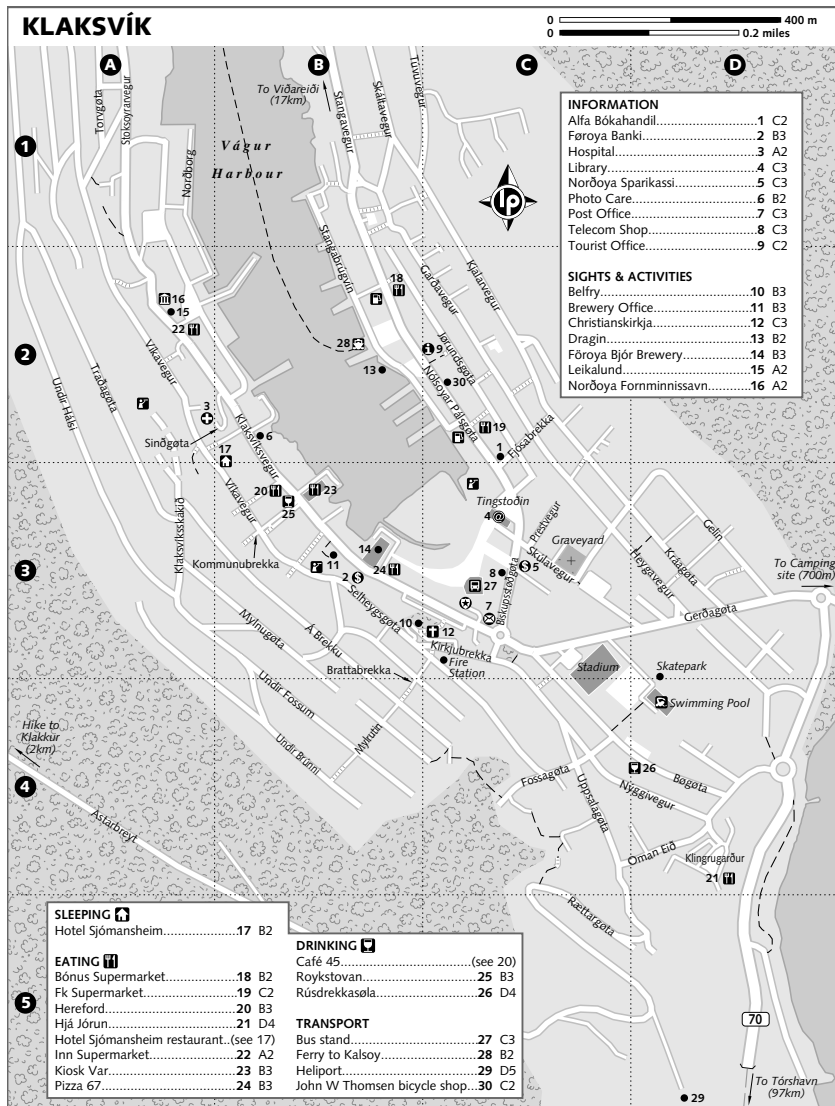
Getting There & Away

From Klaksvík bus No 500 runs to Viðareiði (Dkr30, 30 minutes, three daily) via Hvannasund (Dkr20, 20 minutes). Buses connect with Alpha Pilot tours weekdays only (out 2.20pm, back 6.55pm).

FUGLOY

pop 45

Clinging valiantly to Fugloy's steep southern tip, the slopes above **Kirkja** (pronounced cheer-cha) face a very attractive array of island views. Somewhat gloomier **Hattarvík** is nestled deep in a sweeping valley that rises steeply to the east-coast bird cliffs. Hattarvík's red-roofed 1899 stone church stares wistfully out across the endless Atlantic surf. Neither village has a protected harbour, and for some travellers the real thrill of visiting Fugloy is the dicey, wave-buffed landing as one disembarks from



the 1959 wooden mail-boat *Másin*, the island's main lifeline. Its schedule varies notoriously according to wind direction, weather and whether a detour to Svinoy is added. However, typically departures are twice daily from Hvannasund to Kirkja (9.15am and 3.15pm) taking around an hour then returning immediately. Always book ahead (☎ 505208) especially if you want to continue to Hattarvík. By picking the right day there's time (sometimes only just) to arrive by helicopter in Hattarvík then walk to Kirkja (around 1½ hours by asphalt road or cliffedge foot-path) for the afternoon boat out again. But there's no formal accommodation if you get stranded.

SOUTHERN ISLANDS

SKÚVOY

pop 57

At first glance, Skúvoy's sloping grasslands look just a tad characterless. However, along the west coast, breathtaking **cliffs** plunge dramatically into the surf. And for ornithologists, key attractions are the **great skuas** for which the island was named. In July, these powerful birds swoop menacingly amid oystercatchers and the clouds of fulmars that soar around the very attractive **Høvdin bird cliffs**. Access is on foot from the island's only village, a mostly-tame stroll taking around 45 minutes. Follow the red-painted wooden stakes after the road peters out and make sure you bring a stick to protect your head in case you're dive-bombed!

Skúvoy village is colourful if not the Faroes' most picturesque. There's a gently photogenic **church** beside the heliport and on weekdays the whole place has almost a ghost-town feel. Sweet **Jogvansstova** (from Dkr450) is a vaguely atmospheric if slightly tatty rental-house bookable through Green-gate (see p137). It's a bargain though the shower, hidden in the basement garage, is something of a joke. The village lacks a café but the owner of the tiny **shop** (☎ Tue & Sun) is friendly and very knowledgeable about local ornithology once you get over his initial tetchiness.

For a satisfying day trip, arrive in Skúvoy by helicopter (on Wednesdays you get the

most time) then return to Tórshavn on the 4.30pm boat-bus-ferry-bus combination (Dkr110, 2¾ hours). Prebook the Skúvoy-Sandur section (☎ 505207) in case you're the only passenger. There's no ferry connection between Skúvoy and Suðuroy.

STÓRA DÍMUN

pop 5

This dinky island's central peak dips down at its southern end like a natural ski-jump. Here a small ledge of rich sheep pasture is just enough to sustain a single farm. Ringed by sheer cliffs and lacking a harbour, the island's only practicable access is by helicopter. You'll appreciate the loneliness of the location when landing here very briefly on flights between Frøðba and Skúvoy. However there are no tourist facilities so getting off uninvited would be a rude imposition upon the sole resident family.

SUÐUROY

This attractive, friendly island is appealingly untouristed even though its hub, Tvøroyri, offers the Faroes' most atmospheric pub and best-value guesthouse. Although marginally less dramatic than northern Eysturoy, the island's steep, fjord-nibbled undulations offer some excellent short hikes. Several heart-stoppingly spectacular viewpoints surveying the plunging west-coast bird-cliffs are easily accessible by road if you're driving. By car you can see most of the sights in a busy 24 hours.

Tvøroyri

pop 1760

Pleasant Tvøroyri (pronounced *tver-oi-ree*) is Suðuroy's main commercial centre and transport hub. Greater Tvøroyri sprawls gently along the northern slopes of Trongisvágssjørð from pretty Frøðba village (2km east) to junction-settlement Trongisvágur (2km west). The Drelnes ferry port (4km by road) is directly across the fjord. As yet streets remain un-named. **Suðuroy Kunningarstova** (Tourist Information; ☎ 372490; sout-inf@post.olivant.fo; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) is based in Tvøroyri's town hall (*kommunia*) but also opens a booth at the Drelnes terminal whenever a ferry arrives. Beside the **post office**, the bank **Føroya Banki** has a single ATM.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The single greatest attraction of the 1852 grass-roofed **museum** (☎ 372480; admission Dkr20; ☎ by appt) is the story-telling genius of curator **Einar Larsen** (☎ 228241) who can usually open the museum up if given an hour or two's notice. A rough **cobble-slope**, which was originally used for fish-drying, leads down to the functional commercial port past the restored 1836 **Thomsen monopoly-house** containing the brilliant Kgl Handil pub.

A distinctive three-tiered Norwegian-style 1907 **church** lies beyond the quaint, turquoise **police station**.

Around 1.5km west, **Gallari Oyggin** (☎ 371669; admission Dkr20; ☎ 3-8pm Tue-Sun) displays somewhat brutal black metallic sculptures and has a small Art Café.

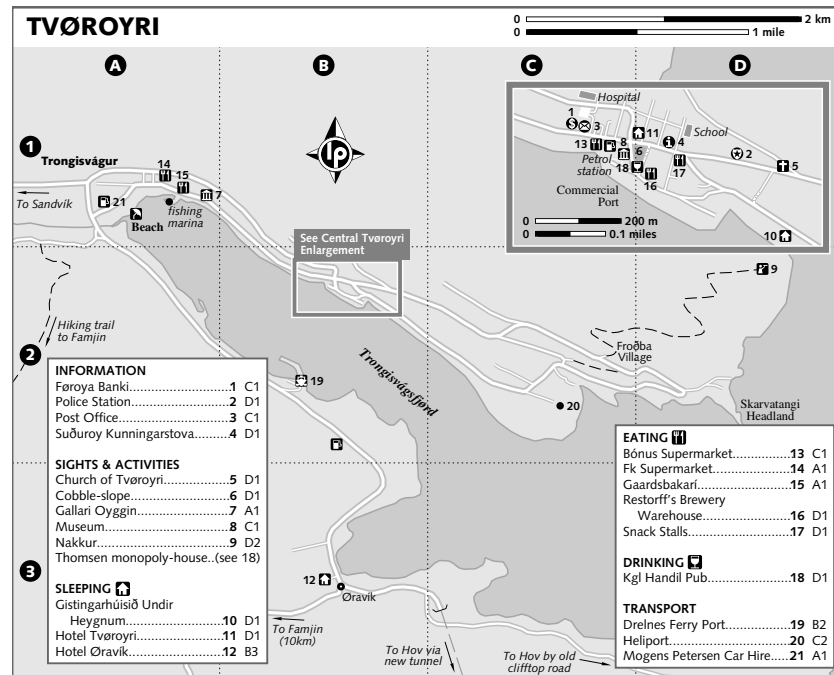
From quaint **Frøðba village**, a gently picturesque stroll past some over-hyped **columnar basalt formations** brings you to the attractive low **Skarvatangi headland**. Or more strenuously follow the clear track up to 325m **Nakkur** for extensive cliff-top views.

SLEEPING & EATING

Gistingarhúsið Undir Heygnum (☎ 372046; mobile 223925; guesthouse@kallnet.fo; s/d from Dkr250/400) The Faroes' best value if most unpronounceable guesthouse offers gleamingly clean Scandinavian-styled rooms with excellent shared bathrooms, kitchen and a homely living room. It's right at the bay-side, just five minutes' stroll east of central Tvøroyri.

Hotel Tvøroyri (☎ 371171; fax 372171; s/d without private bathroom s/d Dkr400/550, s/d with private bathroom s/d Dkr550/650) Beyond the disconcerting welcome of dead-whale photos, this ultra-central blue cube has fresh, tasteful rooms, a comfy top-floor TV room and a flat roof that might one-day make a great café. The restaurant serves set meals by advance order for Dkr85 from lunchtime until 6pm, there's a weekend only pizzeria open from 6.30pm until 10.30pm and a rough-edged basement pub.

Hotel Øravík (☎ 371302; uni@post.olivant.fo; dm/ s/d Dkr160/625/940; camp sites per adult Dkr60) This slightly tatty series of shedlike buildings sits beside a gurgling brook in an appealingly



FLAG DAY

The *Merkið*, the Faroe Islands' 'national' flag looks rather like a Norwegian one in negative: a red Scandinavian cross, edged with blue on a white ground. Invented by Fámjin students in 1919 it had limited local usage in the 1930s but came into its own in 1940. WWII was at its height and Denmark had fallen to Nazi Germany. The Faroes, however, remained pro-Allies and continued to supply Britain with fish despite considerable wartime dangers. As flying the 'enemy' Danish flag was no longer acceptable to British warships, Hans Mikkelsen, captain of the Faroese ship *Eysturoy* suggested using the *Merkið*. Winston Churchill approved the use of the flag on 25th April, 1940. It was the first international recognition of the flag and the date is still celebrated as Faroese Flag Day.

lonely rural hamlet 2.5km south of Drelnes ferry terminal. Double beds are somewhat small and the functional rooms have an over-vivid red decor. The hostel section is due to reopen in 2007. The **restaurant** (fish dinner Dkr198; ☎ 5pm-10pm) also serves bread pizzas (Dkr60 to Dkr90).

Hot dogs are sold from **snack stalls** and from the **Bónus** and **Fk** supermarkets. **Gaardsbakari** (☎ 371175; ☎ 6am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat, 7am-9am Sun) bakes and delivers fresh bread and pastries. Beers are sold from **Restorff's Brewery Warehouse** (☎ 10am-noon & 2pm-5.30pm Mon-Fri).

DRINKING

Kgl Handil Pub (☎ 371007; beers Dkr25; ☎ 9am-11pm with short rest breaks) Complete with sepia photos, shop-drawers, a 19th-century of-ficeroom and the original 1882 cash register, this beautifully restored wooden shophouse is the Faroes' most atmospheric café pub: a must-see even if you're not thirsty.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tvoroyri's heliport is at Froðba. Twice-weekly (thrice-weekly in mid-summer) helicopters buzz to/from Tórshavn (Dkr215, 30 minutes) via Skúvoy and Stóra Dimun. On Wednesday you can arrive from Mykines (Dkr360, two hours) or

continue to Klaksvík (Dkr360, 40 minutes) and Fugloy (Dkr360, one hour); on Friday arrive from Klaksvík/Fugloy or continue to Vágur/Mykines.

The impressively comfortable Smyril car-ferry sails between Tórshavn and Drelnes port twice a day (adult/student/child/pensioner/car Dkr75/60/35/35/55, two hours) with linking bus services connecting to central Tvoroyri and other Suðuroy villages.

Mogens Petersen (☎ 371466; Shell Petrol Station, Trongisvágur; ☎ 7.30am-11pm) rents aging Mazdas (Dkr350 per day). That's a great deal but as they have only two available, most tourists bring vehicles on the car-ferry from Tórshavn.

Northern Suðuroy

An attractive road passing Suðuroy's last coal mine (a hand-dug tunnel that is not an industrial eyesore) descends to unexpectedly sandy beach-bays at **Hvalba** and **Sandvík**. Both villages frame views of the craggy and uninhabited island of **Litla Dímun**. However, the greatest attraction of a trip is to continue 3km west of Sandvík on a gated, partly unpaved farm track to the bird-cliffs of **Glyvraberg**. Hike carefully here as the grassy clifftops are sliced almost invisibly by perilously vertical chasms. One such sphincter-tightening deep chasm is crossed by wobbly hidden plank-bridge. Assuming no *Monty Python* character asks your favourite colour (or the flight speed details for unladen swallows) you can cross for magnificent views north to the spiky rock-stack island of Ásmundarstakkur. On a clear day, panoramas beyond stretch as far field as Mykines.

Tvoroyri to Hvalba buses (up to five daily) only continue to Sandvík (Dkr30, 30 minutes) by advance reservation. Call ☎ 222690 to book a trip.

Fámjin

A wonderfully photogenic 9km switchback road leads from Øravík to Fámjin. Colourful if architecturally ordinary houses are dotted about an emerald-green bowl-valley dripping with waterfalls and backed by an impressive, layered amphitheatre with echoes of the Grand Canyon. Fámjin's 1876 **church** (key-holder ☎ 371921; donation appropriate) displays the original Mikkelsen **Merkið flag**

(see opposite for more information). The 1880 **Krambúðin á Brúgvoyri** (☎ 3pm-10pm Jun-Sep) is a quaint if slightly over-restored harbour-front shop-café catering to local tourists who drive in to watch Fámjin's magical sunsets.

Bus 703 (Dkr20, 30 minutes) runs up to four times daily from Tvoroyri. The inspiring **hike** from westernmost Tvoroyri (2½ hours) is cairn-marked but only on the upper sections. Another trail continues south with some steep sections to Ryskivatn lake whence a driveable track links on to Vágur.

Southern Suðuroy

Soon to be bypassed by a new tunnel, the old coast road between Øravík and Hov is an inspiring cliff-top drive. The overgrown village of **Porkeri** has an attractive turf-roofed **church** dating from 1847. Fjord-side **Vágur** is Suðuroy's lacklustre second city. There's a small **museum** (☎ 374342; ☎ by appt), **tourist office** (☎ 374342; infovag@post.olivant.fo; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) and a **wool workshop** (Ullvirkið; ☎ 374006). Although none of these attractions warrants a lengthy stop, if you're stuck **Hotel Bakkin** (☎ 373961; Rte 20; s/d 450/550, with private bathroom Dkr600/680) has some surprisingly acceptable rooms which are hidden behind a smoke-choked local workers' bar. Simple single room No 4 has a fjord-view balcony. Hidden in a 1930s Vágur town-house 700m east, **Pizza Kokkurin** (Rte 20; ☎ 5pm-10pm) bakes the Faroes' best takeaway pizza. The Vágur area's main attraction is the fine **Kamarið Cliff** viewpoint, 3km southwest which is accessed by a narrow asphalt lane. Even finer is the dizzying **Beinisvørð Cliff** plunging 469m into the sea just 20m from a bend in the old mountain route to Sumba (just before the conspicuous communications mast). **Cap Akraberg**, the Faroes' southernmost point, has some puffin burrows and a much-photographed lighthouse but overall it's a disappointing anticlimax dominated by two vast TV masts.

Visiting southern Suðuroy is best by car. Some buses on the Tvoroyri-Vágur route (Dkr40, 50 minutes, up to six daily) will continue to Sumba (twice on weekdays or by advance request on ☎ 228588) but they bypass the main viewpoints by several kilometres.

FAROE ISLANDS DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is relatively limited so it's worth prebooking. Hotels including the self-consciously alcohol-free so-called seamen's homes (*Sjómansheimið*) typically cost from Dkr600/800 per ensuite single/double. Hotels are functionally well equipped rather than inspiring. Cheaper guesthouses (*gistingarhús*) are often better value and typically offer a communal kitchen. However, most have shared bathroom facilities and as guesthouses are rarely staffed, you'll generally need to prearrange arrival times. Youth hostels (*vallaraheim*) charge Dkr120 to Dkr200 for dormitory beds. This assumes you have a sleeping bag without which there's an additional Dkr50 to Dkr65 bed-linen charge. Six hostels affiliated to the **Danish Youth Hostels Association** (www.farhostel.fo) offer Dkr20 discounts for Hostelling International members.

Tourist offices have useful lists of family B&B options (singles/doubles cost from Dkr350/450) and self-catering house or apartment rentals (2-bed flats from Dkr500) though most rental bookings are handled through Tórshavn-based agencies **Tora Tourist Traffic** (☎ 315505; www.tora.fo) and **GreenGate Incoming** (Map p122; ☎ 320520; www.greengate.fo; Undir Bryggjubakka 3).

Camping (typically Dkr60 per person) is only permitted at recognised camping grounds often attached to youth hostels. The inevitably wet and windy weather can make camping challenging.

ACTIVITIES

Bird-watching (see p117) and **hiking** are the greatest attractions of the Faroe Islands. Excellent maps are sold and the tourist board publishes brochures describing key trekking routes. All land is technically private but you're free to use well-established footpaths that are marked (albeit often very indistinctly) by series of ancient cairns. It's extremely bad form not to close gates. Crossing meadows randomly can disturb bird colonies and might result in stuka-attacks from protective skuas. Chasms and

cliffedges are predictably treacherous in fog. Don't forget those waterproofs.

Boat cruises are a wonderful way to see the islands' stunning bird cliffs and remarkable needle-shaped rocky islets known as stacks. Many also offer **fishing** trips. The national tourist board produce a detailed pamphlet explaining where licences are necessary (per day/season Dkr300/500), ideal fishing spots and suggested equipment. If bringing your own fishing tackle it should be disinfected (and certified) before leaving home or on arrival at the airport or harbour (costs Dkr300). For a multilingual fish-name listing see www.frs.fo/fish.asp?LangId=0.

Scuba diving is possible with **Faroedive** (☎ 458939, 218929; www.faroedive.fo) based in Klaksvík.

BOOKS

Liv Kjørsvik Schei's photo-rich book *The Faroe Isles* offers plenty of cultural background. Bradt's *Faroe Islands* travel guide is extremely comprehensive though its town maps are laced with errors. *Tale of Throvd of Gate* is F York Powell's translation of the classic Icelandic Norse narrative, Faer-eynga Saga.

BUSINESS HOURS

Shops generally open from 9.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, later on Thursday and 9am to noon (sometimes 2pm) on Saturday. Banks work from 9.30am to 4pm, opening until 6pm on Thursdays.

Eateries typically open around noon and close between 10pm and midnight, though several open evenings only. Pubs and cafés often stay open till 3am at weekends.

CHILDREN

Tórshavn occasionally offers music and theatre shows for kids (ask at the tourist office). Under-14s get bus- and ferry-discounts of up to 50% and free entry to many museums.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

The Faroes are represented abroad by Danish embassies (www.um.dk/en/menu/AboutUs/Organisation/MissionsAbroad) who issue all visas. There are Faroese representative offices in the **UK** (☎ +44-20 7333 6707; www.faroes.org.uk) and **Belgium** (☎ +32-2233 0855; www.faroes.be)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Events are listed on www.kunning.fo.

Traditional summer festivals

Many of these colourful events feature rowing competitions, processions in traditional dress, singing and chain dancing:

Jóansøka Located on Suðuroy the weekend following midsummer.

Varmakelda Bonfire and hot-spring fun at Fuglafjørður on Eysturoy on the first weekend of July.

Vestanstevna On Vágur in early July.

Ólavsøka Largest and most exciting traditional festival, celebrating the 10th century Norwegian king Olav the Holy, who spread Christian faith on the isles held on 28-29 July.

Ovastevnu On Nólsoy in mid-August.

Music Festivals

Asfalt Five stages showcase local bands in central Tórshavn in early July.

G!Festival (www.gfestival.com) The Islands' original and biggest music festival held in mid-July features local and international artists on Syðrugøta beach in Gøta.

Summer Festivalur (www.summarfestivalur.fo) At Klaksvík in early August.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

There are no dedicated gay bars or clubs on the Faroe Islands and gay couples are advised to be discreet to avoid upsetting more traditional, religious locals.

HOLIDAYS

Holidays really are holidays in the Faroes: most transport stops running and everything closes down.

New Year's Day (1 January)

Easter (Maundy Thursday to Easter Monday, March/April)

Flag Day (25 April)

Labour Day (1 May)

Common Prayers Day (April/May)

Ascension Day (May/Jun)

Whit Sunday, Whit Monday (May/Jun)

Constitution Day (5 Jun)

Ólavsøka (Faroese National Days & Festival; 28 & 29 Jul)

Christmas Eve (24 December) Some shops open until noon.

Christmas Day (25 December)

Boxing Day (26 December)

New Year's Eve (31 December)

INTERNET ACCESS

There are no internet cafés but major libraries have web-connection offering free time slots that you can book. Beware that some servers illogically treat any e-mail with the

Faroes'.fo ending as spam, so check your 'bulk' inbox.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Faro Islands Tourist Guide (www.faroeislands.com) General information.

Faroislands.dk (www.faroislands.dk) Photos and details of every village.

Framtak (www.framtak.com) Fun mixture including online book sales.

National Tourist Board (www.visit-faroeislands.com) Very extensive tourist information.

Post Office Philatelic Service (www.faroestamps.fo) Surprisingly detailed thematic site including traditional recipes and bird identification photos.

Prime Minister's Office (www.tinganes.fo) Links to all government sites.

MAPS

Tourist offices distribute a free 1:200,000 scale *Faro Islands Map* that includes basic street plans of larger settlements. Bookshops sell 1:20,000 maps (Dkr90), ideal for hikers, and a comprehensive atlas-booklet of 1:100,000 scale maps (Dkr125), perfect for driving tours.

MONEY

Faroese króna are worth exactly the same as Danish krone (Dkr) and both can be used interchangeably. Technically the same is true throughout the Kingdom of Denmark. However in mainland Denmark some shops refuse Faroese money so play safe and swap any remaining Faroese cash to Danish before departure.

Bigger branches of Føroya Banki and Føroya Sparikassi change travellers cheques and major foreign currencies and have multi-card **ATMs** (☎ 6am-midnight). Outside banking hours, hotels and tourist information offices usually exchange money, albeit at poor rates.

Foreigners spending over Dkr300 in shops marked 'Tax-free' can claim back the 25% VAT: fill in a Tax Refund Cheque in the shop and get it stamped by the sales clerk. On departure from the Faroes be prepared to show your purchases to customs who should re-stamp the cheque. Collect your

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

For police, fire or ambulance call ☎ 112.

refund at the airport's Flogfelag Føroya desk or on board the Norröna ferry.

Tipping isn't customary.

Currency

One króna is equal to 100 oyru (spelt krone, øre in Danish). Notes come in Danish and Faroese designs with denominations of Dkr50, Dkr100, Dkr200, Dkr500 and Dkr1000. Coins are in Danish designs only: Dkr0.25 and Dkr0.50, Dkr1, Dkr2, Dkr5, Dkr10 and Dkr20.

POST

Tórshavn's **central post office** (FR-100 Tórshavn, Faroe Islands; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) offers reliable poste restante. Village post offices often open much shorter hours. By economy/priority airmail postcards or letters up to 20g cost Dkr7/7.50 to Europe and Dkr9/10 to the rest of the world. Postal rates are fully listed on www.stamps.fo

TELEPHONE

Post offices, some guesthouses and certain restaurants have card phones charging a Dkr0.40 connection charge plus Dkr0.32/0.22 per minute peak/off-peak for local calls. Peak hours are 8am to 6pm Monday to Saturday. Phonecards are sold in post offices and telecom shops. There are no area codes. Dial ☎ 118for directory inquiries.

Mobile phones use the standard European GSM system (incompatible with most North American hand-phones). Coverage is almost complete. SIM-cards available, from Telebúðin telecom shops in major towns cost Dkr199 including Dkr100 call credit with local calls costing Dkr3/2 per minute peak/off-peak. SMS text-messages cost Dkr0.75. Call ☎ 801020 to check your call credit.

TIME

The local time zone (GMT/UTC in winter) is the same as London, five hours ahead of New York and 11 hours behind Sydney.

TOURIST INFORMATION

There are friendly tourist offices (*kunning-arstovan*) in each main town. They can help you find accommodation and tours and dole out free copies of the highly recommended 106-page *Tourist Guide Faroe Islands* plus a

very creditable 1:200,000 scale country map produced by the **National Tourist Board** (www.tourist.fo; Undir Bryggjubakka 17, Tórshavn).

TOURS

Tours and bookings are available through local tourist offices and from the following Tórshavn-based organisations:

GreenGate Incoming (☎ 320520; www.greengate.fo; Undir Bryggjubakka 3) Fishing, diving, boat tours and accommodation.

MB Tours (Map p122; ☎ 322121; mb-tours@mb-tours.com; Bryggjubakki 2, Tórshavn) Bus tours.

Smyril Line (Map p122; ☎ 345900; www.smyril-line.fo; J Broncksgøta 37, Tórshavn) Schooner cruises, coach and boat excursions.

Tora Tourist Traffic (☎ 315505; www.tora.fo) Coach tours and accommodation.

VISAS

Citizens of the EU, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand need only a valid passport to visit the Faroes for up to three months. Citizens of Nordic countries need only a valid identity card. Those requiring a visa for the Faroes (including South Africans) must have one that specifically identifies the Faroes: ie NOT a standard Danish or Schengen visa. Apply to the Danish embassy in your country of residence.

TRANSPORT IN THE FAROE ISLANDS

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The Faroe Islands' only airport is near Sørvágur on **Vágur** (code FAE; ☎ 354400; www.floghavn.fo), see p126.

AIRLINES FLYING TO AND FROM FAROE ISLANDS

Air Iceland (airline code NY; ☎ 341000; www.airiceland.is)

Atlantic Airways (airline code RC; ☎ 341060; www.atlanticairways.fo)

FaroeJet (airline code F6; ☎ 353333; www.faroejet.fo)

Atlantic Airlines, the 'national' airline, flies in twice weekly from London Stansted (from £192 return), some flights stopping en route in Aberdeen or the Shetland Islands. They also serve the Danish cities of Copenhagen

(from Dkr2060 return, at least daily), Aalborg (weekly) and Billund (three weekly) plus Oslo and Stavanger in Norway (both twice weekly in summer). Both Atlantic Airways and Air Iceland have several weekly summer flights to Reykjavík (not Keflavík). FaroeJet flies Vágur to Copenhagen from Dkr995 one way. Quoted fares are for the cheapest, advanced-booking e-tickets including tax.

Sea

Many tourists visit the Faroes during a two-day 'forced' stopover when the weekly car-ferry **Norröna** (www.smyril-line.com) arrives in Tórshavn from Hanstholm (Denmark) then makes side trips to Bergen (Norway) and Lerwick (Shetland Islands) before continuing to Seyðisfjörður (Iceland). Schedules, fares and the order of stops vary seasonally, see p501.

GETTING AROUND

The national transport company **Strandfaraskip Landsins** (☎ 343030; www.ssl.fo in Faroese) publishes a complete timetable (*Ferðavættan*, Dkr10) of all ferry, bus and helicopter services available from tourist offices and Tórshavn's Farstøðin transport terminal. The same outlets sell SL Visitor Travelcards giving unlimited travel on all buses and inter-island ferries (Dkr600/900 for four/seven days). Certain services offer small discounts to students or for 10-trip multitickets.

Note that 'x' on a timetable means 'weekdays'.

Air

At only Dkr85 to Dkr360 per journey, scenic rides in a 9-seater helicopter (*tyrlan*) are the Faroes' greatest travel-bargain. Book early by phoning **Atlantic Airways** (☎ 341060; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) then pay (cash only) on departure. Beware that bad weather can cause cancellations and stops are skipped when nobody has pre-booked.

On each operation day (three weekly, or four in mid-summer) helicopters depart from Vágur airport, hopping in quick succession to all other heliports (except on Sunday when Frøðba is missed out). The order of stops varies. Most days choppers start with a return hop to Mykines then proceed to Koltur and Tórshavn. Then they do two loops, southern (Skúvoy-Stóra

Dimun-Frøðba) and northern (Klaksvík-Svínoy-Kirkja-Hattarvík-Klaksvík) before returning from Tórshavn to Vágur. On Wednesday and Sunday the southern loop is first but on Sunday there's no visit to Frøðba. On Fridays the northern loop is first and the day finishes with an extra Mykines return. On midsummer Mondays an extra service runs similar to the Friday route but without the initial trip to Mykines.

Bicycle

Surfaced roads, minimal traffic, light summer nights and stunning scenery all make riding a bicycle (*súkkkur*) a tempting proposition. However steep hills, wind, rain and fog argue against it. Road tunnels are cyclists' greatest hazard. Many are freakily dark, others potentially life-threatening due to carbon-monoxide build-up – best avoided.

Good front and rear lighting, extra reflectors, wind- and waterproof-clothing are essential. If things get rough you can pop your bike on certain buses for Dkr30. Mountain bikes can be hired in Klaksvík.

Boat

Apart from Tóshavn-Suðuroy (adult/student/pensioner/car Dkr 75/35/35/55) all domestic vehicle ferries cost adult/student/pensioner/car Dkr35/15/15/55. They run even in fairly poor weather. The passenger-only boats especially to Fugloy via Svínoy (adult/student/pensioner Dkr35/15/15) and to Mykines (adult/student/pensioner Dkr60/30/30, from May to August) are much more weather dependent. Pay on the boat or connecting bus.

Bus

Bygdaleiðir long-distance bus timetables are sensibly coordinated with ferry services, and combined bus-ferry tickets can be purchased once aboard. Read timetable footnotes very carefully: although buses serve virtually every hamlet, rural services might run only on summer weekdays and even then only if you've pre-booked. If you're the only pre-booked passenger you might find that your 'bus' is actually a taxi (albeit charging standard bus-fares).

Car & Motorcycle

On the bigger islands, driving allows you to see vastly more of the Faroes' appealingly remote villages and valleys in a short time.

DRIVING LICENCE

You can drive in the Faroe Islands with a valid driving licence from EU countries, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

HIRE

Small hire-cars typically start at Dkr500/2500 per day/week including partial insurance. The minimum age is 20 and you must have held a driving licence for at least one year. Add Dkr150 for airport pick-ups (Dkr800 with the rental company SLP!)

Main Tórshavn rental companies:

Avis Føroyar (☎ 313535, outside office hr 217535; www.avis.fo; Staravegur 1-3, ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Only 100km per day free mileage.

Bilútleigan (☎ 317865, http://heima.olivant.fo/~current/) Car delivered to you within Tórshavn.

Flogfelag Føroyar (Map p122; ☎ 340000; www.ff.fo; Hoydalsvegur 17) Hertz agents. Prices rise in summer. Unlimited mileage.

SLP (☎ 357300; www.ognir.fo; Á Hjalla; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Reasonable deals for weekly rentals but inconveniently located, 5km from Tórshavn.

ROAD RULES & HAZARDS

Driving is relatively easy: road layout is simple, traffic is thin and drivers are relatively considerate. The Vágur-Streymoy and Eysturoy-Borðoy undersea toll-tunnels cost Dkr170 return for small vehicles, paid on a video-surveyed honesty system at designated petrol stations. Driving is on the right-hand side, front and rear seat-belt use is compulsory, and dipped headlights must be kept on at all times. Beware of sheep leaping onto the road; if you hit one, you must call the **police** (☎ 311448) and pay damages. Don't take the sheep-carcass home: by a never-cancelled medieval law, sheep-theft is still technically punishable by death!

Speed limits are 80km/h on open highways, 50km/h through villages. Traffic fines are severe and you can lose your licence on the spot for driving over 110km/h or for exceeding the blood alcohol limit (0.05%).

One-lane tunnels have passing bays (marked 'M') every few hundred metres.

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