

RESERVATION FOR JANUARY

Uncle John's Pancake House, Friday, January 27, 2013.

Please call or email our Treasurer, Kris Johnson, to let her know that you are coming to the meeting. See details on front page.

Genetics

Swedes have a similar genetic make up to the Danes and the Brits, although variations between those living in the south and the north of the country are greater than once thought. An extensive genetic survey in Sweden and Finland shows clear variations between different parts of the county and

indicates that Swedes are genetically closer to Brits and Danes than to Finns.

Researchers are surprised by the significant differences between Swedes and Finns in light of the fact that Finland was a part of Sweden for seven centuries.

Increase in Respiratory Symptoms After Volcanic Eruption

People living near the glacier-covered volcano Eyjafjallajökull are experiencing higher levels of respiratory ailments since it erupted in 2010, according to a new study conducted by the University of Iceland. The study compared the respiratory health of about 1100 people who lived near the volcano when it erupted to around 500 living

in North Iceland, where the eruption had little or no effect.

The symptoms experienced by those living close to the volcano include severe cough, phlegm, a runny nose and irritated eyes. The study found that the closer the individual lives to the volcano, the more severe the symptoms.

Norwegian Army Allows Religious Headgear

The Norwegian defense ministry has given the all-clear for uniformed soldiers to wear religious headgear such as turbans, hijabs and kippahs. Norway has allowed the wearing of religious symbols, such as armbands and crosses, by its military since the 1980s, but the new rules establish when and how they can be used, including the banning of impractical clothing during

military action. The regulations also stipulate that headscarves and skullcaps be of a single color and without ornaments.

Among those who objected to the move was Jan-Arild Ellingsen of the right-wing populist Progress Party, saying "The armed forces should be kept independent of ethnic and religious affiliations."

Danes Fear Islam

According to a survey by the Rambøll Institute, a narrow majority of Danes regard Islam as an obstacle for social cohesion. At the same time, one in two Danes believe that immigration is positive for Danish society. As of July 2012, nearly 334,000 residents of

Denmark (about 6% of the population) were foreigners; about half of this came from nonwestern countries. With some 200,000 followers, Islam is the second largest religion after the Evangelical Lutheran church.



Mad tourist rush to see Sweden's northern lights

With northern lights viewing hitting its prime, tourists are flocking to Sweden's far north to catch a glimpse of night skies awash in dazzling blues, greens, and violets. Winter tourism in northern Sweden has exploded in the last few years, especially at the STF Mountain Station and hostel in Abisko, located nearly 200 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. After a record northern lights viewing season last year, officials say bookings for this season are already up 130 percent. For the first time ever, tourists are willing to brave the area's bone-chilling winter temperatures are set to outnumber those who come during the balmy white nights of summer.

Image: Johannes Rüttermans

—from www.thelocal.se 28 Nov 2012



A statue of Jón Sigurðsson in Reykjavík.
Photo by Páll Stefánsson.

News from Iceland

Sovereignty Day Celebrated

December 1st was Iceland's Sovereignty Day, and students of the University of Iceland celebrated the day with a special program, as they have since 1922. The program began with a sermon in the university's chapel, followed by laying a wreath of flowers on the grave of Iceland's independence hero, Jón Sigurðsson, in the Hólavallakirkjugarður cemetery.

Day of Icelandic Music Celebrated

Dec. 1 was also the Day of Icelandic Music, and as in previous years, the country's radio stations played three Icelandic songs simultaneously at 11:15 am and the entire nation was urged to sing along.

The three songs were:

'Jólakötturinn' ('Christmas Cat') by Ingibjörg Porbergs

'Spáðu í mig' ('Check Me Out') by Megas

'Á Sprengisandi' ('At Sprengisandur') by Sigvaldi Kaldalóns with lyrics by Grímur Thomsen.

—from www.icelandreview.com

Iceland President Re-elected

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson was re-elected for a fifth term as the President of Iceland, at the end of June. The vote makes him the longest-serving president in the country.

Heavily criticized after Iceland's financial crisis for cheerleading for the overheated business sector, Grímsson earned back support and became a symbol of defiance after insisting the state should not foot the bill for the failed online bank Icesave.

—Scandinavian Press, Fall 2012