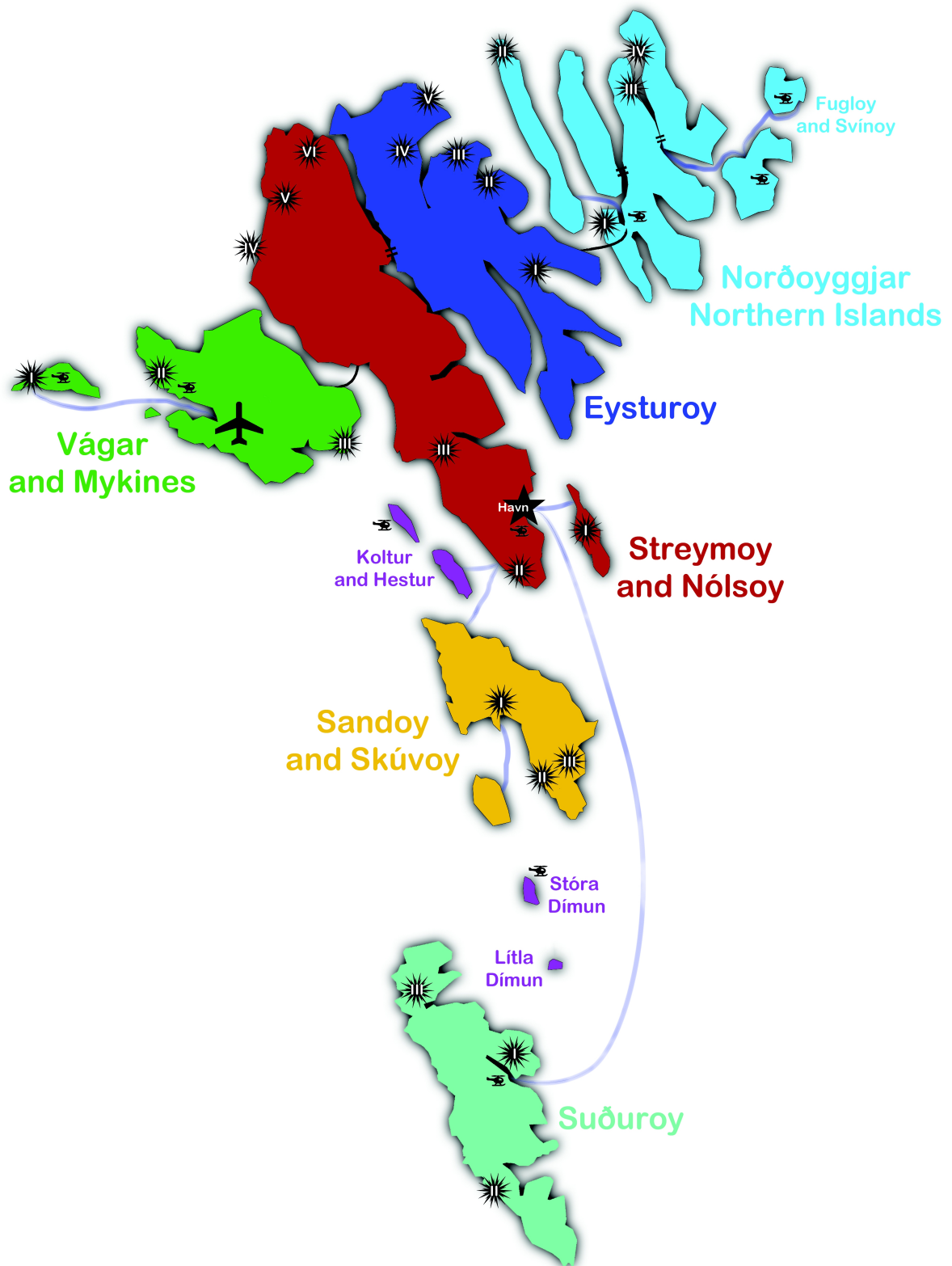


A Visitor's Guide to the Faroe Islands



There are 18 islands in the Faroese archipelago, all but one inhabited. Through a series of causeways and undersea tunnels, you can drive freely between six of the islands: Vágur, Streymoy, Eysturoy, and Borðoy, Kunoy, and Viðoy (called the Norðoyggjar/Northern Islands). The other islands are connected via the ferry and helicopter lines of the Faroese public transportation network as well as private and tourist watercraft. Renting a car allow you to travel freely, but there are also bus connections to most villages. Everything is possible as a day trip from Tórshavn, but staying on different islands will cut costs and make for a more relaxing and varied experience.

Vágur and Mykines – The Faroese airport is located on Vágur, which is also known for several beautiful villages and is the point of departure for Mykines – the puffin paradise many consider to be the most beautiful of all the Faroes. **I** – Mykines, **II** – Gásadalur and Bøur, **III** – Witch's Finger

Streymoy and Nólsoy – Streymoy is home to the Faroese capital city, Tórshavn (or Havn), as well as many other spectacular natural and historic sites, including the Vestmanna bird cliffs and the abandoned village of Saksun, whose grass-roofed houses stand above a mountain-ringed lagoon. A short boat ride out of the capital takes you to the tiny, peaceful island of Nólsoy. **I** – Nólsoy, **II** – Kirkjubøur, **III** – Island Road, **IV** – Vestmanna Bird Cliffs, **V** – Saksun, **VI** – Tjørnuvík

Eysturoy – Second only to Streymoy in size and population, Eysturoy is crowded by 66 mountain peaks and no fewer than 32 villages, including the idyllic Gjógv with its unbelievable natural harbor, tiny colorful Elduvík, Gøta – which hosts the annual G! Music festival in its beautiful fjord – and Funningur, the oldest village in the Faroes, sitting beneath the highest mountain, Slættaratindur. **I** – Gøta, **II** – Oyndarfjørður, **III** – Elduvík, **IV** – Funningur, **V** – Gjógv

Norðoyggjar (Northern Islands)– A little colder and rougher than the others, the Northern Islands are filled with their own kind of beauty. The second largest town in the Faroes, Klaksvík, is your gateway to the regions unique landscapes and villages. Fugloy and Svínoy, the remote islands, are home to some of the loneliest villages in the Faroes. Kalsoy, a spectacular island shaped like a flute, with sheer mountains on one side and valleys opening gently on the other, most of them embracing a small village. The lighthouse at the end of Kalsoy may be the most beautiful view in the Faroes. **I** – Klaksvík, **II** – Kallurin on Kalsoy, **III** – Múli on Borðoy, **IV** – Viðareiði on Viðoy

Sandoy and Skúvoy – Sandoy, rarely visited by tourists, is perhaps the most peaceful of the major islands. It boasts the largest beach in the Faroes as well as charming pastoral landscapes and villages. From here, you can take a ferry to the even more rarely visited Skúvoy, where you'll find a tiny well-kept village and the grave of the Viking hero Sigmundur. **I** – Sandur beach and village, **II** – Skarvanes, **III** – Dalur

Small Southern Isles --- Koltur (Colt) and Hestur (Horse) to the north and Stóra and Lítla (big and little) Dímun to the south are the smallest islands in the Faroes. Hestur is home to a tiny village, Koltur and Stóra Dímun are farmed by a single family each, and Lítla Dímun is uninhabited. Most enjoy these islands' spectacular shapes from a distance, but visits can be arranged, especially to Koltur's preserved medieval village and the sea-caves of Hestur, where haunting summer concerts are held.

Suðuroy – Far removed from the other islands, Suðuroy has a sizeable population of 5,000, milder weather than most of the other islands, and spectacular sea-cliffs and skerries. If you only leave the mainland once, it should be for Suðuroy; the ferry from Tórshavn will also take you past most of the other southern islands in a stunning parade. **I** – Tvøroyri, **II** – Eggjarnar, **III** – Hvalba and Sandvík.



Sheep run beside the fjord of Funningur, with Slættaratindur rising above.

Practical Matters

When to go: July and August are the traditional tourism season in the Faroes, and most of the biggest events are held in July, but already in June the days are long, the grass is green and most of the tourism facilities are open for business. Summer weather can range from 70° and sunny to a rainy, windy 45°, so be sure to pack accordingly. The long off-season has its own charms, such as the northern lights and beautiful snow, but with short daylight hours and even more uncertain weather, it's not for everyone.

In addition to the many local festivals and music events, three big events on the Faroese summer calendar are Tórshavn Culture Night (first Friday in June), the G! Music Festival (mid-July), and the national holiday, Ólavsøka (July 27th-29th).

How to get there: By air, your only option is the Faroes' own Atlantic Airways, which has a surprising variety of regular connections with Europe – look at Copenhagen, Reykjavik, London, or Bergen, Norway. It's safest to plan to spend a few days in Europe at the end of a trip in case of weather delays getting off the islands. For longer trips, visitors can also come by ferry, allowing them to bring vehicles along from Iceland or Denmark – but this takes several days and is usually not practical for Americans.

Where to stay: Anything in the Faroes is possible as a driving day-trip from Tórshavn. However, if you have the time and inclination, it's a good idea to move around so you can slow your pace and try out the accommodations available in even some of the most remote villages and islands – the tourism department can direct you to hotels, guesthouses, home-stays and short-term rental possibilities. Many villages also offer reasonably priced camping facilities, with showers and spaces for tents and RVs.

Getting around: Renting a car is ideal, with well maintained roads and gas stations and public bathrooms in most villages. Just watch out for sheep! With enough patience, most villages can also be reached by bus. Because many of the small museums and hotels have limited space and hours, a good first stop would be the tourist information office to plan your general itinerary, and then go exploring.

7-Day Sample Itineraries (Nature – Culture – Best of Both)

Seven days on the islands will give you a nice sample of their delights, and is the minimum time I recommend. If you can take two weeks, you will have much more time to experience all the best the islands have to offer – with uncertain weather that can bring both miracles and frustration, and eighteen islands each offering their own surprises and wonders. On all of these itineraries, you should be able to work in the Vágur attractions on your way to or from the airport.



The view from Kallurin on Kalsoy.

For sea-cliffs, fjords and spectacular views... this itinerary takes you to the most spectacular landscapes in the Faroes, excellent for nature-lovers and hikers. You should make getting on boats and helicopters a top priority – although the Faroes are gorgeous from any angle, it's much more of an adventure to fly low over the mountains or take a boat through little sea-caves and under waterfalls.

- 1.) Even nature lovers should spend enough time in the capital, *Tórshavn*, to get their bearings, do their shopping and taste Faroese haute cuisine, with ingredients straight from the surrounding ocean and fields. Ferry to nearby *Nólsoy* for idyllic landscapes and the world's largest storm petrel colony.
- 2.) Drive north and take the ferry from *Klaksvík* to the island of ***Kalsoy***, called 'the flute' for its strange shape: sheer cliffs on one side and broad valleys on the other. A road leads through eight tunnels all the way to the village of *Trøllanes* – and from there you can hike up to the remote lighthouse at ***Kallurin***.
- 3.) Also in the northern islands is *Enniberg*, the highest sea cliff in Europe, and the remote islands of ***Fugloy*** and ***Svínoy***, which can be reached by equally scenic boat or helicopter services.
- 4.) ***Mykines*** is considered by most Faroese to be the gem of all the islands. It's remote, impossibly beautiful, and a paradise for birds – including tens of thousands of puffins. Getting on and off the island can be an adventure by itself – there are helicopter and boat services, but both depend on decent weather. If you bring a tent or can get a spot in one of the guesthouses, you can also spend a night here.
- 5.) Go out on the water to explore the bird-cliffs of ***Hestur*** or ***Vestmanna*** (the latter offers larger, more regular tours; either will impress). Not only are they swarming with a variety of seabirds, the soaring cliffs have been carved by the waves into a labyrinth of fantastic shapes, sea-caves and waterfalls. You'll have time before or after to make the fantastic drive to ***Saksun***, an abandoned village caught in time and place above a mirror-like lagoon ringed by mountains.
- 6.) Two hours south of the capital by spacious car ferry, life is slower and the sea is rougher. In addition

to strange basalt formations and lovely pastoral and village landscapes, **Suðuroy** offers view after view of enormous sea cliffs and hundreds of skerries.

7.) In **Eysturoy**, attached to the main island by bridge, you can in one day visit *Eiði* and the famous sea stacks *Risin and Kellingin*, marvel at the cliff-enclosed natural harbor in *Gjógv*, and climb the Faroes' highest peak, *Slættaratindur*, for commanding views of all 18 islands and maybe, far away, Iceland.



The pretty village of Gjógv on Eysturoy – a must on any itinerary.

For darling villages and delightful meals... this itinerary focuses on Faroese culture, from the islands' viking history, grass-roofed houses and ring-dances to trendy new restaurants and the thriving modern music scene. For travelers going this route, it's imperative to do some research and attend a few events – one of the many summer concerts, a Concierto Grotto, a Faroese culture night or a festival.

- 1.) Spend one day in *Tórshavn's* museums, shops, and restaurants, soaking up the capital's surprisingly metropolitan atmosphere. On weekend nights there are always parties and concerts to attend.
- 2.) Take a good hike or a short drive over to ancient *Kirkjubøur*, site of the Faroes' oldest church, the ruins of its medieval cathedral, and a house one family has called home for 17 generations. In the same day, you can ferry over to nearby **Nólsoy** to spend a few hours in its exceedingly picturesque village.
- 3.) Drive over the mountainous *Island Road* and towards *Saksun*, where an abandoned farm (now a museum) sits above a gorgeous lagoon. Then visit *Haldarsvík*, with its octagonal church, on your way to steep-walled *Tjørnuvík* and the beautiful views from the village's black sand beach.
- 4.) Tour **Eysturoy's** most beautiful villages – driving from *Eiði* to *Gjógv*, quite possibly the prettiest Faroese village with its stunning natural harbor, down to *Funningur* (the oldest Faroese settlement) and then to brightly-painted *Elduvík*, *Oyndarfjørður* (home of the rocking stones), and musical *Gøta*, which featured predominantly in the Faroe Islander's Saga and has several traditional turf-roof houses.
- 5.) Visit the **Northern Islands** according to your interests. There you'll find everything from the Faroes' second biggest town, *Klaksvík*, to the remotest villages on lonely **Fugloy**. *Viðareiði*, the northernmost village, has a fine traditional restaurant, and the abandoned village of *Múli* is also well worth a stop.
- 6.) Visit the Southern Islands according to your interests. Stay overnight with the families who live alone on *Koltur* or *Stóra Dímun*, or visit the quiet, sunny islands of **Sandoy** and **Skúvoy**.
- 7.) Ferry over to **Suðuroy**, the southernmost island, who's 5,000 people are considered rural even by Faroese standards. Suðuroy's villages are lovely, and it's coastline boasts endless towering sea-cliffs.



The town of Tvøroyri on Suðuroy, the southernmost island.

For the best of both worlds... The following packs all the highlights I wouldn't be able to pass up into seven days, and take you to about nine of the islands – you will see most of the others at least at a distance. With extra time, I'd take all of the following slower and add some time in the far northern and southern islands. Also, see if you can attend a *Concierto Grotto*, *Faroese Culture Night*, or festival during your stay so you can meet Faroese people and understand the islands from their perspective.

- 1.) Spend one day in *Tórshavn's* museums, shops, and restaurants, soaking up the capital's surprisingly metropolitan atmosphere. On weekend nights there are parties and concerts to attend. If you have the time, you can take the ferry over to nearby *Nólsoy* to spend a few hours in its brightly painted village.
- 2.) Take the ferry from the Faroes' second largest city, *Klaksvík*, to the island of *Kalsoy*, called the flute because of its unique shape – the mountains fall in sheer cliffs on one side, while on the other they open up into a half-dozen broad valleys, most with a tiny village inside. A road leads through these mountains in no fewer than 8 tunnels, and you can drive all the way to *Trøllanes* – and from there, hike to the lighthouse at *Kallurin* and feel like you've reached the end of the earth.
- 3.) In a very full day, hit all the main sights of *Streymoy*, the capital island, by starting in ancient *Kirkjubøur*, site of the oldest church and house in the Faroes, then taking the epic drive over the mountainous *Island Road* and over to *Saksun*, where an abandoned farm (now a museum) sits above a gorgeous lagoon. You might also be able to squeeze in the pretty villages of *Tjørnuvík* and *Haldarsvík*.
- 4.) Another busy day will take you to the most beautiful villages of *Eysturoy* – driving from *Eiði* to the charming village and breathtaking natural harbor of *Gjógv*, down to where *Funningur* sits beneath the mountain *Slættaratindur*, and around to pretty *Elduvík*, *Oyndarfjørður*, and musical, fjord-set *Gøta*.
- 5.) Take the huge car ferry two hours south to *Suðuroy*, the far-flung southernmost island, which is known for its special culture and nature alike. *Suðuroy's* many villages are lovely, and it's coastline is packed with astonishing cliffs and thousands of skerries. This is the island for epic views.
- 6.) You have two great options for experiencing the rough and wonderful Faroese coast and all its bird-life. Take a day trip to *Mykines*, a paradise for puffins and considered by the Faroese to be their most beautiful island. Or combine a boat tour of the bird cliffs of *Vestmanna* with an afternoon visiting the viking ruins at *Kvívík* and enjoying the beach and grass-roofed buildings at *Leynar*.
- 7.) One day left for wiggle room; with busy days and unpredictable weather, you'll probably need it!