

Walking Paths in Dimmuborgir

Shorter route: 500-600 m, a 10-15 minute walk.

Proceed down from the car park and turn to the right. The path takes you along the southern end of Dimmuborgir, down to the Borgarskora channel, following it for a short distance to the east. It then leads back towards the entrance.

Longer route: 600-80 m, a 15-20 minute walk.

As you go down from the entrance, turn to the left, in the direction of Hallarflöt, a small grassy area surrounded by pillars and rock formations dotted with lava tube remains, not far from the entrance. A marked path leads to it. From there you proceed to Smyrilsklettar, cross the Grjótagjá fissure and into the Gatklettsrjóður, towards the Gatklettur itself. Here there is a path leading across the clearing into the Borgarskora channel and on to the shorter route and back to the entrance.

1-2. The Shorter and Longer routes combined

Especially suitable for those with time on their hands. You first take the shorter route and then continue along the longer one to Gatklettur, returning to the entrance across Grjótagjá fissure past Smyrilsklettar and Hallarflöt.

Kirkjuhringur (The church route):

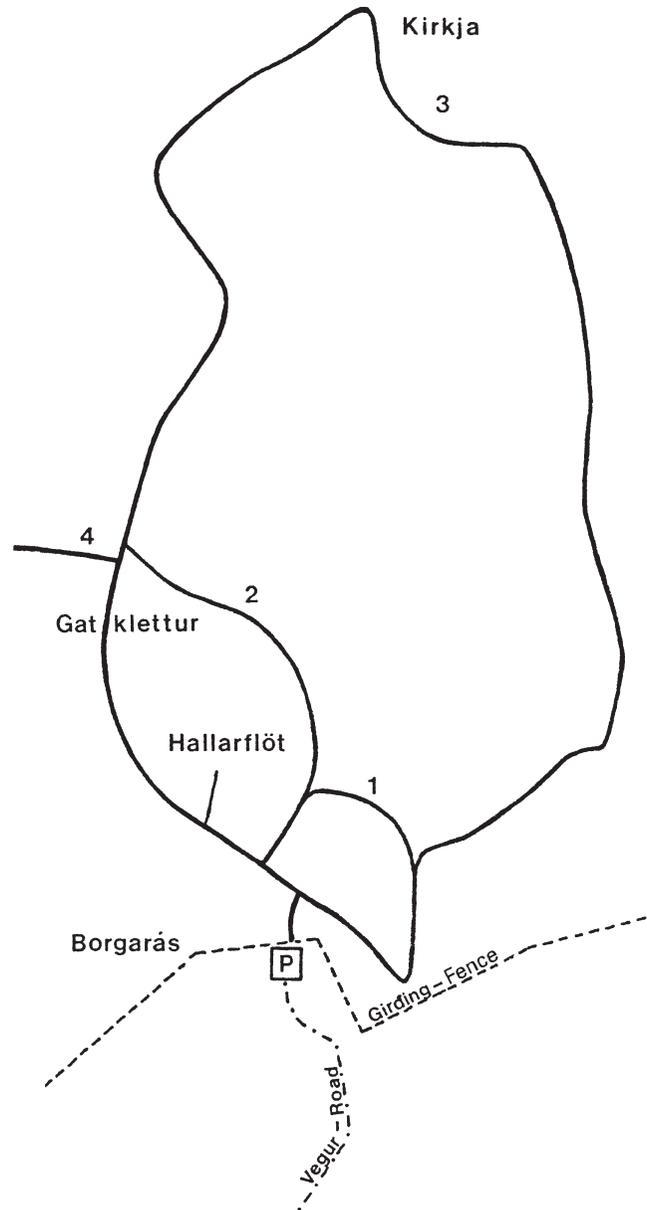
2400m - a 1-hour walk

this route roughly marks off the actual Dimmuborgir area. Start out by taking the same path as for the longer route towards Gatklettur, then proceed to the east inside the clearing until you come to the place known as the Church. From there the route continues to the west through Helgarjórður (named after a pioneer of the land reclamation work in the area). Crossing a lava obstacle, you come to Stjórarjórður and continue from there, over further obstacles and uneven rocks, across the Grjótagjá and along lava channels until you reach the shorter route path at Borgarskora. Turn to the left, down the channel, then up to its rim and follow it back to the entrance.

Dimmuborgir-Hverfjall-Grjótagjá-Stóragjá:

From Gatklettur there is an officially marked path around the Hverfjall mountain, an explosion crater, and Grjótagjá fissure, to the village of Reykjahlíð, a 2-3 hour walk ending at Stóragjá.

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DIMMUBORGIR IN MÝVATNSSVEIT



The Church

BÓSNAR, LEÓSS



*Environment and Food
Agency of Iceland*

*Soil Conservation
Service*

Skútustaðahreppur

UST 03/09

DIMMUBORGIR

(DARK FORTRESS)

Introduction

The Mývatn region lies on an active volcanic belt, extending from Öxarfjörður in the north to the Vatnajökull glacier in the south. A short distance away, to the north-east of Mývatn, is the most active volcanic area, Krafla, cut by fissure swarms extending in a north-south direction. Volcanic eruptions in the area occur every few hundred years, their source being the magma chamber underneath Krafla. From there, the molten magma bursts through the fissure swarms, and explodes to the surface.

The Þrengslaborgir and Lúdentsborgir pseudocrater clusters east of the lake are part of a 10-km long series of craters, which erupted over 2000 years ago. From these the younger Laxárhraun-lava flowed over the old Mývatn and down the Laxárdalur valley to the sea at Aðaldalur - a distance of 63 km. The younger Laxárhraun-lava, which is for the most part aa lava, covers an area of 220 km². One of its most distinguishing features is the pseudocraters which are to be found all over the lava field from Dimmuborgir down to Aðaldalur.

The formation of Dimmuborgir

To the east of Mývatn, in an area where the lava is extremely rough, stands the shield-like lava dome, Dimmuborgir, the remains of a lava pool formed when a lava flowed from Lúdentsborgir was dammed up as it flowed into the lake Mývatn.

Steam and gas eruptions formed a scoria capping on the lava as it built up; eventually the lava broke through the dam and cascaded into lava channels. One such formation is Borgarskora, south of the scoria dome, close to the main entrance. When the level of the lava pools subsided, a 10-20 metre depression, bordered by vertical lava walls, was formed in the most westward part of the dome. In this area there are lava channels with tubes and trails, covered with a glassy lava coating. There are also a number of ridges, cliffs and pillars reaching as high as the original lava surface. It is thought that these pillars were formed by steam issuing through vents in the lava pools when water was trapped underneath the lava. The rock in these pillars had solidified sufficiently as to remain standing even after the crust about them had subsided. A common sight are the vertical marks (slickensides) where the crust scratched the cliff wall and pillars when subsiding.

Also to be seen are horizontal streaks where the crust's subsidence was temporarily halted.

Preservation of Dimmuborgir

In the early forties Dimmuborgir was silting up with wind-blown sand. Some sections had already become totally submerged. To counteract this a conservation program was initiated. In 1942 the owners of the farm Geiteyjarströnd, on whose land the site is, handed over ownership to the Soil Conservation Service, and in the same year this area of 4,2 km² was fenced in. To begin with, stone barriers were erected and lymegrass was sown in the southern part of the area. Over the years the lymegrass has extended and effectively reduced the problem of silting; indeed, the area is now for the most part reclaimed. Birch trees are now commonplace, and have spread to such a degree that some even regard them as an encroachment.

Fit trees were planted in a number of places in 1944-46 but failed to thrive and some have been removed.

In 1974, laws relating to the conservation of the Mývatn and Laxá region were enacted. The laws apply to the whole of Skútustaðir district and a 200 m wide area on both sides of the river Laxá down to its mouth. The total area is some 4.400 km².

Dimmuborgir lies within this protected area. The soil conservation Service now has responsibility for the area together with the Environment and Food Agency of Iceland and the Skútustaðir local authorities.



Gatklettur

Dimmuborgir is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the Mývatn region, with over a 1000 visitors daily in the peak

summer period or a total of more than 50.000 visitors annually. This influx of visitors is just as serious a threat to the vegetation and lava formations as the earlier overgrazing and silting. A number of walking paths have been laid out, together with bridges and steps where needed. The paths take one around Dimmuborgir and provide an excellent view of all the main attractions. Bear in mind that Dimmuborgir area is one of the driest in Iceland.



Hallarflöt

The soil is particularly sensitive to wind erosion and rocks are brittle and fragile.

Please help us to protect Dimmuborgir, by complying with the following instructions:

Kepp to officially marked paths. This ensures not getting lost, vegetation is not at risk and unnecessary tracks are eliminated. If you do get lost, do not leave the fenced-in area. On the fence are arrows at short intervals pointing you in the direction of the entrance.

Do not climb the cliffs. The rock is soft and liable to break and vegetation is threatened.

Do not enter roped-in areas. These are marked off to protect especially sensitive vegetation and allow scarred areas to heal.

Put all litter into litter bins. They are to be found at the entrance and at Hallarflöt. Bear in mind that cigarette stubs are also litter.

There are no tourist facilities (toilets, etc.) in Dimmuborgir and tourists are asked to keep this in mind before visiting the area.

Enjoy the spectacular scenery of Dimmuborgir in a way that preserves it for later visitors.