



Reykjanes
UNESCO Global Geopark

Traditional Folktales and Local Legends

Connecting visitors to place through storytelling
and intangible cultural heritage

Thuridur Aradottir Braun, manager Visit Reykjanes Iceland



**11th International
Conference**
On UNESCO Global Geoparks

Where Geology Meets Mythology

Reykjanes UNESCO Global Geopark showcases a dramatic volcanic landscape shaped by the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Beyond its geological wonders lies a rich tapestry of intangible cultural heritage—folktales, legends, and community stories that have been passed down through generations.

This project aims to deepen visitor connections through storytelling while supporting sustainable local development by enriching geotourism's cultural dimension.

Project Goals

Cultural Connection

Deepen visitor engagement through storytelling linked to specific geosites

Heritage Preservation

Collect and curate folktales, legends, and community stories from the region

Sustainable Tourism

Enrich geotourism's cultural dimension while supporting local development



Three-Phase Approach

01

Collection

Gathering known and lesser-known stories from the region, including ghost tales, folklore, and narratives about local figures throughout the peninsula.

02

Presentation

Selecting stories related to existing tourist sites and integrating them into digital platforms, including Geopark and destination websites.

03

Translation

Translating selected narratives into English to make them accessible to international visitors and local residents of foreign origin.

Enhanced Visitor Experience



Emotional Connection

Stories provide an emotional layer to the landscape, allowing guests to engage more meaningfully with the area's heritage



Cultural Identity

Linking tales with specific geosites strengthens the cultural identity of the Geopark and creates authentic experiences



Historical Context

Folktales add historical and cultural context to geological formations, enriching interpretation

Exceeding Expectations

50

Stories Collected

Double the original target of 25 stories, providing rich material for future projects.

Working with local expert and storyteller Svanur Þorkelsson brought extensive knowledge of Reykjanes folklore, resulting in a collection far exceeding initial expectations.





Expert Collaboration

"With Svanur came extensive knowledge of stories and folktales from the Reykjanes Peninsula, and after collection concluded in late summer 2024, we have 50 articles/stories ready for translation and use in future projects."

The collaboration with Svanur Þorkelsson proved invaluable, bringing deep regional expertise and uncovering stories that might otherwise have been lost to time.

Stories Come Alive at Geosites



The Haunting Tale of Gunna

At Gunnuhver, visitors discover the ghostly legend behind this powerful geothermal area, where folklore meets geological wonder.



The Legend of Oddný and Brimketill

Ancient stories of this natural pool reveal how local legends have shaped the cultural identity of coastal communities.

Digital Integration Strategy



Location-Specific Stories

Stories linked directly to geosite information pages for immediate context.



Featured Blog Content

Special articles highlighting the most compelling narratives and their cultural significance.



Physical Signage

Selected stories featured on interpretive signs at key locations throughout the peninsula.

Moreover



Interpretive Materials

Stories will enhance future visitor guides and educational content



Educational Programs

Resource for schools and cultural education initiatives



Aligning with UNESCO Global Geoparks Goals



Promoting Local Culture

Showcasing intangible heritage alongside geological wonders



Community Engagement

Involving local communities in storytelling and heritage preservation



Sustainable Tourism

Encouraging authentic, place-based interpretation for responsible travel

Long-Term Impact and Future Vision

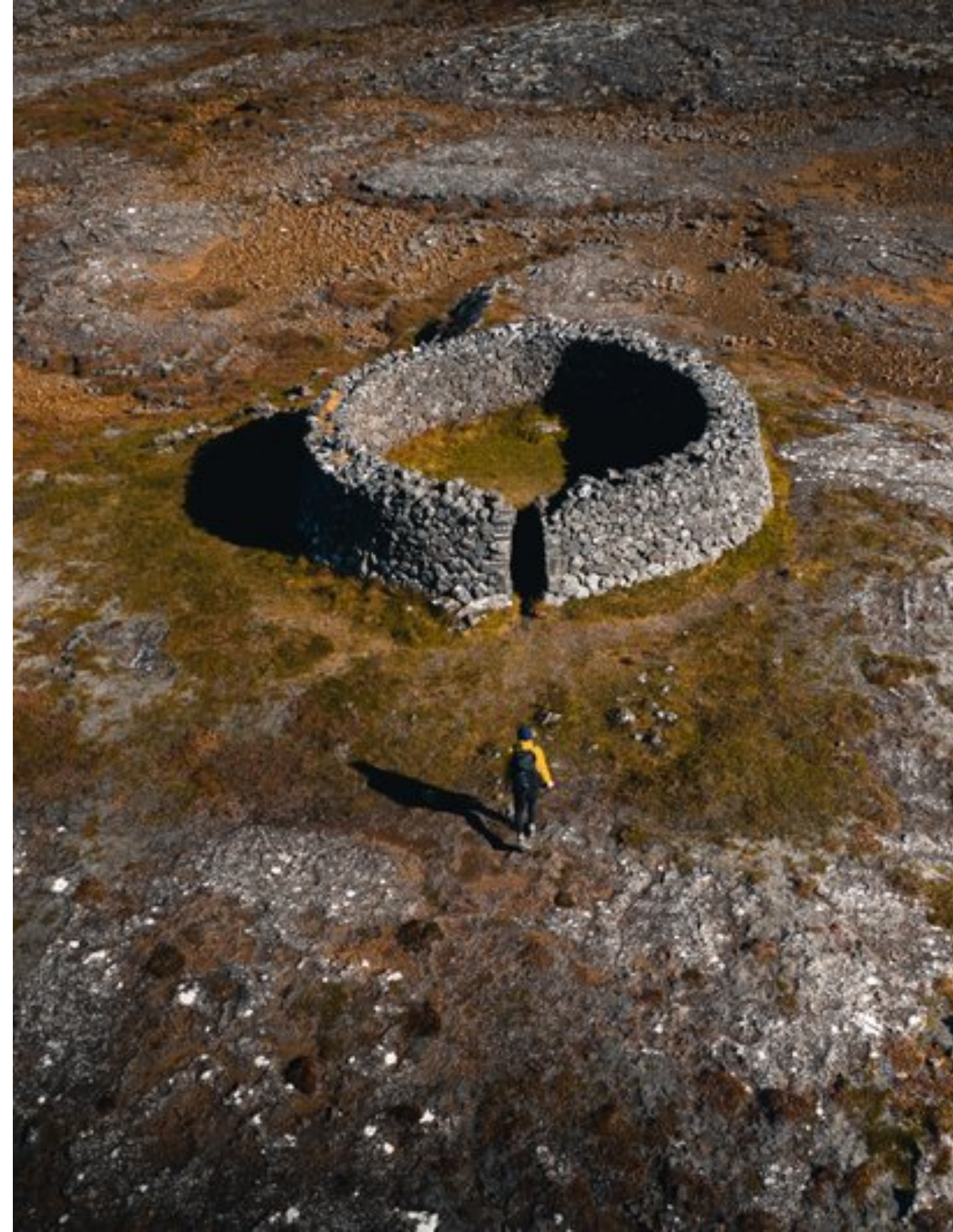
Extended Project Lifespan

The wealth of collected stories ensures the project's impact will extend far beyond original timelines, providing ongoing content for years to come.

Ongoing Development

Continued collaboration with municipalities and landowners to identify new locations for story integration and interpretive signage.

Stories will serve as resources for future interpretive materials, educational content, and visitor engagement initiatives throughout the Geopark.



Preserving Heritage - Enriching Experience

Through the power of storytelling, Reykjanes UNESCO Global Geopark transforms geological wonders into meaningful cultural experiences, ensuring that both landscape and legend continue to inspire future generations.

THANK YOU!

Thuridur Aradottir Braun – thura@visitreykjanes.is
Daniel Einarsson – daniel@reykjanesgeopark.is



**11th International
Conference**
On UNESCO Global Geoparks