

Gothic Atmosphere: The Icy Church of Hallgrimskirkja

Hallgrimskirkja is a Lutheran parish church in Reykjavik, Iceland. It is the largest church in the whole of Iceland and the sixth tallest building in Iceland. It stands at 73 meters or 244 feet. It was named after Hallgrimur Petursson, an Icelandic poet and clergyman and the author of the passion hymns. The design of the church was done by the late Guojon Samuel in 1937. The actual construction of this church began in 1945 and ended in 1986. This means it took exactly 38 years to complete the church. However, the tower was completed before the other parts of the building. The steeple and the wings were completed in 1974, the crypt underneath the choir was built in 1948 and the nave was consecrated in 1986. The Hallgrimskirkja is the main landmark in Reykjavik and its tower can be seen from all corners of the city.



The Pipe Organ

The church features a giant pipe organ that was designed and constructed by Johannes Klais of Bonn, a famous German organ builder. This organ stands tall at an amazing 15 meters and weighs 25 tons. It is driven by 4 manuals and 72 pedal stops, 102 ranks and 5275 pipes all perfectly designed to produce powerful notes. The construction of this pipe was completed in December 1992. Since its completion, it has been utilized in a number of recordings including some by the famous works of Christopher Herrick, an international English organist.



The Statue of Leifur Eiriksson (c. 970– c. 1020)

Standing directly in the front part of the church is a fine sculpture of Leifur Eiriksson the first European (Norwegian) to discover North America. This monument was a gift from the US in honor of the 1930 Althing Millennial Festival. It was designed by Alexander Stirling Calder. It is one of the amazing things to see here.

The Bell Tower

Accessible by an elevator the bell tower offers the best views in the city. There are three bells in the tower representing Hallgrimur, his lovely wife and their daughter who passed away while still young. It is in commemoration of the family of the clergyman. This structure stands at number six among the tallest structures in Iceland.



The interiors of the iconic church are still evocative of ice formations and the fine vault simply reminds you of a typical ice cave. In line with the Lutheran tradition, there is little decoration in the interior as well making it look more gothic and traditional than you could ever imagine.

In 2008, Hallgrímskirkja underwent a major renovation exercise of the main tower. This renovation took an entire year and was completed in 2009. Today this church is landmark as well as a tourist attraction in Iceland. Therefore, the next time you visit Iceland, take your time to visit this historical monument and one of the most important buildings in the history of Iceland. The design itself is breathtaking and the features inside are just magnificent. Visitors can take pictures as they view this amazing architecture.

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