

# The Little Book of the Icelanders

An ebook by Alda Sigmundsdóttir

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There aren't many books I'd recommend reading over morning coffee but *The Little Book of the Icelanders* is one of them. It's an ebook, that is you can't buy it at Tergesen's. You have to order it and pay for it online, then you'll get an electronic copy in your email.

The reason it's good for morning reading is that there are fifty pieces explaining Icelandic society and its quirks and weirdnesses, everything from a passion for foot baths to the swimming pool police. You can read a couple of essays, close the file, go about your

business and, the next time you take a coffee break, open the file and read a couple more essays. Mind you, if you enjoy the essays as much as I did, you'll probably find that you'll drink three cups of coffee and not do the dishes or laundry.

There's nothing more annoying than the habit of Icelanders not replying to mail, email or, even, phone calls. This is true even when you owe them money and want to pay them. For years, when I was working with The Richard and Margaret Beck Trust, we tried to pay for some films. We had the films. We had the money to pay for them. As far as I know,

our many missives were never answered. Alda explains it all. It turns out that Icelanders don't just do that to foreigners. They do it to other Icelanders as well.

There are essays on the attitudes of Icelanders to courting, naming children, traffic lights, and flott. If you don't know what flott is, you've got to read the book. Flott is more important than the economic crises, its more important than the Ice Save agreement. Heck, it's more important than Davið Oddsson.

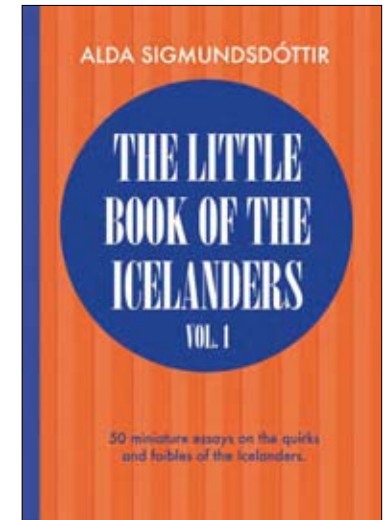
I thought that when I was in Iceland at a party and Icelanders were three sheets to the wind with their arms draped over my shoulders, talking to me like I was a long lost

and wealthy brother, I'd made friends for life, only to discover the next day that they walked past me like they'd never met me. I thought it might be their hangovers or memory loss from too much Black Death but, according to Alda, it is neither. They behave the same way to each other.

I laughed at the essays in this book, not because I was laughing at Icelanders but because I recognize much of the behaviour in myself and members of my family. It felt good. It's not just the sanest, most impressive characteristics that we pass on and share but also some of the zaniest. As I read this book, I frequently thought, yup, I'm definitely part Icelandic.

*The Little Book of the*

*Icelanders* can be ordered by logging on to [www.icelandweatherreport.com](http://www.icelandweatherreport.com) and clicking on the image of the book. That will take you to the main information page, where you can buy it.



## Invasion of the foot massagers (from *The Little Book of the Icelanders*)

Alda Sigurdsdóttir

Icelanders love to be in the loop. They love the latest trends, fashions, styles, gadgets. If it's new and hip, the Icelanders love it. Which is fabulous up to a point. I mean, what's not to like about being hip and cool, right? The problem starts when materialism runs amok and people start mortgaging their grandmother's house to buy that new

Lexus. And the Icelanders have been known to run amok on occasion.

I'll say no more. Never has this little character trait been more spectacularly on display than in the era of the turquoise foot massagers. Back in the 80s, clunky electric foot massagers shook the Icelandic nation to its susceptible core. They were the

new hot gadget. The *objet du jour*. The standard for hipness. The benchmark of cool.

The lure of the turquoise foot massagers spread like wildfire, and that Christmas they sold like hotcakes. They were, hands down, the Present of the Year.

Within two weeks of receiving the coveted massagers,

however, pretty much everyone had figured out that they were little more than clunky plastic tubs with a bottom that moved back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

And that is how practically every other Icelandic storage room wound up containing a clunky electric foot massager. Those puppies have

been emerging one by one ever since, finding their way into Salvation Army stores and Red Cross markets – a blazing turquoise emblem of the Icelanders' susceptibility to marketing and the most banal form of peer pressure.