

# Kaldakinn

## Ice climbing topo for the Kaldakinn area in Northern Iceland

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### General

In the northernmost part of the Kaldakinn area in the Thineyjarsýsla county in N-Iceland, one of the best ice climbing areas in the country can be found.

The area spans over a wide cliffband from farm Björg (the northernmost farm) to the shore, some 5km in total.

The total number of registered ice routes in this topo is roughly 40, and a number of new ascents are known, but not properly registered. Any information on new ascents is highly appreciated.

### How to get there

From Reykjavík, there are three main options:

a) The road route (458km). 6-8 hours in wintertime.

Take route #1 (the ring road) to the west/north towards town Akureyri (388km, via the Hvalfjardargöng tunnel). Drive directly through Akureyri and continue on route #1 towards Husavík. Approx. 45km from Akureyri, turn left onto route #85 towards Husavík and drive north for ~15km.

At that point the main road turns right/east to cross the Skjalfandafljót river. In the bend, country (gravel) road #851 continues north towards "Út-kinn". From there, it's a 12km drive to reach farm Björg.

Routes #1 and #85 are priority roads on the road service's winter schedule and are serviced several times per day (except for holidays). There are however several mountain passes and moors that frequently get blocked during snowstorms, e.g. Holtavörusheiði, Vatnsskarð, Öxnadalshéiði, Víkurskarð.

Route #851 towards Björg is classified as low-priority on the winter schedule and is only serviced 3x/week (and only after all the main roads have been serviced). A 4x4 vehicle is highly recommended.

The rough road from Björg to the shore is not serviced at all and often gets blocked by snowdrift. If blocked, there's a 1-5km walk from the farm to the climbing sectors. If staying at Björg, the farmers may be able to provide a snowmobile/jeep ride from the farm.

Make sure you check the current road condition update at the road service's website - [www.vegagerdin.is](http://www.vegagerdin.is)

Contact the locals at farm Björg (see below) for information on road, weather and ice conditions.

b) Flight to Akureyri.

From Reykjavík domestic airport, airline Air Iceland ([www.flugfelag.is](http://www.flugfelag.is)) flies several times per day to Akureyri airport.

In Akureyri you can rent a car to drive Kaldakinn (70km, see driving directions above).

c) Flight to Husavík.

From Reykjavík domestic airport, airline Ernir ([www.ernir.is](http://www.ernir.is)) flies 1-2x per day to Husavík airport all days except Saturdays.

At Husavík airport, a car can probably be rented (?) and the drive to farm Björg is around 30km southbound on route #85 (and then north on route #851 as above).

### Accommodation

The farmers at Björg ([bjorgum@bjorgum.is](mailto:bjorgum@bjorgum.is), +354 464 3636) have accommodation facilities for smaller and larger groups and are by far the most feasible option due to the proximity to the climbing and the option of a ride to the climbing sectors. The Björg people frequently post photos of the ice conditions on their Facebook page (IceBjorg).

Another options is Hotel Raudaskrida, around 15km from Björg across the Skjalfandafljót river ([hotel@hotelraudaskrida.is](mailto:hotel@hotelraudaskrida.is), 464 3504).

A third option is to stay in Akureyri or Husavík but that requires quite a drive each day to go climbing.

### The climbing

The first routes in Kaldakinn were established in the mid-90s, but the bulk was established during the Alpine Club's ice climbing festivals in 2001 and 2007.

The most famous route in the area is Stekkjastaur (A10), graded WI5/5+ (depending on conditions). One of the most striking ice lines in the whole country and a must climb for any climber of that caliber and above.

Several testpieces were established during an international celebrity visit at the 2007 ice festival. Professional ice climbers Albert Leichtfried and Markus Bendler climbed Captain Hook (M9/9+) and a handful of hard ice lines. Ines Papert and Audrey Gariepy established several WI5+ to WI6+ routes and did a monster 1000m linkup day with all routes WI5 or harder.

The Kaldakinn area currently boast roughly 40 registered routes, ranging in difficulty from WI3-WI6 (and an M9/9+) and there are still a handful of unclimbed lines of varying difficulties. Most of the unclimbed lines are however either quite hard or do not form except in very good ice conditions.

The graph below gives a good indication of the grade distribution in the area.

The length of the routes ranges from 20m to almost 200m and everything in between of course.

Be wary of avalanche risk and of rocks falling from above, especially in sector C ("the trenches"), in particular during a thaw and as spring approaches (with the sun warming up the dark cliffs).

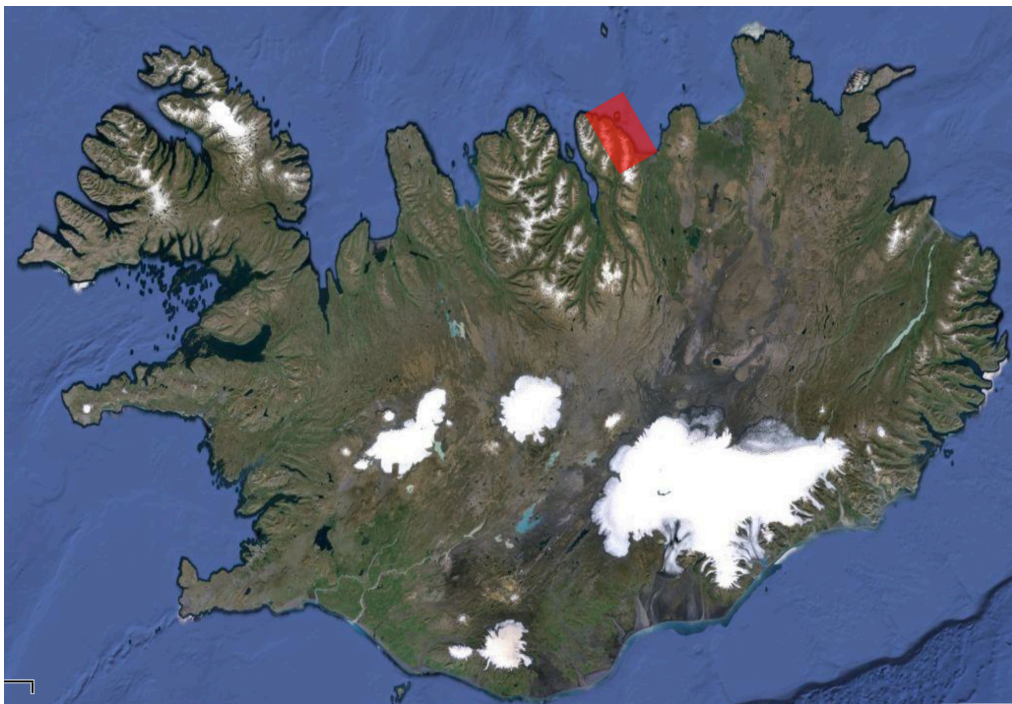
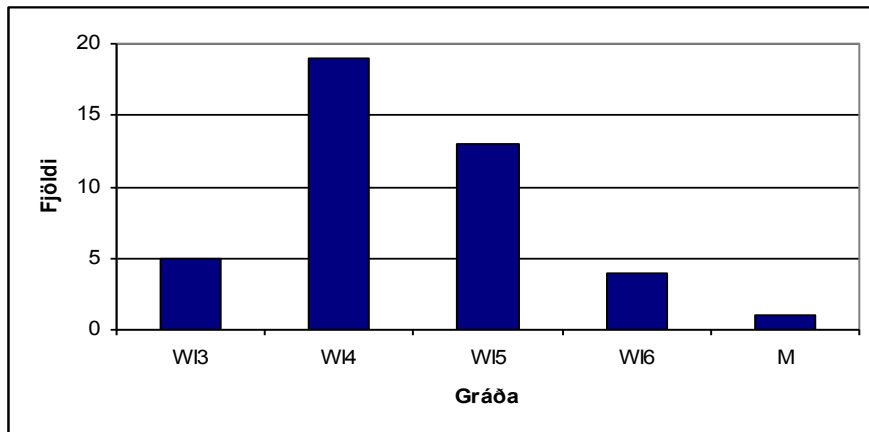
In most cases, the easiest and safest descent is via a rappel on a V-thread at the top of the routes. It is possible to walk off above sector A, but you have to walk almost to Björg to reach the descent gully (and there can be avalanche risk on the slopes above A).

### Season

Iceland in general is very unpredictable in terms of ice and weather conditions in the winter.

The best chance of good quality ice is in January/February. February being a better choice due to longer days and more ice buildup (NB the days are very short in Dec/Jan).

March can give good conditions as well with even longer days but the chances of a thaw are starting to turn as spring approaches.





## A) Stekkjastaur -- 1-2,5 km from Björg

### A1) Wish you were here

WI6+, 60m

24. feb '07: Ines Papert, Audrey Garipey

A steep and delicate route up a series of overhanging icicles south of A3. The route is dedicated to the legendary Hari Berger, who died in an ice climbing accident shortly before the first ascent of the route.

### A2) Arctic Pillar

WI5+, 80m

Jan '08: Mario Sertori et al.

Up steep pillars north of A1 (not formed in the picture).

### A3) Sólhvörf (Solstice)

WI14, 3 pitches

Des '94: Karl Ingólfsson, Jóhann Kjartansson

Up a ramp in the southernmost sector.

### A4) Captain Hook

WI14, M9/9+

27. feb '07: Albert Leichtfried, Markus Bendler

Through the overhang south of A6. WI14 slab start, then 15-20m overhanging bolted mixed climbing to a large icicle in the cave (stance there). Then another 10-15m through the overhang and onto the main curtain above.

### A5) Flowers and Puffins

WI3+, WI6

24. feb '07: Ines Papert, Audrey Garipey

Up a few easy sections south of A6 to the large overhang. Up the steep 15-20m pillar right of A4 into the main ice above.

### A6) Danska leiðin (The Danish Route)

WI14+, 100m

Des '93: Tómas G Júlíusson, Karl Ingólfsson

### A7) Swimming in the Burning Soup

WI5+, WI6, 100m

24. feb '07: Ines Papert, Audrey Garipey

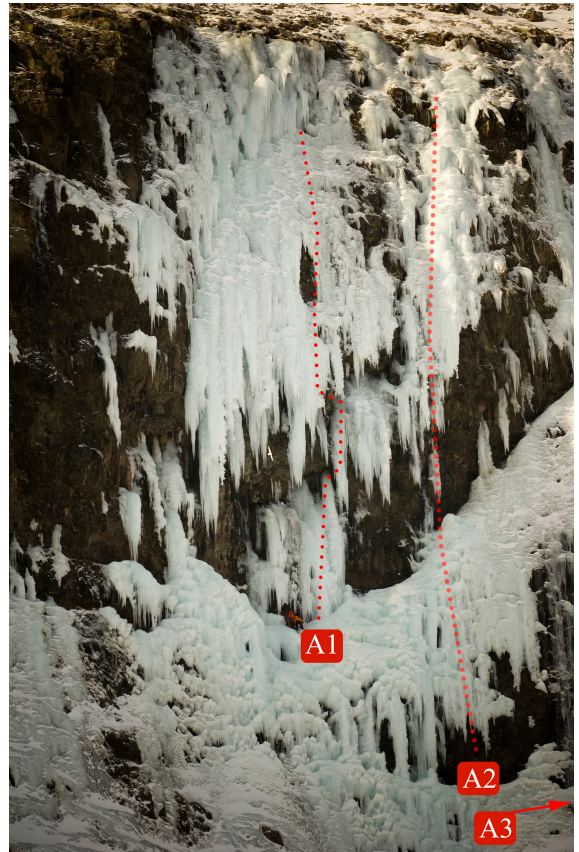
Up a series of steep thin icicles north of A6 to a large mantle. Continue up the thin 10m pillar and up to the top.

### A8) Tangó kálfanna \* (Tango of the Calves)

WI14+, 120m

24. feb '01: Guðmundur H Christensen, Jörunn Harðardóttir

A striking slab route in a gully north of A6. 50m of WI2-3, then 50m of WI4+ and then finally 20m steep turf climbing to the top.



### A9) Ræsið (The Gutter)

WI13+, 120m

24. feb '01: Jón Gunnar Þorsteinss., Húnbogi Valsson

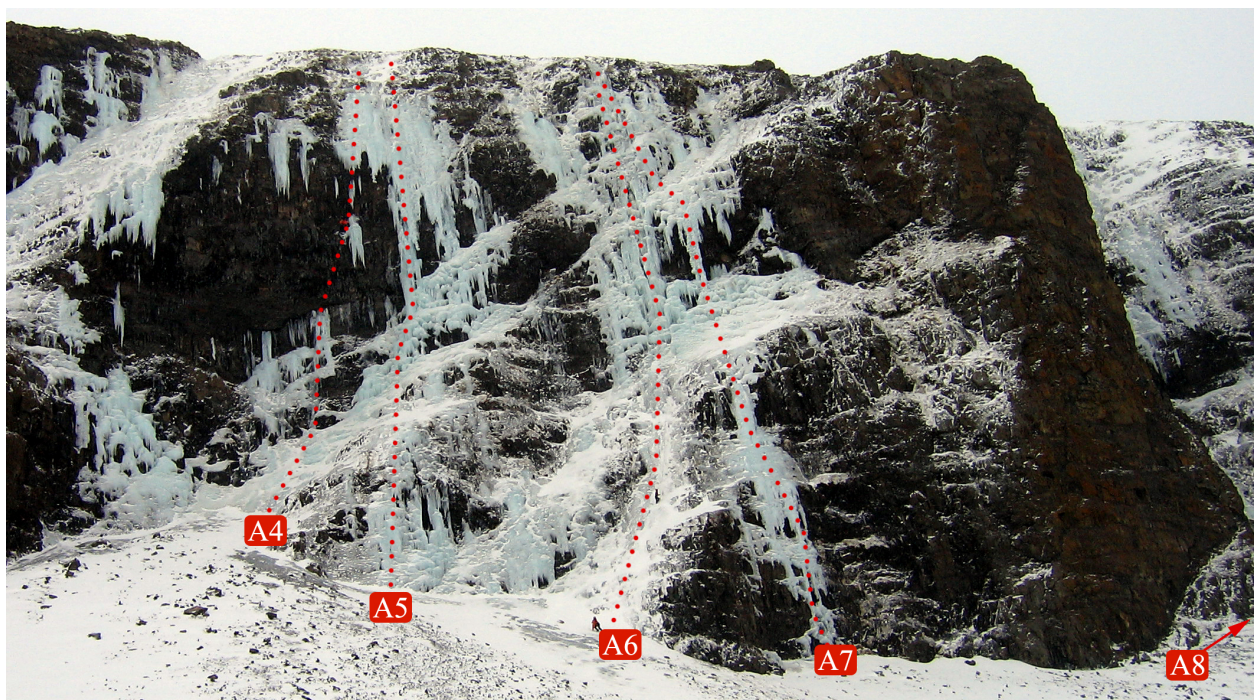
A wide ice line in a narrow gully/chimney north of A8.

### A10) Stekkjastaur \*\*\* (The Rigid Santa)

WI5/5+, 120m

25. des '96: Karl Ingólfsson, Tómas G Júlíusson

A breathtaking long pillar over a 10-15m overhang at the start. Pillar doesn't always touch the ground below, so can be quite hard. 50m of WI4 after the pillar, then steep and technical 50m of WI5 to the top.





## **B) Girnd (Lust)** -- 3 km from Björg

### **B1) Girnd \*\* (Lust)** WI5, 130m

27. des '96: Hallgrímur M., Karl I, Tómas G J  
WI3-4 first pitch. The rest is steep and demanding.

### **B2) Sýnishornið (The Sample)** WI5, 80m

23. feb '01: Páll Sveinsson, Þorvaldur Þórsson  
Crux section in the middle part.

### **B3) Græðgi \* (Greed)** WI5, 70m

24. feb '07: Róbert H, Sigurður T, Einar R Sigurðsson  
Easy slab section to the route proper. WI5 30-40m up to a slab section and then 20m of WI4 to the top.

### **B4) Upprisa svínanna \*\* (Resurrection of the Pigs)**

WI 4+, 150m

23. des '96: Tómas G J, Karl I, Jóhann K

### **B5) Kostulegir postular (Hilarious Apostles)**

WI 4+, 110m

Mar '08: Freyr Ingi Björnsson, Tryggvi Þórðarson

Up a ramp next to B6 and up the steep section above. Gets easier towards the top.

### **B6) E300 \*** WI5, 130m

28. feb '01: Guðmundur H. Christensen, Jórunn Harðardóttir  
Steep 70m initially but levels off to a slab on the upper part.

### **B7) E222** WI5, 125m

24. feb '01: Páll Sveinsson, Þorvaldur Þórsson

### **B8) Sóðakjafur (Foul Mouth)** WI5, 120m

24. feb '01: Jón Haukur og Styrmir Steingrímssynir

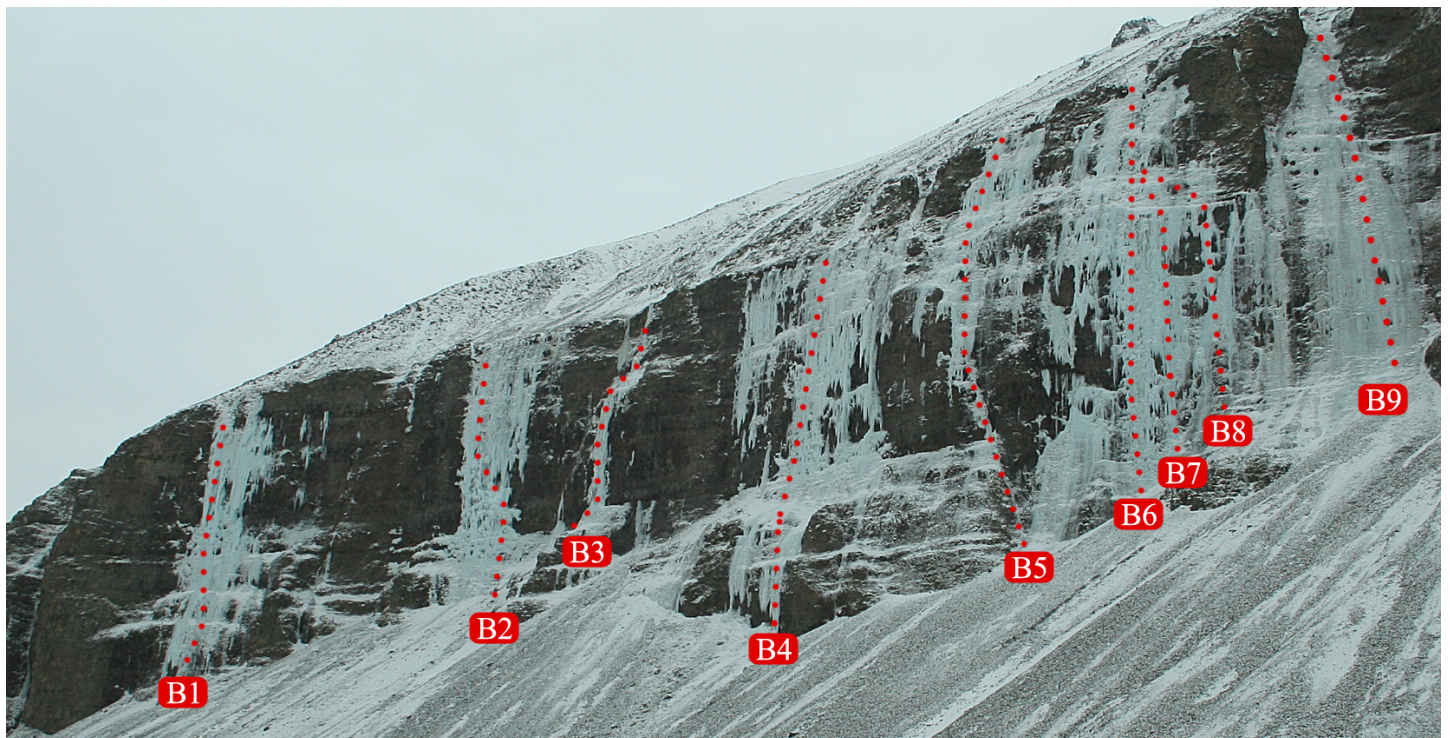
The rightmost version of this wide ice curtain. Traverses a ledge to the main curtain on the upper section.



### **B9) Öskubuska (Cinderella)** WI4, 110m

Mar '08: Berglind Aðalsteinsdóttir, Helga Björt Möller

Wide slab route above B8. Even difficulty most of the way to the top.





## C) Rennurnar (The Trenches) -- 3,5 km from Björg



### C1) Gleymiskan (The Forgetfulness) WI4, 130m

23. feb '01: Jón Haukur, Steingrímsson, Karl Ingólfsson  
Straight up the steep ice slab. Steepest on the middle section.

### C2) Drifa \*\* WI4-5, 200m

Des '94: Hallgrímur Magnúss, Karl Ingólfss, Tómas G Júlíusson  
Starts with a steep first pitch. Then two easier sections of ice and snow followed by a final steep section to the top.

### C3) Frygð \* (Desire) WI5, 150m

Des '93: Hallgrímur Magnússon, Tómas G Júlíusson  
Near vertical, except for a 30m snow section in the middle.

### C4) Miðnæturhraðlestin (Midnight Express)

WI4, 180m

23. feb '01: Helgi Borg Jóhannsson, Jón Gunnar Þorsteinsson  
Easy early section. Crux section in a 20m vertical pillar in the middle. Fairly modest after that section.

### C5) Flagan (The Flake) WI3, 150m

23. feb '01: Sigurbjörn Gunnarsson, Stefán Páll Magnússon  
Even steepness all the way to the top.

### C6) Hlæjandi fýlar \* (Laughing Seagulls)

WI4, 160m

23. feb '07: Arnar E, Berglind Aðalsteinsd, Demian Schane  
An obvious line between C5 and C7. Climbed in three pitches, with the middle pitch slightly harder than the rest.

### C7) Íssól \*\* WI4, 170m

12. jan '07: Jökull Bergmann, Arnar Þór Emilsson  
South/left of the big rock buttress. Fairly steep 55m pitch at the start but levels off towards the top.

**NB! This route is directly below the largest avalanche funnel in the area!!**

## D) The Gullies -- 4 km from Björg

### D1) ...og heilagur andi (...und der heiliger Geist)

WI3+, 50m

23. feb '07: Stefán Ö Kristjánsson, Sveinn F Sveinsson  
In a wide gully north of C7 (beyond the large rock buttress). Starts with a fairly steep section but levels off above. Can be extended another 100m of easy climbing.

### D2) Faðir og sonur... (Vater und Sohn...)

WI3, 70m

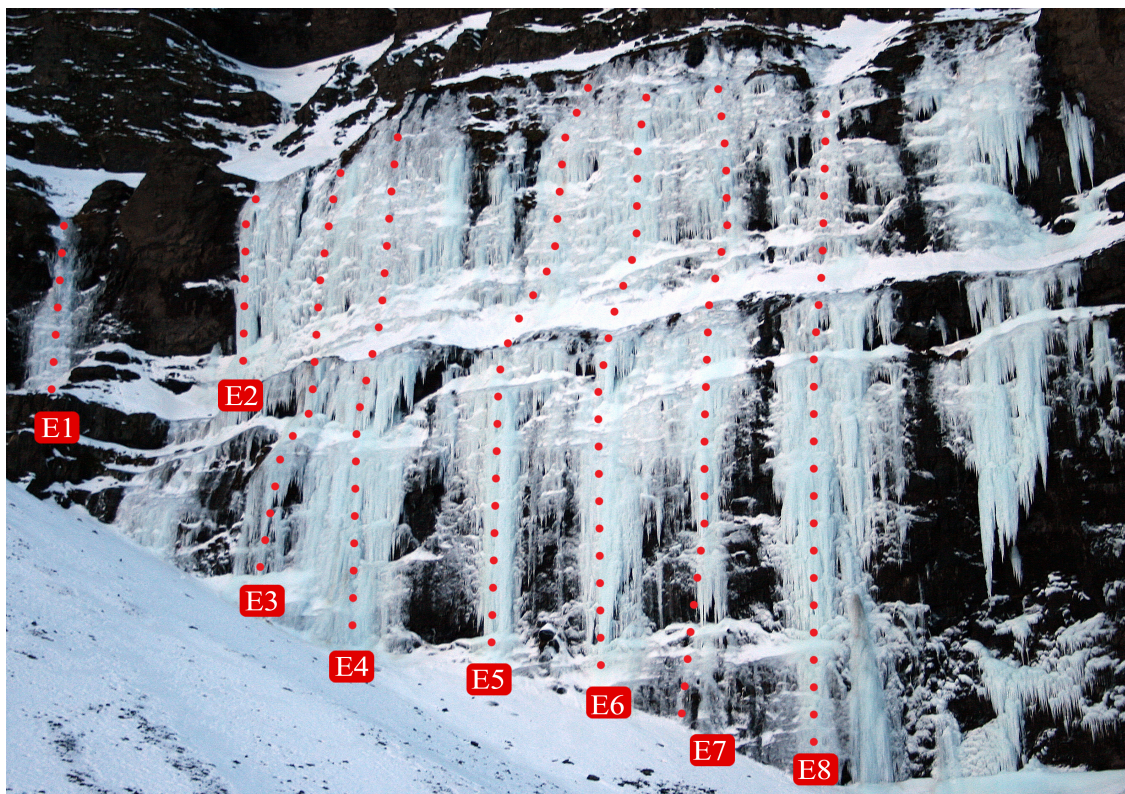
23. feb '07: Haraldur G, Andri Bjarnas, Sigurður Skarph.  
In the same waterfall as D1, just a few meters further north. Climbed in two pitches.

### D3) Vörtusvínið (The Wart Hog) WI3, 60m

24. feb '01: Sigurbjörn G, Stefán P M, Jón Marínó S  
A wide line north of D1 and D2. Easy WI3 with a steeper upper part.



## **E) Dramb (Pride)** -- 4,5 km from Björg



### **E1) Meyjarhaftið (The Hymen)** WI4, 30m

24. feb '07: Guðmundur F Jónsson, Arnar Jónsson  
Single pitch narrow ice line.

### **E2) Mr. Freeze** WI6, 40m

Feb '08: Ian Parnell, Neil Gresham  
Steep route up a thin pillar (sometimes overhanging).

### **E3) Knúsumst um stund \* (Cuddle for a While)**

WI4+, 80m

Mar '08: Berglind Aðalst, Arnar Þ Emils, Sigurður Tómas

### **E4) Blár dagur (A Blue Day)** WI4, 90m

'93-'95: Karl I, Óttar Kj., Sigurður Sæm.

### **E5) Öfund \*\* (Envy)** WI5, 90m

Mar '08: Sigurður Tómas, Guðlaugur Ingi  
Steep and demanding 50m first pitch to the large ledge. Easier WI4/4+ second pitch.

### **E6) Leti \*\* (Sloth)** WI5, 85m

Jan '10: Páll Sveinsson, Viðar Helgason  
Steep and technical first pitch to the ledge. WI4-5 to the top.

### **E7) Reiði \*\* (Wrath)** WI5, 90m

Jan '10: Sigurður T Þ, Guðjón Snær Steindórsson  
Long, steep and technical first pitch to the ledge. WI4-5 to the top.

### **E8) Dramb \*\*\* (Pride)** WI5, 100m

24. feb '07: Sigurður T Þ, Róbert H, Einar R Sig  
Long, steep and technical first pitch to the ledge. Delicate WI4-5 in thinner ice to the top.



## **F) Glassúr** -- 5 km from Björg

### **F1) Limrusmiður \*\* (The Limerick Maker)**

**WI4, 40m**

22. des '96: Karl I, Húnbogi Valsson, Jóhann Kjartansson

### **F2) Í votri gröf \* (In a Wet Grave)** **WI4+, 40m**

Mar '08: Sigurður Tómas, Guðlaugur Ingi

### **F3) Maldon salt \*** **WI4, 40m**

Feb. '07: Skarphéðinn og fleiri

### **F4) Salt í sárin (Salt in the Wound)** **WI4, 40m**

Feb. '07: Skarphéðinn og fleiri

### **F5) RemúlaðisleikjÓ \*\*** **WI4+, 40m**

Feb. '07: Freyr Ingi Björnsson, Smári Stefánsson

### **F6) Skegg spámannsins \*\*\* (Beard of the Prophet)**

**WI4+, 40m**

Feb. '07: Skarphéðinn, Guðlaugur Ingi, Freyr I

### **F7) Synir hafsins \*\* (Sons of the Sea)** **WI4+, 40m**

Mar '08: Sigurður Tómas, Guðlaugur Ingi

### **F8) Glassúr \*\* (Frostings)** **WI4+, 40m**

23. des '95: Karl I, Jóhann K og Hallgrímur M

### **F9) Úr djúpinu \*\*\* (From the Depths)** **WI5, 40m**

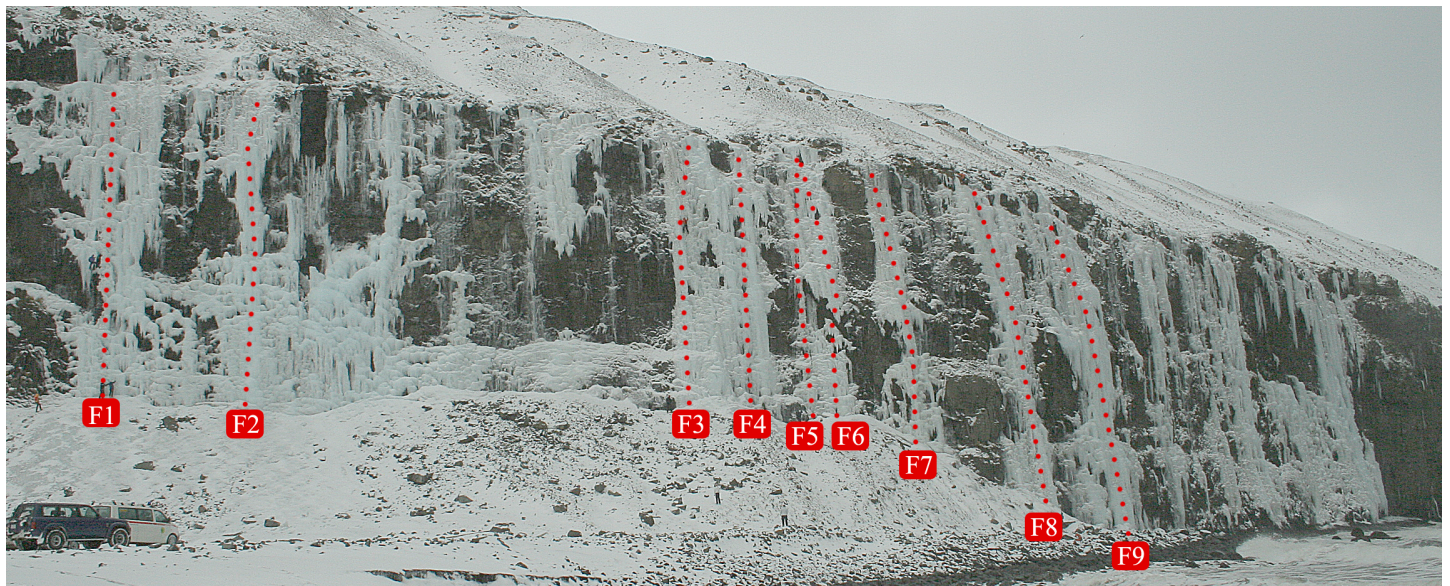
Feb '07: Ines Papert, Audrey Gariépy

Steep section around halfway up.

### **F10) Við fjöruborðið (At the Waterfront)** **WI5, 50m**

Feb '07: Ines Papert, Audrey Gariépy

Above the rock shore. Beware of the high tide that swallows the start of the climb! Location not verified...



### **Photos:**

Róbert Halldórsson (RH)

Guðmundur F Jónsson (GFJ)

Sigurður Tómas Þórisson (STÞ)



### Nýjar leiðir:

6 o'clock in the morning, Pétur comes to us: "It's terribly cold outside" – my eyes are sparkling. The thermometer shows -12 °C – that looks good! Fortunately a longer frost period has past by, and now an icy wind from the mainland blows right into the icefalls. Today is the day for the ice tube! So put on the crampons and let's go. This perfect ice climbing day takes its course – the result: Halli Gully, WI5, 120 m, 2 pitches long. A great new route in the sector Girnd in Kaldakinn.

<http://www.vertikale-welten.de/en/ice-climbing-iceland-expedition-part-3.php>

"Halli Gully": February 10th, 2009 Michael Rinn og Marco Hardiman

Sama og Öskubuska, FF 2008 af Berglindi og Helgu.

Mario Sartori og co klifruðu Arctic Pillar hjá Dönsku leiðinni. Hægra megin við Wish you were here (A1).

<http://www.up-climbing.com/en/contributions/mountaineering/iceland>





