



## Shopping

## If You Can't Make It to Gdańsk

Stokrotka is Iceland's Polish supermarket, and like a good foreign food store, it has some things that you just can't buy anywhere else in town. From the candy shelves, I picked up a box of ptasie mleczko (birds' milk), bite-size Polish candies with a chocolate coating over a soft, marshmallow-like interior. Just beneath, I found halwa (chałwa to Poles), a candy made from crushed sesame seeds that is also popular in the Middle East. Crates of Kubuś – a carrot-juice-based kid's drink with a cute bear mascot – lined one wall. My companion was attracted by the bags of pickles and the freezer full of pierogies. We were both thrilled to find jars of krem chrzanowy (horseradish cream). Little known in Iceland but common in central Europe, krem chrzanowy tastes great spread on bread with smoked fish. I bought a bottle of beet-juice concentrate to use as a base for making borscht (Polish beet and vegetable soup). In the refrigerator I found spicy chorizo sausage, much used in Mexican and southwestern

American cooking. Besides chorizo, Stokrotka sells eight or nine other types of interesting sausage, a good break for those bored with the bland bjúgu at Bónus.

Stokrotka (which means "Daisy" in Polish) is fairly easy to find, though it's in an industrial area on the far side of Hafnarfjörður's harbour. Coming from Reykjavík, drive through the center of Hafnarfjörður, then make your first right onto Óseyrarbraut and an immediate left onto Hvaleyrarbraut. I found Maria Valgeirsson (Stokrotka's owner) and Alicja Kryszewska at work in the store. Like many Poles in Iceland, they are from the area around Gdańsk in northern Poland, where Poland's shipping industry is based and where the Solidarity trade union arose in the 1970s. Maria worked for 14 years in the Gdynia shipyards, before moving to Fáskrúðsfjörður in eastern Iceland in 1989 to work in fish processing. She moved to Hafnarfjörður in 1999 and started Stokrotka in October 2003.

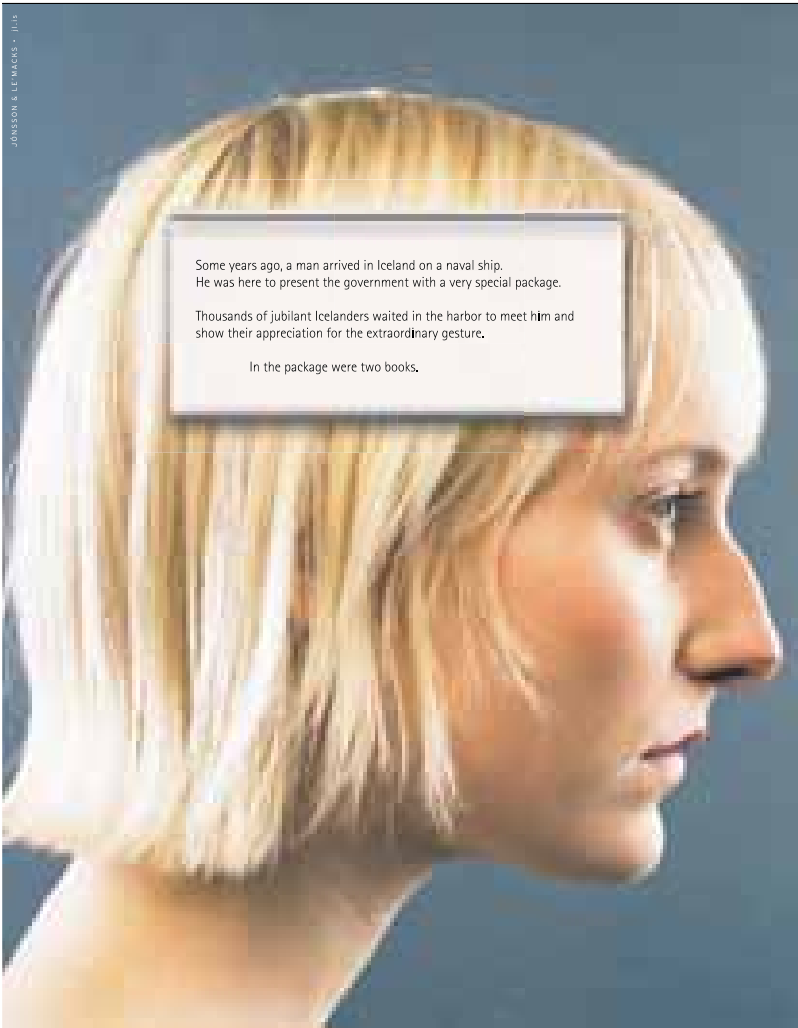
Poles are by far the largest immigrant group in the country, so it's little surprise that there's a supermarket to serve them. According to Hagstofa Íslands, at year's end 2004 there were 1903 Polish citizens living in Iceland. Danes, the next largest immigrant group, number only 890. The special relationship between Iceland and Poland began in the late 1960s, when Icelanders contracted with shipyards around Gdańsk to build and repair Icelandic ships. Many friendships developed, and Icelanders began to invite their Polish counterparts to visit and work in Iceland. Contacts increased after the fall of communism in 1989. Today, Iceland offers Poles a sense of adventure, the chance to live in a foreign country, the ability to find a respectable job quickly (Iceland has much lower unemployment than Poland), and the chance to save money to buy a new apartment, build a vacation home, or help out family members back home. Many Poles in Iceland are highly educated, but, like other

immigrants, are willing to take a job they're overqualified for in return for the experience of living abroad. Religion is a strong bond for the Polish community, who pack Iceland's Catholic churches on Sundays.

With 40 million people, Poland is one of Europe's big countries. It's an attractive tourist destination, with low prices, good and inexpensive food, handsome cities like Kraków and Gdańsk, mountains, lakes, and a deserved reputation for friendly service and hospitality. A trip to Stokrotka is a good way to start getting familiar with a country that will unquestionably take an ever larger role in Europe over the coming decades.

*Stokrotka, Hvaleyrarbraut 35, Hafnarfjörður, Tel. 517 1585. Open Monday-Friday 12:00-19:00, Saturday 12:00-18:00, Sunday 12:00-16:00.*

■ By Ian Watson



Some years ago, a man arrived in Iceland on a naval ship. He was here to present the government with a very special package.

Thousands of jubilant Icelanders waited in the harbor to meet him and show their appreciation for the extraordinary gesture.

In the package were two books.

### Where does it come from?

## THE Origins TOUR

#### ● The Culture House

Medieval manuscripts - Eddas and Sagas and other exhibitions cast light on Iceland's cultural contributions and relations with the world at large.

[www.thjodmenning.is](http://www.thjodmenning.is)

#### ● National Gallery of Iceland

19th and 20th century Icelandic art. The museum owns the most valuable collection of works by Icelandic artists in the country.

[www.listasafn.is](http://www.listasafn.is)

#### ● National Museum of Iceland

The country's largest museum of cultural history featuring a permanent exhibition on Iceland's extraordinary history from settlement to present day.

[www.natmus.is](http://www.natmus.is)



A journey through a nation's heritage.