



Iceland's Five-Star Stunner: Deplar Farm



From left: heli-skiing, the spa and the dining room at Deplar Farm

It's nearly midnight on my second day at [Iceland's Deplar Farm](#) as the Northern Lights reach their strongest fluorescence of the evening. Reclining on a built-in lounge chair in the resort's geothermally heated pool, I observe the phenomenon, which has been dancing across the sky in shades of green and the occasional violet, caused by colliding atomic oxygen and molecular nitrogen particles, respectively, for an hour. Buoyed by the endorphins still rearing from a day spent heli-skiing and fly-fishing, the other pool party attendees and I sip beverages from the swim-up bar, plunge into the water, where the evening's Bob Marley soundtrack plays even louder, and float with our eyes pressed upwards.

This was not my first, but, in fact, third "Eleven moment" of the day, and just one of many to mold my four-day trip to the northern Icelandic retreat into one of my life's most unique travel experiences. To properly understand why "eleven" is the adjective of choice at Deplar Farm, one must first understand the impetus behind Eleven Experience, a pioneering travel company that was launched in 2011 and operates a smattering of ultra-luxe experiential properties everywhere from the French Alps to

Colorado and [Harbour Island](#).

Contact Indagare for assistance planning a vacation to Deplar Farm.



Courtesy Eleven Experience

It all goes back to 1984. *This is Spinal Tap* coined the phrase “up to eleven,” which references an amplifier that goes to eleven instead of the regular ten. This concept of expanding the upper limit, be it in music or hospitality, stuck with the future founder of Eleven Experience, Chad Pike. Decades later, Pike titled his adventure-focused company after the film scene, committing to a mission of elevating every experience beyond the presumed limit. And while Eleven has become known for its adrenaline-pumping activities, it quickly became apparent during the course of my stay at Deplar Farm that those who wish to relax can unwind at an eleven, too.

See Photos from the Trip: [Adventure at Deplar Farm](#)



From left: kids jumping into the pool at Deplar Farm; a room

Located on a former sheep farm in a Narnia-like wonderland on northern Iceland's Troll Peninsula, Deplar Farm opened in the spring of 2016. The 13-room property blends into the dramatic mountainous landscape with a grass roof and enough glass walls that it is camouflaged almost entirely when viewed from the right angle. On the inside, the property is designed to perfection thanks to Pike's wife, who runs No. 12 Interiors and styles each of the group's properties as though it were her own home. The dining room wall is decorated with a rare collection of taxidermied Icelandic birds, the bar is made with reclaimed Siberian driftwood that the staff scavenged at a nearby beach, and the plush rooms, all designed in soft earth tones, tout complimentary mini bars with craft chocolates and local beers, Mr. Steam showers and Aesop bath products.

Related: [First Look at Eleven Experience's Bahama House](#)



From left: the mountains surrounding Deplar Farm; fly-fishing in the summer

And while it is without a doubt the most pampering property in Iceland, Deplar is, at its core, about exploring the outdoors. Eleven Experience has hand-picked some of the best wilderness guides in the world, who skillfully lead intermediate skiers down runs commensurate with their ability, demonstrate the proper technique for skeet shooting, and who also entertain, in the evenings, with a heavy dose of wit.

During the spring months (March-June), the focus at Deplar is on heli-skiing. The property has two helicopters that shuttle guests to any of the surrounding peaks, many of which sit at around 3,000 foot above sea level. While you won't find waist-deep powder here, Iceland is known for summit-to-sea skiing, wherein skiers finish runs by the icy waters of the Arctic Ocean. Also revered for its exclusive salmon beats, northern Iceland is an angler's paradise during fly-fishing season, which lasts from June through September.

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From left: Deplar Farm in summer, sea-kayaking

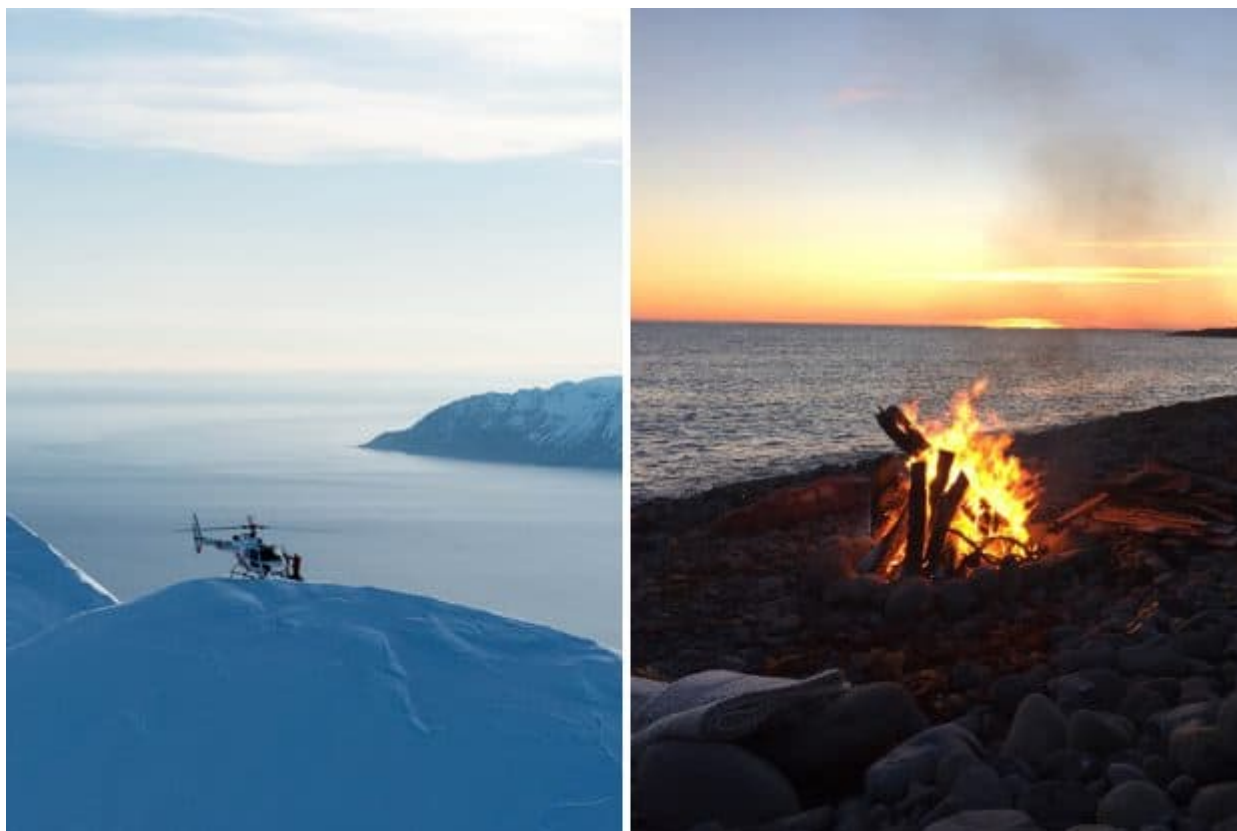
Open year-round, Deplar offers many seasonal farm-based activities. Laser tag in the surrounding countryside, fat-tire biking and snowmobiling can be arranged upon request, as can day trips to the fjords for whale-watching, surfing and sea-kayaking. Leisurely pursuits also abound, beginning in the spa, which features an indoor/outdoor pool complete with a swim-up bar, hot and cold plunge pools, a steam room and treatment rooms, as well as two i-sopod float tanks. These sensory deprivation tanks are filled with skin temperature salt water, encouraging the user to float and fall asleep or into a meditative state. A haven for kids at the property, the media room comes stocked with Nintendo, PlayStation and a full snack supply. The gym is well equipped; a yoga studio looks over at the beautiful countryside; and the upstairs bar area boasts a foosball table, darts board, pool table and Ping Pong set. Deplar is designed so that kids, as well as young-at-heart adults, can game in style.

Related: [Just Back From... Iceland](#)



From left: chia seed pudding with chocolate and berries; the chef at work

The last piece to any successful hotel puzzle is the culinary program, and the one at Deplar excels on all fronts. Breakfast begins with your choice of hot items (think Icelandic pancakes and huevos rancheros), supplemented by the buffet bar, which offers such healthy fare as overnight oats with blueberries and chocolate shavings, *skyr* (Icelandic yogurt) and granola and a savory spread of smoked salmon and charcuterie. Lunch is enjoyed either in the field (skiers eat mid-mountain but Ghost House will open later this year and offer après dining on the slopes) or at the resort. A typical field lunch might include grilled steak with Israeli couscous and roasted carrots and dates and chocolate-almond clusters for dessert. Guests and guides usually have dinner together in the main dining room, which boasts stunning sunset views of the striking landscape, but private dining can be arranged anywhere on property. Dinner tends to be more upscale, with two courses and dessert, but guests can request simple fare or Italian pies from the pizza oven.



From left: Heli-skiing, a beach bonfire

Deplar Farm is the kind of place travelers come with the notion of grand-“Eleven”-adventures. And while clipping into your skies with the hum of a chopper in the background never ceases to be goosebump-inducing, and just the chance to glimpse the Northern Lights tango across the night sky makes you lose all track of time—until you’ve repeated, “just ten more minutes,” dozens of times and suddenly it’s 2 a.m.—the real magic at Deplar, and the reason to return time and again, lies in the small, unexpected Eleven moments. The moments that, if scripted, wouldn’t touch the adventure quotient of surfing in the Arctic Ocean or snorkeling with puffins. But when you ride through the Icelandic wilderness with a third-generation horse breeder to the seaside where a bonfire and bourbon hot chocolate await, you are reminded of the wideness of the world, and the tiny speck that we inhabit. Or, when Eleven Experience’s Director of Experience Development (who doubles as the “Minister of Fun”) dons a disco suit and initiates a mandatory dinner costume party, you remember that, yes, vacation is about relaxing and indulging, but it is also about luxuriating in the sillier side of life. It is these memories, coupled with the extreme adventures I checked off my bucket-list, that will inspire all my future travels, and keep me reaching for those rare eleven moments.

Contact [Indagare](#) for assistance planning a vacation to Deplar Farm.

- Emma Pierce on April 5, 2017

