

Dear Symposium Guests.

On behalf of the University of Iceland I am honored to welcome you to the *24th Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality* and especially to this building, Askja (named after the volcano Askja), where the Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences is situated and where programs in tourism are taught.

Universities play a vital role in the creation of knowledge and wealth in modern societies, since human progress has always been determined by knowledge, research, innovation and entrepreneurial thinking. In terms of creating knowledge in tourism and hospitality we here in Iceland have been fortunate enough to collaborate through the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre, that is the three universities offering programs in tourism studies, University of Iceland, University of Akureyri and Holar University College, together with the Icelandic Tourist Board and the Icelandic Travel Industry Association. In many ways this is an ideal partnership that links academic research together with a practical venue.

Tourism is the fastest growing industry in Iceland. Of course it plays a vital role in creating income for the state but it is the vast number of creative opportunities the growing tourism has brought along that might just be the biggest natural resource Iceland has within its means. It's not untapped in terms of the volume of tourists now traveling to the country (we reached about one million visitors last year) but there are indeed rising challenges to be met regarding responsibility and infrastructure due to the constantly growing stream of travelers wanting to visit the country and to enjoy its distinctive nature.

I am therefore glad to see that this symposium will deal with responsible tourism, whether it be in terms of environmental responsibility, ethical tourism consumption or responsible human resource management to name a few of the topics up for discussion during the next three days. In these matters, the future might be beyond our vision, but it is not entirely beyond our control. Research and innovation in tourism will surely help us in finding solutions to meet these challenges and this is something that the University of Iceland fully supports.

I wish you all a successful symposium and a happy stay in Iceland.