

SÆVAR KARL

THE MAN WHO BROUGHT FASHION TO REYKJAVÍK



When tailor Sævar Karl opened a fashion store in the heart of Reykjavík over three decades ago, he may not have realised that his dream of selling Iceland's leading collection of top international brand names would become such a huge success. Today, the store bearing its founder's name, Sævar Karl, is the nation's leading venue for the top brands in both men's and women's fashion.

„Sævar Karl is a bit like the Charles Saatchi of Iceland,“ explains Hildur Erla Björgvinsdóttir, Managing Director of Sævar Karl. “He was the first person to bring European fashion to the country.” The store stocks leading fashion labels from around the world, including Armani, Prada and D&G. Each brand was selected by Sævar Karl himself for its quality and style.

The result, says Björgvinsdóttir, is a unique shopping experience for both new and experienced fashion connoisseurs. Although Sævar Karl himself retired in 2007, the team behind the store continues to fulfil his dream of providing customers with access to the finest designer brands, available at excellent prices and with superior service. Combined, these qualities create a unique consumer experience in the capital.

ICELAND'S WIDEST SELECTION OF DESIGNER FASHION – AT EXCELLENT PRICES

„Non-designer jeans are often sold in Reykjavík for about ISK 20,000,“ says Björgvinsdóttir. „At Sævar Karl, you can buy a pair of the latest D&G jeans for surprisingly low prices.“

Iceland has always been a great place to shop for designer clothing. Low overheads, along with a 15% tax back voucher for foreign visitors (on all purchases over ISK 4000), makes the top tier of the retail market particularly good value, especially now that foreign currencies can buy more in the country.

As a result, the world's top labels are more accessible to people on a budget in Iceland. „Of course we see a lot of people who only wear certain brands,“ says Björgvinsdóttir.

„But we also get a large number of customers who are buying Gucci or Prada for the first time. And we like it when we get to be a part of that experience. After all, these are classic looks so you can buy one item that is going to last a long time.“

The number of brands at Sævar Karl—over 20 and counting—is the broadest in Iceland. From D&G belts and Armani suits to Prada overcoats and Schumacher accessories, nowhere else has the same range of labels for men and women.

PERSONALISED SERVICE AND ATMOSPHERE

Visitors to the two-storey, 800-square metre Sævar Karl shop in Reykjavík's main shopping district will be welcomed into a comfortable yet stylish enclave of the capital. Chairs from upscale furniture boutiques punctuate corners between racks of Joop! suits and rows of D&G shoes. Glass squares cut into the ground floor reveal glimpses of the women's fashion section on the lower level. And children, who, like everywhere in Iceland, are always welcome, love crossing a small bridge over a pond housing four coy goldfish.

On Saturdays, musician Pálmar is on hand to tickle the ivories and entertain guests on Sævar Karl's grand piano. On that and every other day, anyone who steps into the store is greeted and assisted by one of Sævar Karl's eight highly qualified employees, each of whom is passionate and experienced with top-level fashion. They will help and advise you on purchases, from the type of stitching on the new Miu Miu handbag to whether you'll suit the new pre-season belt you saw Daniel Craig sporting in the last issue of Vogue. Once you have chosen, one of Iceland's finest tailors is on-hand and works exclusively with Sævar Karl to immediately make any alterations necessary.

„It's often been said that we have the best service in Iceland,“ says Björgvinsdóttir. „And it should be that way. It doesn't matter who you are; everyone who likes fashion is welcome here.“

WHERE FASHION AND ART MEET

In addition to his fashion passion, Sævar Karl had a great interest in art.

In commemoration of this, „we bring culture and fashion together,“ explains Björgvinsdóttir. Four times a year, one room of Sævar Karl is transformed into an art gallery showcasing outstanding works of Icelandic art and photography.

This transition of design, from the fashion to the gallery to the shop's decor, combined with Iceland's best service and selection of designer goods, proves that Sævar Karl's dream of a unique shopping experience is still very much alive.

Whether this is your first designer-wear experience or you've got a collection of each season's best Prada, you'll leave Sævar Karl having had a memorable experience. So stop by, sip a cup of freshly brewed coffee, and let the friendly team help you find something by which to remember your trip to Iceland.

The man who brought fashion to Reykjavík would be proud.

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