

MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

"The Bronze Statue of Thor in Iceland"

By Teresa Russo

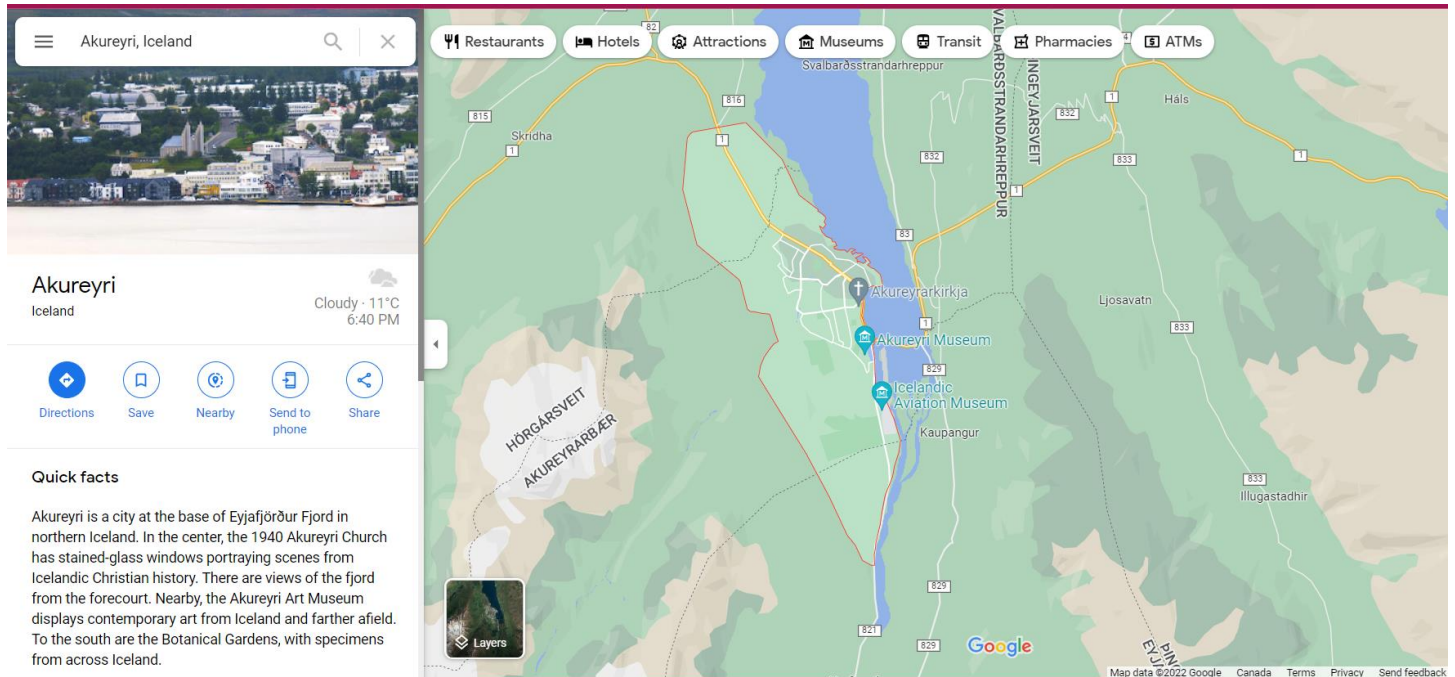


Bronze statuette of Thor, Viking God, c1000. From Iceland, at National Museum Reykjavik. **Photo Credit:** HIP / Art Resource, NY ([artres.com](https://www.artres.com)) **Image Reference:** AR9447424 **Image size:** 5027 X 5088 px



The Bronze statuette of Thor now housed in the National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavík is 6.7cm tall and dated to 1000 AD/CE. The statuette is a likeness of an older Thor as a bearded man with a cap on his head. The bronze statue was found in 1815 near Akureyri, in Northern Iceland, an area called Eyrarland Farm. Therefore, the statuette is also referred to as the Eyrarland Statue. It is the most famous object in

the museum and a rare piece of Viking art, depicting Thor as he holds his hammer, Mjöllnir. Some art historians have speculated that this statuette could be a depiction of a story in the *Poetic Edda* when the Norse god attended a Giant's wedding to regain his stolen hammer. This story gave Thor one of his attributes of attending weddings in old Norse mythology to bless brides.



Location of Akureyri, Iceland and the museum where Thor statuette is located ([Google Maps](#)).

The curator at the museum points out that Thor's hammer in this bronze statue resembles a cross. This points to the Christian communities that were developing during the early Middle Ages while Anglo-Saxon tribes (discussed in the poem of *Beowulf*) and Vikings were still following Old Norse mythology. The curator states that the style of the statue dates it to a period in Iceland when heathenism was transitioning into Christianity. In addition, the curator speculates that the statue could be representing Christ the King sitting on a throne with a cross in his hand. This object along with "Thor's bronze hammer amulat" from the Viking period (also located at the same museum) demonstrates how Christian symbols was gradually incorporated into Viking artefacts.



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After the statue was found in 1815 it was sent to Copenhagen in 1817 for preservation since there was no museum in Iceland. In 1930 the statuette along with other artifacts were returned to Iceland during the Millennium of the Althing (Alþingi), which was a festival celebrating the oldest surviving parliament (called the Alþingi) in the world and the history of Iceland. It took place in Thingvellir (Þingvellir) National Park. The park received its national status in 1930 and was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2004.

Audio of the Thor statuette at the National Museum of Iceland from the “Dawn of Iceland Society (800-1000)” permanent exhibit: [English](#) | [Þjóðminjasafn Íslands \(thjodminjasafn.is\)](https://thjodminjasafn.is)

