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Eagles Dream
Snæfellsnes, Iceland

Designed to showcase breathtaking views from every angle, this holiday house not only blends into the spectacular, cascading mountainous ridges of Western Iceland, it has become a part of them.

'Eagles Dream' designed by Gudmundur Jonsson Arkitektkontor inspires and reimagines what is possible to construct in remote and environmentally sensitive locations using prefabricated mass timber.

‘Slagveður’ in Icelandic literally translates to “hitting weather”. It describes the gusts of wind that are so powerful and sudden they feel as if they are actually ‘hitting’ you. It describes well the conditions that Icelandic builders face due to the severe high winds and heavy snowfall in the region which often wreak havoc for the local industry.

But times are changing with the advances in mass timber. Icelandic architects are increasingly turning to mass timber as an immediate and practical building solution.

The Eagles Dream summer house showcases the potential of this kit-of-parts approach when applied with collaborative local expertise to battle the wind, rain, and snow, with jaw dropping, showpiece results.

Climate-informed design

The property is located on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, an area of outstanding natural beauty with EarthCheck certification status. Given the pristine natural environment, it was essential that the construction of the property had minimal impact on the land and the lower carbon footprint. It was also essential that the design could withstand harsh weather conditions and be as quick and easy to build as possible.

High wind load design

The high load-bearing Sylva™ CLT elements proved ideal for this wind-resistant design. Gudmundur Jonsson designed the structure to redirect wind and distribute the wind load across all of the surfaces.

Elevating the building on columns with a flat roof allows wind to pass over and under, reducing pressure points. This ‘breezeway’ feature also accommodates large snow deposits, minimizes the building's footprint, preserving the pristine natural surroundings.

Wind-Defying construction: A collaborative effort

Constructing the Eagles Dream with Sylva CLT elements in this high-wind area required meticulous planning and an expert team effort to execute:

Stora Enso prefabricated the Sylva™ CLT Walls, Floors, and Roofs in 2021 into 144 bespoke elements. The parts were then pre-fitted with lifting slings so they could be quickly and safely hoisted directly off the delivery truck with optimally balanced weight upon arrival and manoeuvred into position with minimal exposure to the wind and rain.

The precise CNC by Stora Enso enabled the on-site workers (some of whom were new to working with mass timber) to assemble the elements quickly and accurately, aligning perfectly with the architect’s design. This also eliminated the need for heavy cutting machinery on site, reducing safety risks in high winds.

Skipavík ehf studied local weather forecasts to scheduled installation in the windows of calmer weather.

IDEX worked with all of the team to ensure that the elements arrived, just in time. Shipment was scheduled over the summer months to allow for install in optimal weather conditions upon delivery.

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Transportation

The kit of parts was nested into two optimised loads on a tautliner (curtain-sided trailer) from Rotterdam direct to Þorlákshöfn, on a RO-RO (Roll-on/Roll-off ship). The materials were then transported the remaining 355 km to the construction site at Hólar 6.

Carbon Footprint

The Sylva CLT elements generated 6 tonnes of greenhouse gases (CO_2e) to manufacture and 6 tonnes of CO_2e to transport. Compared to the 90 tonnes of carbon dioxide that the trees removed while growing and will store in the building, this is a small fraction. Choosing Sylva CLT elements instead of non-renewables avoided 135 tonnes of greenhouse gases. (Source: Stora Enso Carbon Calculator).

Origin of the Wood

The Sylva™ elements were made with wood sourced from PEFC-certified forests. PEFC is one of the most trusted and widely recognised certifications for sustainable forest management.

About the Project Team

IDEX ehf, a privately owned company with over 30 years on the Icelandic market, provided the high-quality building materials for the project and integrated collaboration.

Gudmundur Jonsson Arkitektkontor is a Norwegian architectural firm working in Iceland and Norway. They have received recognition for their work, including winning the Building Tradition Award for the Norveg Coastal Culture Center and have prior experience working with mass timber.

Skipavík ehf, based in nearby Stykkishólmur, Iceland, offers diverse services including ship repairs, construction contracting, and technical services. Established in 1908, the company is renowned for its maritime expertise and innovative projects, including the Viking ship Valtýr and now the Eagles Dream too.

Publications gudmundur jonsson's residence rests on columns in iceland

View more projects built in extreme climates and remote locations with a kit of parts.

Earth Observatory

Akornanni

Patina Hotel Maldives

Eilean Donan Castle Visitors Centre

Aurora Spirit Whisky Destillerie



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[redacted]

General

Delivery year

2024

Building type

1-2 Family Dwellings

Area (m²)

261

Storeys

1

Units

1



Photo credit: Gunnar Sverrisson | @gunnarsverrisson

Products

Products and Services

Sylva™ CLT Floors and Roofs, Sylva™ CLT Walls, Preinserted lifting devices

Product quality

PEFC Certified, NVI

Product volume (m³)

118

Number of deliveries

2

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Team

Architect

Gudmundur Jonsson Arkitektkontor

Structural Engineer

Verkís Consulting Engineers

MEP Designer

Verkís Consulting Engineers

Main contractor

Skipavík ehf

Specialist Timber Subcontractor

IDEX ehf