



# Iceland

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## Best Places to Stay

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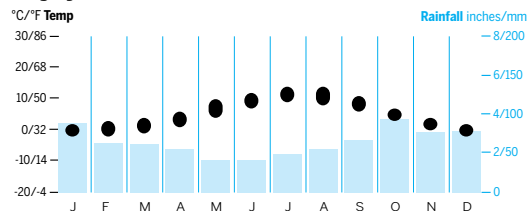
## Why Go?

The energy is palpable on this magical island, where astonishing natural phenomena inspire the welcoming, creative locals and draw an increasing number of visitors in search of its untrammelled splendour. A vast volcanic laboratory, here the earth itself is restless and alive. Admire thundering waterfalls, glittering glaciers carving their way to black-sand beaches, explosive geysers, rumbling volcanoes and contorted lava fields.

In summer permanent daylight energises the already zippy inhabitants of Iceland's quaint capital, Reykjavík, with its wonderful cafe and bar scene. Fashion, design and music are woven into the city's fabric, and the museums are tops. In winter, with luck, you may see the Northern Lights shimmering across the sky. Year-round, though, adventure tours abound, getting you up close and personal with sights and sounds that will stay with you for life.

## When to Go

### Reykjavík



**May & Jun** Prime birdwatching season happily coincides with the two driest months and fewer crowds.

**Aug** It's full throttle in Reykjavík, the country teems with visitors and it's almost always light.

**Nov–Apr** The best months for Northern Lights and bare minimalism.



## Iceland Highlights

- 1** Party 'til dawn on the weekend pub crawl *djammið* in lively **Reykjavík** then hit excellent museums, shops and cafes.
- 2** Ride horses, climb glaciers, trek lava fields, or soak in hot-pots on **Snæfellsnes Peninsula** (p598).
- 3** Join the droves exploring the **Golden Circle** (p595):

scintillating Gullfoss waterfall, exploding geysers, and the nation's birthplace, rift valley Þingvellir.

- 4** Explore black-sand beaches and offshore rock formations in verdant **Vík** (p596).

- 5** Take a wilderness hike in dramatic **Þórsökk** (p596) valley.

- 6** Go whale watching in **Húsavík** (p598) or **Reykjavík** (p588).

- 7** Exhaust your camera's memory card at **Skaftafell** in Vatnajökull National Park and nearby **Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon** (p597).

- 8** Swim through steam clouds at the world-famous **Blue Lagoon** (p595).

## REYKJAVÍK

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The world's most northerly capital combines colourful buildings, wild nightlife and a capricious soul to brilliant effect. You'll find Viking history, captivating museums, cool music, and offbeat cafes and bars. And it's

a superb base for touring Iceland's natural wonders.

Reykjavík's heart lies between Tjörnin (the Pond) and the harbour, and along Laugavegur, with nearly everything for visitors within walking distance.