



Iceland

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Best Places to Eat

- » Fish Company, Reykjavík (p637)
- » Indian Mango, Reykjavík (p637)
- » Vegamót, Reykjavík (p638)
- » Á Næstu Grösum, Reykjavík (p637)

Best Places to Stay

- » Reykjavík City Hostel (p636)
- » Reykjavík Downtown Hostel (p636)
- » Eric the Red Guesthouse, Reykjavík (p636)
- » Álfrhóll Guesthouse, Reykjavík (p636)

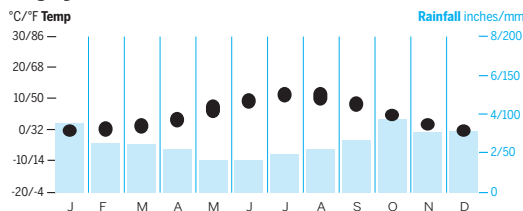
Why Go?

A land of troll-inhabited mountains and black-sand beaches, where calling seabirds are more common than a human voice – it sounds like a fairy tale, but Iceland is only a hop away from mainland Europe. A vast volcanic laboratory, here the earth itself is restless and alive. Admire thundering waterfalls, glittering-white glaciers, geysers, volcanoes and spouting mud pools; and bathe in the Blue Lagoon, the world's biggest natural hotpot. Only the toughest creatures survive: come eye to eye with whales on a boat trip, or horse trek under the midnight sun.

In summer, permanent daylight energises the inhabitants of Iceland's only city, Reykjavík, whose weekend pub crawl (*runtur*) is particularly high-spirited. Fashion and music are woven into the city's fabric: experience both during the Iceland Airwaves festival in October. In winter, with luck, you may see the eerie Northern Lights flickering across the sky.

When to Go

Reykjavík



May & Jun Prime birdwatching season happily coincides with the two driest months.

Aug Reykjavík runs at full throttle, culminating in the Culture Night arts festival.

Nov–Apr The best months for the Northern Lights.

Connections

Out on the edge of nothing, Iceland is nevertheless connected by year-round flights from Keflavík airport to European destinations, including Denmark (Copenhagen), Finland (Helsinki), Norway (Bergen, Oslo and Stavanger) and Sweden (Göteborg and Stockholm), as well as France, Germany and the Netherlands.

For a more romantic arrival, take the ferry from Denmark (see p642) to Seyðisfjörður.

ITINERARIES

Three Days

Arrive in Reykjavík on Friday to catch the decadent *runtur*. Sober up in Laugadalur geothermal pool, admire the views from Hallgrímskirkja, then absorb some Viking history at the National Museum. On Sunday, visit Gullfoss, Geysir and Pingvellir on a Golden Circle tour. Stop to soak in the Blue Lagoon on the way home.

Essential Food & Drink

» **Traditional Icelandic dishes** These reflect a nightmarish historical need to eat every last scrap: brave souls might try *svið* (singled sheep's head), *súrsaðir hrútspungar* (pickled ram's testicles) and *hárkarl* (putrefied shark meat), bought from the butcher, fishmonger or old-school workers' canteens. More palatable offerings include *harðfiskur* (dried strips of haddock with butter), *plokkfiskur* (a hearty fish-and-potato gratin) and delicious, yoghurt-like *skyr*.

» **Succulent specialities** Icelandic lamb is among the tastiest on the planet – sheep roam free in the mountains all summer, grazing on sweet grass and wild thyme. Iceland also takes great pride in its fishing industry, and super-fresh fish dishes grace most menus. Pink-footed goose and reindeer meat from the eastern highlands are high-end treats.

» **Whale-meat controversy** Many restaurants serve whale meat: the International Fund for Animal Welfare points out that only 1.1% of Icelanders regularly eat whale, with tourists responsible for consuming a significant proportion of these protected species.

» **Favourite drinks** The traditional alcoholic brew *brennivín* is schnapps made from potatoes and caraway seeds. It's fondly known as *svarti dauði* (black death). Coffee is a national institution.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Icelandic króna (Ikr)
- » **Language** Icelandic
- » **Money** ATMs everywhere
- » **Visas** Not needed for citizens of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the EU and the USA staying for up to 90 days

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 103,000 sq km
- » **Capital** Reykjavík
- » **Country code** 354
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	Ikr115
Canada	C\$1	Ikr115
euro zone	€1	Ikr161
Japan	¥100	Ikr140
New Zealand	NZ\$1	Ikr84
UK	UK£1	Ikr186
USA	US\$1	Ikr114

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** Ikr17,000
- » **Two-course evening meal** Ikr4,000
- » **Museum entrance** free–Ikr1,000
- » **500mL beer** Ikr800
- » **Reykjavík bus ticket** Ikr280

Resources

- » **Icelandic Tourist Board** (www.visiticeland.com) With links to regional websites
- » **Reykjavík tourist office** (www.visitreykjavik.is)