



Iceland



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Carolyn Bain, Alexis Averbuck

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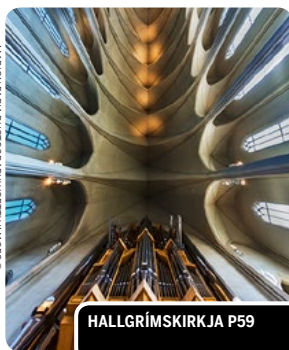
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Plan Your Trip

Itineraries



**4
DAYS**

Reykjavík Minibreak

Whether you're on a lengthy layover or enjoying a long weekend away, don't miss the chance to get out into the countryside and take in some of the natural wonders located within a stone's throw of the capital. It's simple to string together the top sights, including the Golden Circle, with more off-the-beaten-path diversions, and still have a bit of time left to lap up Reykjavík's unique charm.

After landing in **Keflavík International Airport** make a beeline for the **Blue Lagoon** to soak away the jet lag in surreal waters and silica mud. Wander the Reykjanes Peninsula's steaming earth near **Valahnúkur** or **Krýsuvík** before barrel-ling down the coastal highway for fresh seafood in **Eyrarbakki** or **Stokkseyri**. Choose a base near **Hella** or **Hvolsvöllur** to get out in the open air on horseback: the lush waterfall-rimmed Fljótshlíð valley is a key candidate. Or try to spot the Northern Lights (in the colder months). Active bodies will enjoy the stunning Fimmvörðuháls hike from **Skógar** up through the ridge





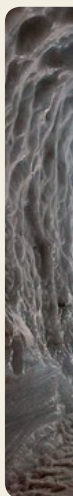
Geysir (p116)

between two brooding ice caps (and the site of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in 2010) then down into **Pórssmörk**, a forested valley dotted with wild Arctic flowers. Or you can take a super-Jeep tour or amphibious bus to Pórssmörk, and head out on day hikes around the valley. Those who are tighter on time can trek along the glacial tongue of **Sólheimajökull** instead.

On your way back west, roam the **Pjórsárdalur**, a broad volcanic river valley with a handful of disparate sights, including a Settlement Era farmstead, hidden waterfalls, and the foothills of Hekla volcano. Or, swing up to the gushing

cascades at **Gullfoss**, the spurting **Geysir** from which all others got their name, and the rift valley and ancient parliament site **Pingvellir National Park** – the classic Golden Circle route.

Wrap up your minibreak with a night in **Reykjavík**. Iceland's capital bustles with an all-star assortment of design boutiques, interesting museums and galleries, scrumptious restaurants and lively bars, plus there's easy access to whale-watching trips from the Old Harbour.



1
WEEK

Best of the West

With one week to spend, you'll be able to roam further than the popular Golden Circle and the busy southwest. We like heading northwest from Reykjavík to lesser-travelled west Iceland, which is chock-a-block with history and boasts landscapes ranging from lava fields to broad fjords and ice caps, and gives a sense of the wonderful solitude that Iceland offers.

Start in **Reykjavík**, enjoying the city's museums, cafes and bars while getting acclimatised. Then complete the day-long Golden Circle with stops at glittering **Gullfoss**, surging **Geysir**, and historic **Pingvellir National Park**, where you'll witness the tearing apart of the continental plates. If you're feeling adventurous, go inland and bump along the rutted **Kaldidalur Corridor** for stunning vistas through the pinnacles of several ice caps. Stop in at **Langjökull** for exploration of its glistening tunnel and caves, or a taste of icy activities such as snowmobiling or dog sledding. You'll emerge at **Upper Borgarfjörður**, where you can sleep in the quiet countryside and explore enormous lava tubes. If you're not up for the back-country aspects of the Kaldidalur Corridor, instead head to **Borgarnes** along the coastal route, and learn about the sagas at its excellent Settlement Centre.

Next up, explore the wonderful Snæfellsnes Peninsula. Start by horse riding around the bay of **Breiðavík** or creeping into the bizarre gorge, **Rauðfeldsgjá**. Then head west to **Arnarstapi**, where you can hike the coastal trail to **Hellnar** or pick up a Snæfellsjökull glacier tour, exploring Jules Verne's fabled centre of the earth. The area is part of Snæfellsjökull National Park and offers a multitude of hikes, taking in bird cliffs, volcanic craters, lava tubes and protected native flower terrain.

On the tip of the peninsula near **Öndverðarnes** look for pods of orca whales, or catch a whale-watching or puffin-viewing tour near **Grundarfjörður**. Then alight in charming **Stykkishólmur**, where you can take in interesting museums and sup on tasty mussels. If time permits, hop aboard the **Baldur** ferry for a day trip to quaint **Flatey** island; it's a great way to really disconnect from the world before returning to the capital.



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Top: Arnarstapi (p191)

Bottom: Langjökull (p180)

10
DAYS

Classic Ring Road

For such a wild, wonderful land, much of Iceland is surprisingly compact; the classic Ring Road trip loops you near the most popular sights. With extra time, you can add on myriad other adventures along the way.

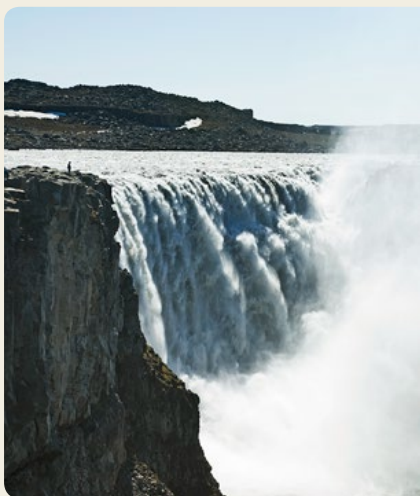
Start in **Reykjavík**, enjoying the city's creature comforts, before heading out in a clockwise fashion. Stop in **Borgarnes** for its fascinating Settlement Centre, historical sights and tasty restaurants. Then zip up to **Stykkishólmur**, an adorable village overlooking a bay studded by islets. With extra time, from here you could detour to the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. Either way, rejoin the Ring Road, breaking free of it once more to explore the quaint townships and coastal vistas of the **Tröllaskagi Peninsula** before gliding through **Akureyri**, Iceland's unofficial northern capital. Head to the geological treasure chest of the **Mývatn** region next, with a stop at **Dettifoss** to experience nature's awesome power firsthand. Push eastwards, detouring to **Borgarfjörður Eystri** for summer puffins galore. Take a break in **Seyðisfjörður**, then tackle the long journey through the rest of the east as the road curls along magical fjords.

Pause in **Höfn** for langoustine, then jump on a snowmobile to discover the vast ice cap at **Vatnajökull**. Don't miss the glacial lagoon at **Jökulsárlón**, or neighbouring Fjallsárlón, where giant bergs break off glaciers and float out to sea. You can warm up your hiking legs in **Skaftafell**, then head south across mossy lava fields and enormous river deltas to **Vík**, which has a fantastical basalt-columned beach and puffin cliffs. Still feeling spry? Tackle the awesome trek from **Skógar** to **Þórsmörk**, a verdant interior valley. Or continue west along the Ring Road, passing enormous waterfalls at **Skógafoss** and **Seljalandsfoss**, then veer away one last time to check out the Golden Circle: **Gullfoss**, **Geysir** and the yawning continental divide and ancient governmental seat at **Þingvellir National Park**. Roll back into **Reykjavík** to spend the remainder of your holiday chatting with the locals, whether in the city's geothermal pools or during late-night pub crawls.

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JUSTIN FOLKES/ISTOCK/PLANET ©



Top: Stykkishólmur (p181)

Bottom: Dettifoss (p280)





4
WEEKS

The Grand Tour

On an extended stay in addition to seeing major sights you can venture further from the Ring Road into the gorgeous Westfjords, or four-wheel-drive the Highlands.

From **Keflavík**, rent wheels and head to the **Blue Lagoon** to unwind. Follow the coastal road to arty **Stokkseyri**, then ditch the car to hike from **Landmannalaugar** to verdant **Pórssmörk**. Next, catch the boat to **Vestmannaeyjar**, where puffins flip-flap over fresh lava. Then sojourn near **Vík**, with its black basalt beach.

At **Kirkjubæjarklaustur** venture up to **Lakagíggar** to learn about the devastating effects of Laki's eruptions. **Skaftafell** offers hiking and glacier walking. Don't miss a boat ride with icebergs at **Jökulsárlón** and a snowmobile safari on **Vatnajökull**, Europe's largest ice cap. Pause in **Höfn** for legendary langoustine, then relax in hushed **Breiðdalsvík** before negotiating hairpin fjord roads to peaceful **Eskifjörður** and inspiring **Seyðisfjörður**. Follow the rhyolite cliffs down to **Borgarfjörður Eystri** to photograph puffins, then climb through **Vopnafjörður** to the grassy plains of **Langanes**. The quiet northeastern circuit rolls through **Ásbyrgi** to charming **Húsavík**, perfect for whale watching. Scenic **Mývatn** makes a great base for exploring the pounding waterfall, **Dettifoss**, and Iceland's Highland treasures such as the mammoth caldera at **Askja** and silent ice caves at **Kverkfjöll**. Stop for a slice of civilisation in **Akureyri** before touching the Arctic Circle in **Grímsey**. Wander up through **Dalvík**, check out **Siglufjörður**, then treat yourself to a relaxing swim in **Hofsós**.

Next, head to the Westfjords to learn about ancient witchcraft in **Hólmavík**, sleep fjordside in **Djúpavík** and bathe in the **Norðurfjörður** geothermal spring. Use spunky **Ísafjörður** as a launch pad to **Hornstrandir**, Iceland's majestic hiking reserve. Enter the incredible heart of the Westfjords, to find the gushing waters of **Dynjandi**, and use **Bíldudalur** or Þingeyri as a base for exploring jaw-dropping fjords. Head down to **Patreksfjörður** for a square meal and to visit the bird cliffs at **Látrabjarg** and the mind-blowing pink-red beach at **Rauðasandur**.

Ferry over to charming **Stykkishólmur** and discover the treasures of the **Snæfellsnes Peninsula**. **Borgarnes** and **Upper Borgarfjörður** blend saga sites and hidden caves, then **Langjökull** presents some human handiwork in its ice tunnel. Finish the history lesson at **Pingvellir National Park**. Then end the epic journey in **Reykjavík**, the ebullient capital.



STANORE/Shutterstock ©



KENN SCHAFER/Shutterstock ©

Top: Búðir (p192), Southern Snæfellsnes
Bottom: Puffins, Látrabjarg Peninsula (p200)

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/S-train/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Carolyn Bain

A travel writer and editor for 16 years, Carolyn has lived, worked and studied in various corners of the globe, including London, Denmark, St Petersburg and Nantucket. She is regularly drawn north from her base in Melbourne, Australia, to cover diverse destinations for Lonely Planet, from dusty outback Australia to the luminous Greek islands, by way of Maine's lobster shacks and Slovenia's alpine lakes. The Nordic region stakes a large claim to her heart, with repeated

visits to Iceland and Denmark for work and pleasure. Carolyn writes about travel and food for a range of publishers; see carolynbain.com.au for more.



Alexis Averbeck

Alexis Averbeck was born in Oakland, CA, and earned a degree at Harvard University. She has travelled and lived all over the world, from Sri Lanka and India to Mexico, Europe and Antarctica. In more recent years she's been living in Hydra, Greece, and exploring her adopted homeland; travelling to France to sample oysters in Brittany and careen through hill-top villages in Provence; and adventuring along Iceland's surreal lava fields, sparkling fjords and glacier tongues.

A travel writer for over two decades, Alexis has lived in Antarctica for a year, crossed the Pacific by sailboat and written books on her journeys through Asia, Europe and the Americas. She also appears in videos and on television promoting travel and adventure, and is a painter – visit www.alexisaverbeck.com.

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