



Southwest Iceland & the Golden Circle

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Why Go?

Black beaches stretch along the Atlantic, geysers spout from geothermal fields and waterfalls glide across escarpments while brooding volcanoes and glittering ice caps score the inland horizon. The beautiful Southwest has many of Iceland's most legendary natural wonders, so it's a relatively crowded and increasingly developed area. The Golden Circle (a tourist route comprising three famous sights: Pingvellir, Geysir and Gullfoss) draws by far the largest crowds outside of Reykjavík, but visit during off-hours or venture further afield and you'll find awe-inspiring splendour.

The further you go the better it gets. Tourist faves such as the silica-filled Blue Lagoon and the rift valley and ancient parliament at Pingvellir are just beyond the capital. Churning seas lead to the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago offshore. At the region's far reaches lie the powerful Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull volcanoes, busy Skógar and Vík, and the hidden valleys of Pórsmörk and Landmannalaugar.

Road Distances (km)

Selfoss	100				
Gullfoss	156	71			
Landmannalaugar	230	130	147		
Vík	226	130	177	218	
Reykjavík	51	57	113	185	186
	Keflavík	Selfoss	Gullfoss	Landmannalaugar	Vík

Reykjanes Peninsula



REYKJANES PENINSULA

The Reykjanes Peninsula expands in drama as you move away from the highway between Reykjavík and Keflavik International Airport. You'll find not only the Blue Lagoon, Iceland's most famous attraction, but numerous other gorgeous and interesting sights, many of them based around active volcanoes. The busiest towns are no-frills Keflavík and nearby Njarðvík, but the sweet, windswept fishing hamlets of Garður and Sandgerði – great for whale watching – are just minutes to the west of the airport on a small northwestern spur. The rest of the Reykjanes, from dramatic Reykjanestá in the southwest to the Reykjanesfólkvangur wilderness reserve in the east, is an untamed landscape of multi-hued volcanic craters, mineral lakes, bubbling hot springs, rugged mountains and coastal lava fields.

The Reykjanes Peninsula is a Unesco Global Geopark (www.reykjanesgeopark.is), formed to research and protect the region's unusual geology (pillow lava! oceanic ridge! meeting of tectonic plates! four volcanic systems!) and local culture.

Getting There & Away

Public transport to Keflavík and the Blue Lagoon is fast and frequent from Reykjavík. There is limited public bus service to other villages, but you'll do best with private transport to reach the more remote parts of the peninsula.

Blue Lagoon

As the Eiffel Tower is to Paris, so the Blue Lagoon is to Iceland...with all the positive and negative connotations implied. Those who say it's too commercial and too crowded aren't wrong, but you'll be missing something special if you don't go.

Activities

★ Blue Lagoon

GEOTHERMAL POOL

(Bláa Lónið; ☎ 420 8800; www.bluelagoon.com; adult/child Jun-Aug from €50/free, Sep-May from €40/free; 🕒 8am-midnight Jun-mid-Aug, reduced hours mid-Aug-May) In a magnificent black-lava field, the milky-teal Blue Lagoon spa is fed water from the futuristic Svartsengi geothermal plant; with its silver towers, roiling clouds of steam, and people daubed