



# East Iceland

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## Why Go?

As far as you can get (some 650km) from the country's capital, Iceland's impressively varied and sparsely populated east doesn't announce itself as loudly as other parts of the country, preferring subtle charms over big-ticket attractions. The Eastfjords is the area's most wondrous destination – the scenery is particularly spectacular around the northern fjord villages, backed by sheer-sided mountains etched with waterfalls. If the weather's fine, several days spent hiking or kayaking here may be some of your most memorable in Iceland.

Away from the convoluted coast, the country's longest lake stretches southwest from Egilsstaðir, its shores lined with perfect diversions. Head further inland and you'll come to the forgotten farms, fells and reindeer-roamed heathlands of the empty east, and to Snæfell, one of Iceland's prime peaks.

Ring Road motorists often simply overnight in Egilsstaðir then speed out of the east. Lunacy! The spectacular fjords, scenic hiking trails, fascinating geology (including an abundance of stones and minerals) and friendly villages of the east are some of Iceland's unsung treasures.

## Road Distances (km)

Reykjavík	552					
Egilsstaðir	85	698				
Borgarfjörður Eystri	155	702	70			
Seyðisfjörður	111	660	27	92		
Neskaupstaður	164	703	72	140	96	
Breiðdalsvík	64	612	84	153	109	100
	Djúpivogur	Reykjavík	Egilsstaðir	Borgarfjörður Eystri	Seyðisfjörður	Neskaupstaður

## **i** Getting There & Away

The 'Travel Guide' pages of the East Iceland tourism website ([www.east.is](http://www.east.is)) outline transport to/from and within the region, including the schedule of buses in and out of the fjords.

### AIR

Egilsstaðir's airport is 1km north of town. **Air Iceland** (Flugfélag Íslands; ☎ 570 3030; [www.airiceland.is](http://www.airiceland.is)) flies up to five times daily year-round between Egilsstaðir and Reykjavík. Flights are popular (and in peak winter may offer the only transport connection).

### BUS

**To/From East Iceland** Egilsstaðir is a major stop on the Ring Road.

Note that there is no winter bus connection between Egilsstaðir and Höfn.

**SBA-Norðurleið** (☎ 550 0720; [www.sba.is](http://www.sba.is)) services (pick-up and drop-off at campground; note no winter services):

- ➔ Bus 62 to Höfn (1kr8800, 4½ hours, one daily June to mid-September)
- ➔ Bus 62a to Reykjahlíð, Mývatn (1kr5700, 2½ hours, one daily June to mid-September)
- ➔ Bus 62a to Akureyri (1kr9000, four hours, one daily June to mid-September)

**Straeto** (☎ 540 2700; [www.straeto.is](http://www.straeto.is)) services (pick-up and drop-off opposite the N1, corner of Miðvangur):

- ➔ Bus 56 to Reykjahlíð, Mývatn (1kr4550, two hours, one daily June to mid-September, four weekly rest of year)
- ➔ Bus 56 to Akureyri (1kr6300, 3½ hours, one daily June to mid-September, four weekly rest of year)

## **i** Getting Around

### BUS

Within east Iceland it's possible to use SBA-Norðurleið's daily bus 62/62a to travel between fjords. From Egilsstaðir to Höfn, the bus stops at Reyðarfjörður, Fáskrúðsfjörður, Stöðvarfjörður, Breiðdalsvík, Berunes hostel and Djúpivogur.

Local buses run from Egilsstaðir to villages around the fjords, under the **SVAust** (☎ 471 2320; [www.east.is](http://www.east.is)) umbrella. Note that these buses don't carry bikes.

As well as direct services to Borgarfjörður Eystri (in summer) and Seyðisfjörður, SVAust runs the following two year-round routes, geared to service the needs of Alcoa commuters. Buses run every day (fewer services on weekends); ticket price depends on distance travelled. Check online for schedule and fare details, or ask at tourist information centres in the area.

- ➔ Route 1 Egilsstaðir–Reyðarfjörður–Eskifjörður–Neskaupstaður (Nordfjörður)
- ➔ Route 2 Reyðarfjörður–Fáskrúðsfjörður–Stöðvarfjörður–Breiðdalsvík

### CAR

The Ring Road (Rte 1) steams through Egilsstaðir, but if you want to explore the Eastfjords you need to leave it here. Options:

- ➔ Rte 92 south to Reyðarfjörður and nearby fjords
- ➔ Rte 93 east to Seyðisfjörður
- ➔ Rte 94 north to Borgarfjörður Eystri

**Car Hire** If you fly into the east, or arrive by ferry from Europe without wheels, the big-name car-hire places (Avis, Budget, Hertz and Europ-car) have agents in Egilsstaðir.

## INLAND

### Egilsstaðir

POP 2330

However much you strain to discover some underlying charm, Egilsstaðir isn't a ravishing beauty. It's the main regional transport hub, and a centre for local commerce, so its services are quite good (including quality accommodation and dining options). It's growing fast, but in a hotchpotch fashion and without a proper town centre.

Egilsstaðir's saving grace is its proximity to lovely Lagarfljót, Iceland's third-largest lake. Since Saga times, tales have been told of a monster living in its depths. If you want to do some beastie-hunting, or explore the forest on the lake's eastern bank, Egilsstaðir makes a good base.

A word of warning: if you can, avoid Egilsstaðir on Wednesday nights in summer, as the ferry to Europe sails from Seyðisfjörður (27km away) on Thursday mornings and rooms, meals and campsites in the area are in hot demand. If you are taking the ferry, book your accommodation well ahead.

## **i** Sights & Activities

Recent high-profile industrial projects, such as the Kárahnjúkar hydroelectricity dam and Alcoa aluminium smelter (both opposed by environmentalist groups, but welcomed by many locals for bringing jobs to the area), have seen an influx of workers to the east.

There has been feverish house-building in Egilsstaðir and other eastern communities; in time, the hub town's entertainment facilities may grow, but at present there's not a great deal to lure visitors in Egilsstaðir itself.

### Minjasafn Austurlands

MUSEUM

(East Iceland Heritage Museum; [www.minjasafn.is](http://www.minjasafn.is); Laufskógar 1; adult/child 1kr800/free; ☎ 1-5pm