



Iceland

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Best Places to Eat

- » Dill (p234)
- » Bergsson Mathús (p234)
- » Narfeyrarstofa (p253)
- » Pallurinn (p253)
- » Vogafjós (p256)

Best Places to Stay

- » Icelandair Hotel Reykjavík Marina (p231)
- » Hótel Egilsen (p242)
- » Hótel Aldan (p259)
- » Skjaldarvík (p248)
- » Kaldbaks-Kot (p252)

Why Go?

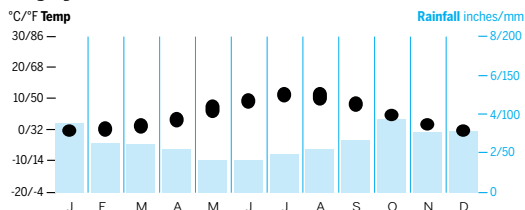
Iceland is literally a country in the making, a vast volcanic laboratory where mighty forces shape the earth: geysers gush, mudpots gloop, sulphurous clouds puff from fissures and glaciers grind great pathways through the mountains. Experience the full weirdness of Icelandic nature by bathing in turquoise pools, kayaking under the midnight sun or crunching across a dazzling-white ice cap.

Iceland's creatures are larger than life too: minke, humpback and even blue whales are common visitors to the deeper fjords. Record-breaking numbers of birds nest in the sea cliffs: cutest are the puffins who flutter here in their millions.

Despite the devastating recession, signs of recovery have arrived surprisingly fast. Clean, green Reykjavík must contain the world's highest concentration of dreamers, authors, poets and musicians. Little wonder, as the magnificent scenery of this Atlantic island forged in fire and ice make it one of the world's most awe-inspiring sights.

When to Go

Reykjavík



May–Jun Prime birdwatching season happily coincides with the two driest months of the year.

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

Nov–Apr The best months for viewing the aurora borealis (Northern Lights).

AT A GLANCE

- » **Capital** Reykjavík
- » **Area** 103,000 sq km
- » **Population** 320,060
- » **Country code**
☎354
- » **Language** Icelandic
- » **Currency** króna (lkr)

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	lkr128.98
Canada	C\$1	lkr120.74
Europe	€1	lkr158.68
Japan	¥100	lkr130.66
New Zealand	NZ\$1	lkr102.88
UK	UK£1	lkr187.13
USA	US\$1	lkr123.28

For current exchange rates, see www.xe.com.

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room**
lkr12,000-16,000
- » **Two-course evening meal** lkr5000
- » **Museum entrance**
free-lkr1500
- » **Beer (500mL)** lkr900
- » **Reykjavík bus ticket**
lkr350

Resources

- » **BSI** (www.bsi.is) First port-of-call for the island's bus network
- » **Icelandic Tourist Board** (www.visiticeland.com) With links to regional websites
- » **Reykjavík Tourist Office** (www.visitreykjavik.is)

Connections

Little Iceland, way out on the edge of nothing, is nevertheless connected by regular flights from Keflavík airport to Scandinavian and other European capitals – see p238 for details.

For those who like more romance, the ferry from Denmark (p494) via the Faroes along the jaw-dropping fjord to Seyðisfjörður is the most stylish way to arrive.

ITINERARIES

Three Days

Arrive in Reykjavík on Friday to catch the decadent *djammið* (pub crawl). Sober up in Laugardalslaug 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.

One Week

Head for the countryside: chill out on serene Snæfellsnes in the west; view the volcanic Vestmannaeyjar in the south with their immense puffin colonies; or drive east to Skaftafell for wonderful hiking and glacier walking.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Traditional Icelandic dishes** These reflect a nightmarish historical need to eat every last scrap: brave souls might try *svið* (singd sheep's head), *súrsaðir hrútspungar* (pickled ram's testicles) and *hákarl* (putrefied shark meat), bought from the butcher, fishmonger or old-school workers' canteens. More palatable offerings include *harðfiskur* (dried strips of haddock with butter), *plökkfiskur* (a hearty dish of leftover fish stew, served au gratin) and delicious yoghurt-like *skyr*.
- » **Succulent specialities** Icelandic lamb is some of 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 superfresh fish dishes grace most menus. Pink-footed goose and reindeer meat from the eastern highlands are high-end treats.
- » **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.