



# Iceland

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hótel Egilsen (p241)
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## Why Go?

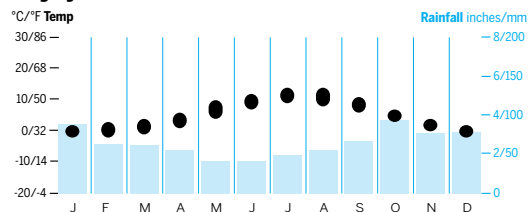
Iceland is literally a country in the making, a vast volcanic laboratory where mighty forces shape the earth: geysers gush, mudpots gloop, sulphurous clouds puff from fissures and glaciers grind great pathways through the mountains. Experience the full weirdness of Icelandic nature by bathing in milky blue 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.

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



**Jun–Aug Cons:**  
high demand, high prices. Pros: best weather, loads of daylight, fun festivals.

**May & Sep**  
Shoulder season – smaller crowds, lower prices, cooler weather.

**Oct–Apr** Good for winter activities, including viewing the aurora borealis (northern lights).

## AT A GLANCE

**Capital** Reykjavík  
**Area** 103,000 sq km  
**Population** 325,700  
**Country code** ☎ 354  
**Language** Icelandic  
**Currency** króna (Ikr)

## Exchange Rates

<b>Australia</b>	A\$1	Ikr105
<b>Canada</b>	C\$1	Ikr108
<b>Euro Zone</b>	€1	Ikr152
<b>Japan</b>	¥100	Ikr110
<b>New Zealand</b>	NZ\$1	Ikr94
<b>UK</b>	UK£1	Ikr195
<b>USA</b>	US\$1	Ikr120

## Set Your Budget

**Budget double room**  
 Ikr12,000–Ikr15,000

**Two-course evening meal**  
 Ikr4000–Ikr5000

**Museum entrance**  
 free–Ikr1500

**Beer (500mL)**  
 Ikr800–Ikr1200

**Reykjavík bus ticket**  
 Ikr350

## Resources

**Visit Iceland** ([www.visiticeland.com](http://www.visiticeland.com))

**Visit Reykjavík** ([www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is))

**Reykjavík Grapevine** ([www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is))

**Icelandic Met Office**  
 (<http://en.vedur.is>)

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/iceland](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/iceland))

## Connections

Iceland is well connected by regular flights from Keflavík airport to Scandinavian and other European capitals, as well as numerous North American cities.

The ferry from Denmark via the Faroe Islands to Seyðisfjörður (east Iceland, 660km from Reykjavík) is a superbly scenic way to arrive.

## ITINERARIES

### Three Days

Arrive in **Reykjavík** on Friday to join the notorious 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 **Skafafell** for wonderful hiking and glacier walking.

## Essential Food & Drink

**Protein power** The superb local fish and lamb should be high on your culinary hit list. You may be enticed by the 'novelty value' of sampling whale or puffin, but please do consider your actions.

**Skyr** Rich and creamy yoghurtlike staple, sometimes sweetened with sugar and berries. You'll see it in local desserts, playing a starring role in cheesecake and crème brûlée (or even 'skyramisú') concoctions.

**Pýlsur** Icelandic hot dogs, made with a combination of lamb, beef and pork, and topped with raw and deep-fried onion, ketchup, mustard and tangy remoulade (ask for '*eina með öllu*' – one with everything).

**Hákarl** Feeling brave? Chef Anthony Bourdain described *hákarl* (fermented shark, which reeks of ammonia) as 'probably the single worst thing I have ever put in my mouth'.

**Rúgbrauð** Dark, dense rye bread. Look for *hverabrauð* in Mývatn – it's baked underground using geothermal heat.

**Beer** Try the new wave of craft beers from microbreweries such as Borg, Kaldi and Einstök.