



≡ *Fast Talk*

Icelandic

Guaranteed to get you talking

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Before You Go

Many visitors to Iceland get around without speaking a word of Icelandic, but just a few phrases go a long way in making friends, inviting service with a smile, and ensuring a rich and rewarding travel experience – you could discover a cosy thermal spring off the tourist track, experience a sublime meal, or grab that great shopping bargain.

Icelandic is a North Germanic language. Iceland was settled primarily by Norwegians in the 9th and 10th centuries. By the 14th century Icelandic (Old Norse) and Norwegian had grown apart considerably. This was due to changes in Norwegian, while Icelandic changed remarkably little through the centuries.

In fact, Iceland has an unbroken literary tradition, dating from about 1100. The treasures of the Sagas and the Poetic Edda, written about 700 years ago, can be enjoyed by a modern-day speaker of Icelandic.

Be aware, especially when you're trying to read bus

timetables or road signs, that place names can be spelled in several different ways due to Icelandic grammar rules.

If you read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English, you'll be understood.

PRONUNCIATION TIPS

You'll find further pronunciation tips on p#, but to get you started:

★ The Icelandic alphabet consists of 32 letters: *a, á, b, d, e, é, f, g, h, i, í, j, k, l, m, n, o, ó, p, r, s, t, u, ú, v, x, y, ý, þ, ð, æ, ö.*

★ Double consonants are pronounced as such.

★ Stress is generally on the first syllable.

★ The Icelandic letter *þ*, represented as *th* in the pronunciation guide, is pronounced as the ‘th’ in ‘thin’, while *ð*, represented as *th*, is pronounced as the ‘th’ in ‘lather’.

ARTHUR OR MARTHA?

When there are both feminine and masculine forms of a word, it's indicated in this book in either of two ways, with the feminine form always appearing first:

★ with a slash separating the feminine form and masculine ending (which is added to the feminine form) of a word:

hot heit/-ur (f/m)
hait/-oor

★ when the distinction between masculine and feminine is more complex, each word is given in full, separated with a slash:

cold köld/kaldur (f/m)
kerld/kuhld-oor

Fast Talk Icelandic

Don't worry if you've never learnt Icelandic (íslensku *ees-lehn-skö*) before – it's all about confidence. You don't need to memorise endless grammatical details or long lists of vocabulary – you just need to start speaking. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort. And remember that body language and a sense of humour have a role to play in every culture.

“you just need to start speaking”

Even if you use the very basics, such as greetings and civilities, your travel experience will be the better for it. Once you start, you'll be amazed how many prompts you'll get to help you build on those first words. You'll hear people speaking, pick up sounds and expressions from the locals, see something on a billboard – all these things help to build your understanding.



Phrases to Learn Before You Go

1. Where's the next petrol station?

Hvar er næsta bensín stöð?

kvahrr ehrr nais-dah behn-seen sterth?

In the highlands you should check fuel levels and the distance to the next petrol station before setting off.

2. I'm looking for a public toilet.

Ég er að leita að almenningssalerni.

yehkh ehrr ahth lay-tah ahth ahl-mehn-inkhs-sahl-ehrr-dni

Major sights often have too few facilities for increasing visitor numbers; plan ahead and stop at facilities when you see them.

3. What would you recommend?

Hverju mælir þú með? *kver-yu mai-lir thoo medh*

Let a local recommend a delicious, fresh blast of local flavour.

4. I'd like a bottle of beer, please.

Get ég fengið bjór í flösku, takk.

get yekh fen-gidh byohr-ee fleusku tak

You must be at least 20 years old to buy alcohol, which is only sold in licensed bars, restaurants and government-run Vínbúðin liquor stores.

5. How do you say...?

Hvernig segir maður ...?

kvehrr-dnikh say-irr mahth-örr ...?

Most Icelanders speak English, but attempts to speak the local language will be much appreciated.

10. *Phrases to Sound Like a Local*

Cool!

Kúl!

kool

No worries.

Engar áhyggiur.

ayng-ahrr ow-higyrrö

Sure.

Vissulega.

viss-ö-lehkh-ah

No way!

Ekki séns!

ehky-i syens

Just joking!

Bara grín!

ba-rrah green

Too bad.

En leitt.

ehn layt

What a shame.

En leiðinlegt.

ehn layth-in-lehcht

What's up?

Hvað segirðu (gott)?

kvahth sagy-irr-th (gott)

Well done!

Vel gert!

vehl gyehrt

Not bad.

Ekki slæmt

ehky-i slaimt

10. *Phrases to Start a Sentence*

**When is
(the tour)?**

Hvenær er (ferðin)?
kveh-nahr ehrr (fehrth-in)

**Where is (the
bus stop)?**

Hvar er biðstöðin?
kvahr ehrr bith-sterth-in?

**Where can I
(buy a ticket)?**

Hvar get ég (keypt miða)?
kvahr geht yekkh (kayft mith-ah?)

**Do you have
(a map)?**

Áttu (kort af staðnum)?
owt-ö korrt ahv stahth-nöm?

**Is there (a
flight to...)?**

Er (flogið til ...)?
ehrr flo-yith til ...?

**I'd like
(a coffee).**

Gæti ég fengið (kaffi).
gyai-ti yekkh fayn-khith (kahf-fi)

**I'd like to
(return this).**

Mig langar (að skila þessu).
mikh lowng-ahr (ahth skhi-lah thehss).

**Can I (take
photographs)?**

Má ég (taka myndir)?
mow yekkh (tah-kah mind-irr?)

**Do I need to
(book)?**

Parf ég að (panta)?
thahrrf yekkh ahth (pahn-tah)?

**Can you
(show me)?**

Gætir þú (sýnt mér)?
geh-törr thoo (seent myehrr?)

Chatting & Basics

≡ Fast Phrases

Hello./Goodbye.

Halló./Bless.
hahl-loh/blehs

Please./Thank you.

Gjörðu svo vel./Takk fyrir.
gyer-thö svo vehl/tahk firr-irr

Do you speak English?

Talar þú ensku?
tah-lahrr thoo ehn-skö?

Essentials

Yes.

Já.
yow

No.

Nei.
nay

Please.

Gjörðu svo vel.
gyer-thö svo vehl

Thank you.

Takk fyrir.
tahk firr-irr

You're welcome.

Ekkert að þakka.
ehk-ehrrt ahth thahk-ah

Excuse me. (forgive me)

Afsakið.
ahf-sahk-ith

Sorry.

Fyrirgefou.
firr-irr-gyehv-thö