



Iceland



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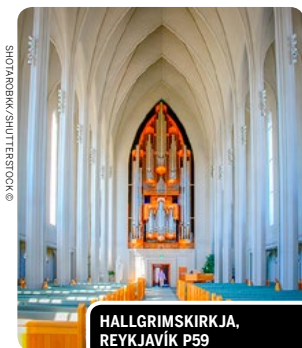
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Plan Your Trip

Itineraries



**4
DAYS**

Reykjavík Minibreak

Whether you're on a lengthy layover or enjoying a long weekend away, don't miss the chance to get out into the countryside and take in some of the natural wonders located within a stone's throw of the capital. It's simple to string together the top sights, including the Golden Circle, with more off-the-beaten-path diversions, and still have a bit of time left to lap up Reykjavík's unique charm.

After landing at **Keflavík International Airport** make a beeline for the **Blue Lagoon** to soak away the jet lag in surreal waters and silica mud. Wander the Reykjanes Peninsula's steaming earth near **Valahnúkur** or **Seltún** before barrelling down the coastal highway for fresh seafood in **Eyrarbakki** or **Stokkseyri**. Choose a base near **Hella** or **Hvolsvöllur** to get out in the open air on horseback: the lush waterfall-rimmed Fljótshlíð valley is a key candidate. Or try to spot the Northern Lights (in the colder months). Active bodies will enjoy the stunning Fimmvörðuháls hike from **Skógar** up through the ridge





Strokkur geyser (p126)

between two brooding ice caps (and the site of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in 2010) then down into **Þórsmörk**, a soaring valley dotted with wild Arctic flowers. Or you can take a super-Jeep tour or amphibious bus to Þórsmörk, and head out on day hikes around the valley. Those who are tighter on time can trek along the glacial tongue of **Sólheimajökull** instead.

On your way back west, roam the **Þjórsárdalur**, a broad volcanic river valley with a handful of disparate sights, including a Settlement Era farmstead, hidden waterfalls, and the foothills of Hekla volcano. Or, swing up to the gushing

cascades at **Gullfoss**, the spurting **Geysir** from which all others got their name and **Strokkur** geysir nearby, and the rift valley and ancient parliament site **Pingvellir National Park** – the classic Golden Circle route.

Wrap up your minibreak with a night in **Reykjavík**. Iceland's capital bustles with an all-star assortment of boutiques, museums and galleries, lively bars and restaurants serving scrumptious food, plus there's easy access to whale-watching trips from the Old Harbour.



1
WEEK

Best of the West



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With one week to spend, you'll be able to roam further than the popular Golden Circle and the busy southwest. Try heading northwest from Reykjavík to lesser-travelled west Iceland, which is chock-a-block with history and boasts landscapes ranging from lava fields to broad fjords and ice caps, and gives a sense of the wonderful solitude that Iceland offers.

Start in **Reykjavík**, enjoying the city's museums, cafes and bars while getting acclimatised. Then complete the day-long Golden Circle with stops at glittering **Gullfoss**, surging **Geysir**, and historic **Pingvellir National Park**, where you'll witness the tearing apart of the continental plates. If you're feeling adventurous, go inland and bump along the rutted **Kaldidalur Corridor** for stunning vistas through the pinnacles of several ice caps. Stop in at **Langjökull** for exploration of its glistening tunnel and caves, or a taste of icy activities such as snowmobiling. You'll emerge at **Upper Borgarbyggð**, where you can sleep in the quiet countryside, explore enormous lava tubes or soak in a sleek spa complex. If you're not up for the back-country aspects of the Kaldidalur Corridor, instead head to **Borgarnes** along the coastal route, and learn about the sagas at its excellent Settlement Centre.



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Next up, explore the wonderful Snæfellsnes Peninsula. Start by horse riding around the bay of **Breiðavík** or creeping into the bizarre gorge, **Rauðfeldsgjá**. Then head west to **Arnarstapi**, where you can hike the coastal trail to **Hellnar** or pick up a Snæfellsjökull glacier tour, exploring Jules Verne's fabled centre of the earth. The area is part of Snæfellsjökull National Park and offers a multitude of hikes, taking in bird cliffs, volcanic craters, lava tubes and protected native flower terrain.

On the tip of the peninsula near **Öndverðarnes** look for pods of orcas, or catch a whale-watching or puffin-viewing tour near **Grundarfjörður**. Then alight in charming **Stykkishólmur**, where you can take in interesting museums and sup on tasty mussels. If time permits, hop aboard the **Baldur** ferry for a day trip to quaint **Flatey** island; it's a great way to really disconnect from the world before returning to the capital.

Top: Stykkishólmur (p219)

Bottom: Pingvellir National Park (p119)

10
DAYS

Classic Ring Road

For such a wild, wonderful land, much of Iceland is surprisingly compact; the classic Ring Road trip loops you near the most popular sights. With extra time, you can add on myriad adventures along the way.

Start in **Reykjavík**, enjoying the city's creature comforts, before heading out in a clockwise fashion. Stop in **Borgarnes** for its fascinating Settlement Centre, historical sights and tasty restaurants. Then zip up to **Stykkishólmur**, an adorable village overlooking a bay studded by islets. With extra time, from here you could detour to the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. Either way, rejoin the Ring Road, breaking free of it once more to explore the quaint townships and coastal vistas of the **Tröllaskagi Peninsula** before gliding through **Akureyri**, Iceland's unofficial northern capital. Head to the geological treasure chest of the **Mývatn** region next, with a stop at **Dettifoss** to experience nature's awesome power firsthand. Push eastwards, detouring to **Borgarfjörður Eystri** for summer puffins galore. Take a break in **Seyðisfjörður**, then tackle the long journey through the rest of the east as the road curls along magical fjords.

Pause in **Höfn** for langoustine, and make plans to discover the icy realms of the vast **Vatnajökull** ice cap, be it via snowmobile or super-jEEP. Don't miss the glacial lagoon at **Jökulsárlón**, or neighbouring Fjallsárlón, where giant bergs break off glaciers and float out to sea. You can warm up your hiking legs in **Skaftafell** with glacier hikes aplenty then head south across mossy lava fields and enormous river deltas to **Vík**, which has a fantastical basalt-columned beach and puffin cliffs. Still feeling spry? Tackle the awesome trek from **Skógar** to **Pórssmörk**, a verdant interior valley. Or continue west along the Ring Road, passing enormous waterfalls at **Skógafoss** and **Seljalandsfoss**, then veer away one last time to check out the Golden Circle: **Gullfoss**, **Geysir** and the yawning continental divide and ancient governmental seat at **Pingvellir National Park**. Roll back into Reykjavík to spend the remainder of your holiday chatting with the locals, whether in the city's geothermal pools or during late-night pub crawls.

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Top: Dettifoss (p322)
Bottom: Lava at Hverir (p311)





4
WEEKS

The Grand Tour

Remote and fantastical swaths of Iceland open to you with an extended stay. In addition to seeing major sights, venture further from the Ring Road, into the gorgeous, isolated Westfjords, or four-wheel-drive in the Highlands.

From **Keflavík airport**, rent wheels and head to the **Blue Lagoon** to unwind. Follow the coastal road, then head inland to chase waterfalls like **Seljalandsfoss**. Catch the boat to **Vestmannaeyjar**, where puffins flip-flap over fresh lava. Then sojourn near **Vík**, with its iconic black beach and stone sea stacks.

At **Kirkjubæjarklaustur** explore emerald trails and a fiery history. **Skaftafell** offers hiking, glacier walking and winter ice caves. Don't miss the icebergs at **Jökulsárlón** and consider a snowmobile or super-Jeep safari on frosty **Vatnajökull**, Europe's largest ice cap. Pause in **Höfn** for legendary langoustine, then negotiate hairpin fjord roads with epic views. Enjoy panoramas aplenty in inspiring **Seyðisfjörður**, and puffins and glorious hiking in **Borgarfjörður Eystri**.

Climb through **Vopnafjörður** to the grassy plains of **Langanes**, then follow the quiet northeastern circuit to the natural wonders of **Ásbyrgi**. Charming **Húsavík** is perfect for whale watching. Scenic **Mývatn** is a great base for exploring geothermal wonders and pounding waterfall **Dettifoss**. It's also a jump-off point for Highland treasures like mammoth caldera **Askja**. Get a slice of civilisation in **Akureyri** before touching the Arctic Circle on the island of **Grímsey**. Tour Tröllaskagi to check out **Siglufjörður**, then treat yourself to a relaxing swim in **Hofsós**.

Head to the Westfjords to learn about ancient witchcraft in **Hólmavík**, and use buzzing **Ísafjörður** as a launch pad to **Hornstrandir**, Iceland's majestic reserve. Explore the gushing waters of **Dynjandi**, then weave through fjords to bird cliffs at **Látrabjarg** and the mind-blowing pink-red beach **Rauðasandur**.

Ferry to charming **Stykkishólmur** and discover the treasures of the **Snæfellsnes Peninsula**, including golden beaches and craggy lava fields. **Borgarnes** and **Upper Borgarfjörður** blend saga sites and hidden caves, then **Langjökull** presents its ice tunnel. Get a history lesson at **Pingvellir National Park**, then finish up in **Reykjavík**, the ebullient capital.



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ANDREW MAWDSLEY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Top: Hiking Hornstrandir (p262)
Bottom: Víkurkirkja, Vík (p168)

Behind the Scenes

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OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Alexis Averbuck

West Iceland, North Iceland, The Highlands Alexis has travelled and lived all over the world, from Sri Lanka to Ecuador, Zanzibar and Antarctica. In recent years she's been living on the Greek island of Hydra and exploring her adopted homeland; sampling oysters in Brittany; and adventuring along Iceland's surreal lava fields, sparkling fjords and glacier tongues. A travel writer for more than two decades, Alexis has lived in Antarctica for a year, crossed the Pacific by sailboat

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Belinda Dixon

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