

“All you’ve got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go!”

TONY WHEELER, COFOUNDER – LONELY PLANET

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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions
to help you put together your perfect trip

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UNDERSTAND ICELAND

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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ISBN 978-1-74179-942-2

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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Brandon Presser,
Carolyn Bain, Fran Parnell

Iceland



Arctic Circle

Denmark Strait

Tröllaskagi Peninsula

Ring Road detour with viewpoints galore (p196)

Westfjords

Majestic stone towers and silent fjords (p158)

Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Cracked lava and humbling earth energy forces (p142)

Reykjavík

Iceland's unrivalled nightlife headquarters (p44)

Blue Lagoon

Steaming silica cauldron full of relaxing tourists (p88)

Vestmannaeyjar

Craggy archipelago and roaring bird life (p128)

Kerlingarfjöll

An interior massif and emerging hiker's haunt (p289)

Fimmvörðuháls

Gushing waterfalls and a steaming eruption site (p116)





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 Melbourne, London and Oakland, 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



Brandon Presser

Coordinating Author; Reykjavík, Southwest Iceland & the Golden Circle, West Iceland, The Westfjords, Iceland: Nature's Wonderland, Iceland Today Growing up in northern Canada, Brandon was all too familiar with sweeping, desolate terrain and shiver-worthy landscapes. But no snowdrift was big enough to prepare him for the sheer awesomeness of the remote Icelandic countryside. It was a simple transcontinental layover that turned harmless curiosity into full-blown

infatuation and now, a decade later, he's checked off almost every fjordhead and mountain pass from his to-do list. He's even received compliments on his Icelandic pronunciation! (His grammar, however, is improving at glacial speeds.) Brandon spends most of the year writing his way across the globe – he's authored around 40 Lonely Planet guidebooks and explored over 75 countries. For more about Brandon, check out www.brandonpresser.com.

Read more about Brandon at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/brandonpresser



Carolyn Bain

Month by Month, North Iceland, East Iceland, Southeast Iceland, The Highlands, Directory A–Z, Transport Melbourne-born Carolyn has had an ongoing love affair with the Nordic region, a love that began when she was a teenager living in Denmark and that has been regularly rekindled over 12 years of writing guidebooks to destinations such as Denmark, Sweden and Nordic-wannabe Estonia. Researching this book fulfilled a long-held ambition and has taken her Nordic

adulation to dizzying new heights. New and/or rekindled obsessions include *skyr*, snowmobiles, fjords, hot-pots, Northern Lights, puffins, *lopapeysur* and Of Monsters and Men.

Read more about Carolyn at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/carolynbain



Fran Parnell

History, Natural Wonders, Icelandic Culture, Icelandic Attitudes, Icelandic Cuisine Fran's passion for Scandinavia began while studying for a masters degree in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic. A strange university slide show featuring sublime Icelandic mountains and a matter-of-fact man who'd literally dug his

own grave awakened a fascination that has kept on growing. Deserted valleys and blasted mountain tops are her chosen lurking places, and Hekla is her favourite volcano. Fran has also worked on Lonely Planet's guides to Scandinavian Europe, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Reykjavík.

Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

8th edition – May 2013

ISBN 978 1 74179 942 2

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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itineraries

Whether you've got three days or 30, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



10 Days

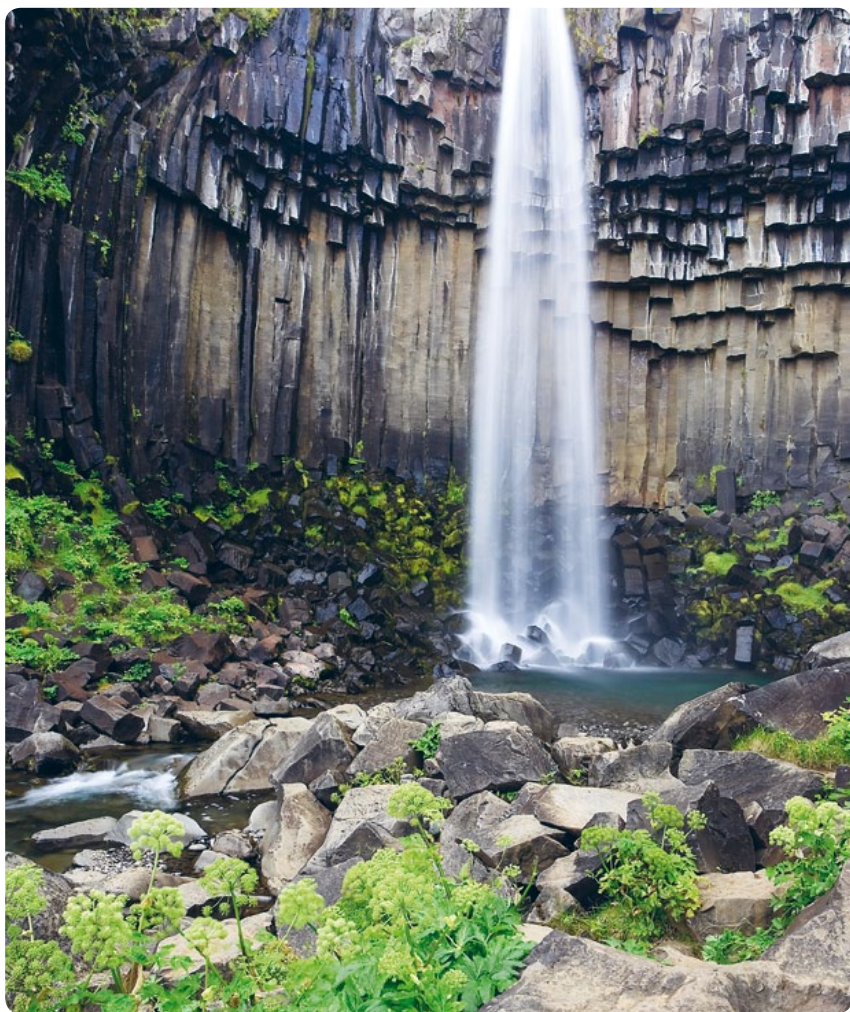
Intro to Iceland: Classic Ring Road

Depart **Reykjavík** in a clockwise fashion, stopping in **Borgarnes** on the way to **Stykkishólmur**, an adorable village overlooking an isle-ridden bay. Rejoin the Ring Road, breaking away once more to uncover the quaint townships and coastal vistas of the **Tröllaskagi Peninsula** before gliding through **Akureyri**, Iceland's unofficial northern capital. Onto mysterious **Mývatn** next, with a stop at **Dettifoss** to experience the awesome power of nature. Push eastward to **Borgarfjörður Eystri** for summer puffins galore. Slow down in **Seyðisfjörður**, then tackle the long journey through the rest of the east as the road curls along dozens of magical fjords. Pause in **Höfn** for langoustine, jump on a snowmobile to discover **Vatnajökull**, then putter along the glacial lagoon at **Jökulsárlón**. Warm up your hiking legs in **Skaftafell**, then tackle the awesome trek from **Skógar** to **Þósmörk**, a verdant interior valley. Find your way back to the Ring Road and as you continue west, veer away one last time to check out the yawning continental divide and the island's ancient government seat at **Þingvellir National Park** before rolling into **Reykjavík** to spend the remainder of your holiday enjoying the capital's treasures.



Three to Four Weeks The Grand Tour

Pick up your own wheels after arriving in **Keflavík**, and head to **Blue Lagoon** to slough off the hours of tiring travel. Follow the coastal road through maritime **Stokkseyri**, then it's on to **Landmannalaugar** for the legendary multiday hike down into the secreted valley of **Þórs mörk**. Back near the Ring Road – as the anti-clockwise journey continues – you'll find the boat out to **Vestmannaeyjar**, where puffins flit like buzzing bees above fresh lava flows. Hang out in verdant **Vík**, then push onward to **Kirkjubæjarklaustur**, where you can venture up to **Lakagígar** to learn about the devastating effects of the Laki eruptions. Further on, **Skaftafell** offers a slew of hiking and biking possibilities. Don't miss a boat ride among oversized ice cubes at **Jökulsárlón** and a snowmobile safari on **Vatnajökull**, Europe's biggest glacier. Pause in **Höfn** for some legendary langoustine, then relax in hushed **Breiðdalsvík** before negotiating the hairpin fjord roads leading up to peaceful **Eskifjörður** and inspiring **Seyðisfjörður**. Follow the rhyolite cliffs down to **Borgarfjörður Eysri** to snap photos of puffins and turf houses, then climb through **Vopnafjörður** to the grassy plains of **Langanes**, Iceland's 'tail'. The quiet northeastern circuit rolls through **Ásbyrgi** before dropping off in the charming town of **Húsavík** for some serious whale watching. Wander around scenic **Mývatn**, which makes a great base for exploring the pounding waterfall, **Dettifoss**, and Iceland's inland treasures like the glittering caldera at **Askja** and silent ice caves at **Kverkfjöll**. Stop for a slice of civilisation in **Akureyri** before touching the Arctic Circle in **Grimsey**. Wander up through **Dalvík**, check out **Siglufjörður**, then treat yourself to a relaxing swim in **Hofsós**. Learn about ancient witchcraft in **Hólmavík**, sleep fjordside in **Djúpavík** and bathe in **Norðurfjörður's** geothermal spring. Base yourself in the charming village of **Stykkishólmur** to explore the myriad treasures of the **Snæfellsnes Peninsula**, from golden beaches and craggy lava fields to glistening ice caps and hidden hot-pots. It's on to **Borgarnes** next, followed by **Upper Borgarfjörður's** blend of saga sites and hidden caves. Continue the history lesson at **Pingvellir National Park**, where you can also glimpse the shifting continental plates. Then end the epic journey in **Reykjavík**, Iceland's charming cultural stronghold.



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MARTIN MOOS / GETTY IMAGES ©

- » (above) Svartifoss waterfall (p272). Skafftafell
- » (left) Town houses along Grettisgata, Reykjavik



Two Weeks Best of the West

Start in **Reykjavík**, enjoying the city's cafes, bars and museums. Head to **Pingvellir National Park** to witness the tearing apart of continental plates, then take in the rosy sunsets in **Laugarvatn** before completing the so-called Golden Circle with stops at spurting **Geysir** and glittering **Gullfoss**. Rev up the 4WD for a ride along the deserted Kjölur Route, stopping in **Kerlingarfjöll** to admire the striking landscapes. Slide west for a soothing seaweed bath in **Reykhólar** before negotiating the sawtooth fjords of **Ísafjardardjúp**. Use spunky **Ísafjörður** or scruffy **Bolungarvík** as a launch pad to explore the ethereal wilderness of **Hornstrandir**, Iceland's most majestic hiking reserve. Crawl through the heart of the Westfjords, using **Pingeyri** as a base to check out the region's photogenic features, like the gushing waters of **Dynjandi**. Hop aboard the Baldur ferry and pause in **Flatey** to disconnect from the world, then alight in charming **Stykkishólmur**. Swing through **Grundarfjörður**, meditate atop one of the earth's chakras at **Hellnar**, link up with a glacier safari in **Arnarstapi**, soak your weary bones at **Lýsuhóll**, then learn about the sagas in **Borgarnes** before returning to the capital.

Three to Four Days Reykjavík Drop-In

If you're on a lengthy layover or enjoying a long weekend away, try the following route, which takes in some of the top attractions located within a stone's throw of the capital. After landing in **Keflavík** make a beeline for **Blue Lagoon** to soak away the jetlag. Wander through the steaming earths at **Krýsuvík** before barrelling down the coastal highway for fresh seafood in **Eyrarbakki**. Choose a base near **Hella** or **Hvals völlum** to enjoy a spot of horse riding and Northern Lights viewing (in the colder months). Active bodies will enjoy the stunning hike from **Skógar** up through the ridge between two brooding ice caps (and the site of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in 2010) then down into **Pórs mörk**, a silent kingdom filled with wild Arctic flowers. Those who are tighter on time can trek along the glacial tongue of **Sólheimajökull** instead. Swing through gushing **Gullfoss**, spurting **Geysir** and the rift-ridden **Pingvellir National Park** on your way to **Reykjavík**. Iceland's capital bustles with an all-star assortment of trendy boutiques, galleries and clubs. Don't forget to stop in **Hafnarfjörður** to cavort with 'hidden people' before returning to the airport.

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