



East Iceland

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Why Go?

Iceland's underrated easterly region doesn't announce itself as loudly as other parts of the country, preferring subtle charms instead of big-ticket attractions. The Eastfjords is the area's most wondrous destination – the scenery is particularly spectacular around the northern fjord villages, backed by sheer-sided mountains etched with waterfalls. If the weather's fine, several days spent hiking or kayaking here may be some of your most memorable in Iceland.

Away from the convoluted coast, the country's longest lake stretches southwest from Egilsstaðir, its shores lined with perfect diversions. Head further inland and you'll come to the forgotten farms, fells and reindeer-roamed heathlands of the empty east, and to Snæfell, one of Iceland's prime peaks.

Most travellers hit the accelerator and follow the over-eager Ring Road as it ploughs through Egilsstaðir and out of this region. Lunacy! They don't know what they're missing.

Road Distances (km)

Reykjavík	552					
Egilsstaðir	85	698				
Borgarfjörður Eystri	155	702	70			
Seyðisfjörður	111	660	27	92		
Neskaupstaður	164	703	72	140	96	
Breiðdalsvík	64	612	84	153	109	100
	Djúpvogur	Reykjavík	Egilsstaðir	Borgarfjörður Eystri	Seyðisfjörður	Neskaupstaður

i Getting There & Around

The 'Travel Guide' pages of the East Iceland tourism website (www.east.is) outlines transport to/from and within the region, including the bogging schedule of buses in and out of the fjords.

AIR

Egilsstaðir's airport is 1km north of town.

Air Iceland (Flugfélag Íslands; ☎580 3000; www.airiceland.is) flies daily year-round from Egilsstaðir to Reykjavík (one way from €60).

BUS

TO/FROM THE REGION Egilsstaðir is a major crossroads on the Ring Road. Buses generally arrive at and depart from the N1 petrol station or the nearby tourist information centre. Note that there is no winter bus connection between Egilsstaðir and Höfn.

SBA-Norðurleið (☎550 0700/70; www.sba.is) runs a Akureyri–Mývatn–Egilsstaðir service (bus 62/62a) daily from June to mid-September, four times weekly rest of year; Akureyri–Egilsstaðir takes four hours (lkr8700).

Sterna (☎551 1166; www.sterna.is) offers a Höfn–Egilsstaðir service (bus 9/9a) once daily from mid-May to mid-September; four hours.

Hópfærdabílar Akureyrar (☎898 5156; www.hba.is) runs a Höfn–Egilsstaðir service (bus 1/1a) once daily from June to mid-September (lkr7500, four hours); stops include Reyðarfjörður, Berunes and Djúpvogur. The company offers a lkr15,000 pass that allows travel along the route over three days.

WITHIN THE REGION Austfjarðaleið (East Iceland Bus Company; ☎477 1713; www.austfjarðaleið.is) runs buses from Egilsstaðir to villages around the fjords. See the relevant town for details of links.

CAR

The Ring Road steams through Egilsstaðir, but if you want to explore the Eastfjords you need to leave it here. Options:

- » **Rte 92** south to Reyðarfjörður and nearby fjord towns
- » **Rte 93** east to Seyðisfjörður
- » **Rte 94** north to Borgarfjörður Eystri

The Ring Road takes you south then east to Breiðdalsvík and weaves along the coast around to Djúpvogur. A shortcut is provided by the rough (gravel) but scenic Rte 939 via the Öxi mountain pass.

CAR HIRE If you fly into the east, or arrive by ferry from Europe without wheels, **Avís** (www.avis.is), **Budget** (www.budget.is), **Hertz** (www.hertz.is) and **Europcar** (Bílaleiga Akureyrar/Höldur; www.europcar.is) all have agents in Egilsstaðir.

INLAND

Egilsstaðir

POP 2270

However much you strain to discover some underlying charm, you'll find sprawling Egilsstaðir isn't a ravishing beauty. It's the main regional transport hub, and a centre for local commerce. Sorry, it's about as enchanting as it sounds. Services include an excellent regional tourist office and quality accommodation.

Egilsstaðir's saving grace is its proximity to lovely Lagarfjót, Iceland's third-largest lake. Since Saga times, tales have been told of a monster living in its depths. If you want to do some beastie-hunting, or explore the forest on the lake's eastern bank, Egilsstaðir makes a good base.

Sights & Activities

Thanks to recent high-profile industrial projects (the Kárahnjúkar hydroelectricity dam and Alcoa aluminium smelter – both opposed by environmentalist groups, but welcomed by many locals for bringing jobs to the area), the east has seen an influx of workers, and there has been feverish house-building in Egilsstaðir and other eastern communities. In time, the hub town's entertainment facilities may catch up, but at present there's not a great deal to lure visitors.

Minjasafn Austurlands

MUSEUM

(East Iceland Heritage Museum; www.minjasafn.is; Laufskógar 1; adult/child lkr1000/free; ☎1-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Jun-Aug, 1-4pm Mon-Fri Sep-May) Egilsstaðir's cultural museum is a sweet little place. Its displays focus on the history of the region.

Sundlaugin Egilsstöðum

SWIMMING POOL

(Tjarnarbraut 26; adult/child lkr500/250; ☎6.30am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, reduced hours Sep-May) The town's impressive swimming pool, with saunas, hot-pots and gym, is north of town.