



# welcome to Iceland

## **A Symphony of Elements**

Iceland is, literally, a country in the making – the natural elements work in harmony to power its veritable volcanic laboratory: geysers gush, mudpots gloop, Arctic gales swish along silent fjords, stone towers rise from the depths of an indigo sea, and glaciers grind their way through cracked lava fields and the merciless tundra. The sublime power of Icelandic nature turns the prosaic into the extraordinary. A dip in the pool becomes a soothing soak in a geothermal lagoon, a casual stroll can transform into a trek across a glittering ice cap, and a quiet night of camping means

front-row seats to either the aurora borealis' curtains of fire, or the soft, pinkish hue of the midnight sun.

## **A Deeply Personal Experience**

Beyond the torturous clash of ecological anomalies, it's hard not to be deeply touched by the island's awesome beauty – few leave the country without a pang and a fervent vow to return. Iceland has that effect on people – it turns brutes into poets, and sceptics into believers. Perhaps it's the landscape's austere bleakness, or maybe it has something to do with the island's tiny

*A mythical kingdom ruled by elves and Arctic energy, Iceland is where the past meets the future in an elemental symphony of wind, stone, fire and ice.*



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(left) Glacial lake, Landmannalaugar (p121)  
(below) Reykjavik rooftops, with Hallgrímskirkja (p46) in the background



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population, but a soul-stirring visit is as much about the people you meet as it is about the ethereal landscape. The warmth of the Icelanders starkly contrasts the frigid climate – expect complimentary cakes and cookies, friendly intellectual banter, invites to pub crawls, eager hiking buddies and 50 new Facebook friends when you return home.

## **Scandinavian Sensibilities & Sagas**

Iceland's climate and environment is as charged as the scrolls of its ancient sagas;

electrifying legends of heroes and thieves during a time when the rest of the European continent was mired in disease and ignorance. The era's mystic ruins, crumbling turf houses and haunting cairns act as the cultural and tactile counterpoints to the islanders' modern set of visual pursuits. Influenced by its Scandinavian brethren, Iceland's current spectrum of style embodies the airiness of a crisp Arctic evening. The relative ease of life allows for an aesthetic that draws on the desolation of the surrounding land and mixes it with the whimsy of the collective imagination.