

EUROPE · ROAD TRIPS · HIKING · ADVENTURE · WILDLIFE · MOUNTAINS

 Iceland

Iceland is a young island still being made: lava fields steam beside glaciers, waterfalls pour off basalt cliffs and the Mid-Atlantic Ridge splits the land at Þingvellir. Summer brings near-endless daylight for road trips round the Ring Road; winter trades daylight for a chance of the northern lights. It is expensive, but much of the finest scenery costs nothing to see.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Iceland and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 11 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Reykjavík	 CURRENCY Icelandic króna (ISK) £1 ≈ ISK 162	 LANGUAGE Icelandic, English	 BEST TIME Jun–Aug
 DAILY BUDGET £95–£420 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, F 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 3h direct ~£90–£300 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+0 standard time

Iceland's attractions are almost all natural, and a first trip is shaped by how far you drive. A long weekend from Reykjavík covers the Golden Circle and the waterfalls of the south coast. A week takes you east along Route 1 to the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon, while ten days or more lets you complete the Ring Road, about 1,320 km, via the East Fjords, Lake Mývatn and Akureyri. Detours to the Snæfellsnes peninsula and the remote Westfjords reward extra time, and summer opens the interior highland roads to 4x4s.

Expect high prices: a main course in a mid-range Reykjavík restaurant typically costs £20–30, and accommodation books out months ahead in summer. Many travellers self-cater from Bónus and Krónan supermarkets or hire a campervan. Weather drives everything; storms can close roads in any season, so plans need slack. The Golden Circle and south coast are crowded at midday, but an early start or a few hours' drive brings real solitude. Iceland suits hikers, photographers and confident drivers; people are often surprised by how small Reykjavík feels, and by how bright summer midnights are.

Top 5 highlights

-  NATURE

Golden Circle

A day loop from Reykjavík taking in Þingvellir, where the North American and Eurasian plates pull apart, the Strokkur geyser erupting every few minutes at Geysir, and the two-tiered Gullfoss waterfall.
-  NATURE

Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon

Icebergs calved from the Breiðamerkurjökull glacier drift across this lagoon before washing up on the black sand of nearby Diamond Beach. Boat trips run in summer, and seals often bob between the floes.

3

NATURE

Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss

Two of the south coast's best-known waterfalls, about half an hour apart on Route 1. Walk behind Seljalandsfoss's curtain of water, then climb the stairs beside Skógafoss, where the Fimmvörðuháls trail begins.

4

NATURE

Snæfellsnes peninsula

Often called Iceland in miniature: the glacier-capped volcano Snæfellsjökull, black and golden beaches, seals at Ytri Tunga and the much-photographed Kirkjufell mountain near Grundarfjörður, a couple of hours' drive from Reykjavík.

5

NATURE

Lake Mývatn

A volcanic lake in the north ringed by pseudocraters, the lava labyrinth of Dimmuborgir and the Mývatn Nature Baths. Húsavík, under an hour away, is the country's best base for whale watching.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Reykjavík

≈ 245,000 people

The world's northernmost national capital is compact and walkable, with the Hallgrímskirkja church, the Harpa concert hall, geothermal pools in every district and an excellent food and bar scene.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Reykjanesbær (Keflavík)

≈ 22,000 people

The merged towns of Keflavík and Njarðvík sit beside the international airport; useful for a first or last night, and close to the Reykjanes peninsula's lava fields and coastline.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Akureyri

≈ 20,000 people

The capital of the north sits at the head of the long Eyjafjörður fjord, with botanic gardens, good cafés and easy access to Mývatn, Húsavík and the Goðafoss waterfall.

Reykjavík's figure covers the whole capital area, including Kópavogur and Hafnarfjörður. Outside it, Reykjanesbær has recently overtaken Akureyri as the largest town.

When to go to Iceland

Best time: **Jun–Aug.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

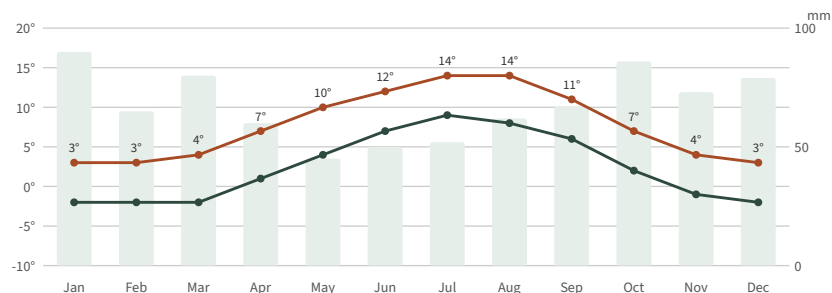
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Reykjavík

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan–Feb	Þorrablót Midwinter feasts held through the old month of Þorri, roughly late January to late February, where Icelanders tuck into fermented shark, singed sheep's head, sour ram's testicles and brennivín.
Aug	Menningarnótt (Culture Night) On a Saturday in August, Reykjavík fills with free concerts, open galleries and street events, starting with the Reykjavík Marathon and ending with fireworks over the harbour.
Nov	Iceland Airwaves A November music festival spread across Reykjavík's venues, showcasing new Icelandic and international acts; a good excuse for a winter city break with a chance of northern lights.

How much does Iceland cost?

SHOESTRING £95 per person / day ≈ ISK 15,401 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £210 per person / day ≈ ISK 34,043 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £420 per person / day ≈ ISK 68,087 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Plokkfiskur Comforting fish hash of boiled cod or haddock mashed with potatoes, onion and béchamel, traditionally served with buttered dark rye bread (rúgbrauð).	Kjötsúpa Lamb soup slow-simmered with swede, carrots, potatoes and a little rice or oats; a warming staple made with free-roaming Icelandic lamb.	Pylsa (hot dog) Iceland's hot dogs use a blend that includes lamb; order 'eina með öllu' (one with everything) for raw and crispy onions, ketchup, sweet mustard and remoulade.
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Getting around

There are no trains, so most visitors hire a car or campervan and follow Route 1, the Ring Road. Highland F-roads open only in summer and require a 4x4. Strætó buses cover some long-distance routes, Flybus and other coaches link Keflavík airport with Reykjavík, and Icelandair flies from Reykjavík's domestic airport to Akureyri, Egilsstaðir and Ísafjörður. Check road.is before every drive.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  C F 230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 112 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +354	TIME ZONE UTC+0 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not expected, as service is included in prices. Rounding up for an excellent guide or meal is appreciated but never required.

ETIQUETTE

Shower thoroughly without a swimsuit before entering any public pool or lagoon. Never drive off-road, which is illegal, keep to marked paths around fragile moss, and remove shoes when entering homes.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Keflavík International Airport (KEF), Keflavík; Akureyri Airport (AEY), Akureyri

Visas & entry for Iceland

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel to the Schengen area, which includes Iceland, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period without a visa. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Iceland are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Iceland

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026

Christmas Day

Sat 26 Dec 2026

Second Day of Christmas

Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Thu 25 Mar 2027	Maundy Thursday
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Thu 22 Apr 2027	First Day of Summer
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Pentecost
Mon 17 May 2027	Pentecost Monday
Thu 17 Jun 2027	National Day
Mon 2 Aug 2027	Commerce Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Icelandic

ENGLISH	ICELANDIC	SAY IT
Hello	Halló	HAA-loh
Thank you	Takk fyrir	tahk FII-rir
Please	Vinsamlegast	VIN-sahm-leh-gahst
Excuse me	Afsakið	AHF-sah-kith
How much is this?	Hvað kostar þetta?	kvath KOS-tar THET-tah

Know before you go

- Check road.is for road conditions and vedur.is for forecasts every morning; storms can close mountain passes at short notice, and gusts can wrench car doors, so open them carefully.
- Treat Reynisfjara and other south-coast black-sand beaches with great respect: sneaker waves surge far up the sand without warning, and several visitors have been swept away.
- Tap water is excellent, so skip bottled water. To save money, shop at Bónus or Krónan supermarkets and buy alcohol at the duty-free shop on arrival at Keflavík.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.