

Iceland Travel Guide



Jokulsarlon Lagoon Iceberg, Iceland

Iceland is rapidly gaining importance in the tourist destination. It was in the 9th century that the Norse Viking settled here and it is in Reykjavik that you would find the majority of Iceland's population. So make a point to visit Reykjavik on your Iceland tours. Here you will find vibrant nightlife, aesthetic arts scene, and you can also explore the picturesque countryside at Thingvellir, Gullfoss, and Geysir.

Nature lovers will find their dream come true at Iceland. This huge island nestled in the North Atlantic is full of rugged topography with volcanic formations such as black lava, hot blue geysers, rivers, cascades, and lush valleys. There are bays and fjords along the coast. You would be amazed to know that Iceland was the testing station for the lunar landing module by the US before reaching out to the moon.

You can come here in summer, when you can avail guided bus trips offered by many tour operators which will take you all around. The best places to see are Thorsmoerk and Snaefellsjoekull. Another exciting option is to ride on horseback across the highlands. There are no trees and but just one small forest which is a prominent landmark of the country.

Whether you want to spend time in the serenity of nature, or watch the birds and the whales, or you want some adventurous activity such as skiing, glacier Skidoo, or horse ride, Iceland is the place to be.

There are a good number of hotels here in Iceland though most of them may be costly, but it can be well understood considering the adverse conditions under which life goes here.

Getting In

A convenient option of reaching Iceland is to fly to Europe and then to Iceland. In this aspect, it is perhaps best to use UK as an entry point to Iceland. This is because UK faces less rigorous checks than some other European countries. Iceland is easily reached by air. The international airport is Keflavik, which is in the South West of the country about 40 km from Reykjavik. An airport transfer bus service called the Fly Bus runs between the airport and Reykjavik bus terminal via various hotels. A return is 300 Kr cheaper than 2 singles. Another great option is to take the bus which stops at the Blue Lagoon either to or from the airport. It then continues every half an hour or so to Reykjavik. Direct flights from New York City, Boston, Minneapolis, Orlando, Baltimore, San Francisco, and most major European countries namely, Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Glasgow, Helsinki, London, Oslo, Madrid, Manchester, Milan, Munich, Paris, Stockholm, and Zurich airports are available. This is mainly because Iceland Air uses Keflavik as a hub.

Another option of traveling to Iceland is to take the low cost airline Iceland Express, which flies from Copenhagen and London (Stansted) to Keflavik. It gives additional service during the summer months to Frankfurt Hahn, Berlin Schefeld, Friedrichshafen, Alicante, Gothenburg, and Stockholm Arlanda. New connections have been added in 2007 from Copenhagen directly to Akureyri and Egilsstadir. Additionally, reaching Iceland will be much easier as British Airways offer flights from London and SAS from Oslo.

You may also reach Iceland by boat though it takes longer as compared to plane.

Transport

Traveling by flight, by car, by bus, and even by cycle seems to be difficult for a new tourist. Quite naturally, aircraft in Iceland are like buses or trains elsewhere. They are the main form of transportation in Iceland other than the roads.

The scheduled service to domestic destinations including Greenland and Faroe Islands is provided by Air Iceland. You may also travel by car through the roads. Driving in Iceland is on the right-side of the road. There are excellent car hire desks from Hertz and Avis at the airport as well as a local company, Alp. Hiring and renting of cars is, however, expensive. There are two signs that foreigners should pay attention to. First, "malbik endar" means that the road changes from a paved road to a gravel road. Slow down before these changes for one can lose control easily. Also "einbreio br" means that a one-lane bridge is approaching. Arrive at the bridge slowly and assess the situation. If another car has arrived at the bridge, first allow them the right-of-way. In spite of such precautions, driving in Iceland is an amazing experience with all the proper precautions.

The BSI Travel Runs regular bus service to most parts of the country, especially around the Ring Road (Route 1). Cycling is another way of experiencing Iceland. It provides a different cultural experience to the other means of transportation in Iceland. Cycling in Iceland is great fun though traffic in and out of Reykjav is heavy.

Leisure

There is no dearth of recreation options in Iceland. Hiking is one of them. However, only a few places in Iceland have marked walking paths. The Iceland Touring Association operates walking tours all year round. Besides, a number of travel agencies and tour operators organize trips to Iceland's glaciers, which cover 11 per cent of the country. Transport is mainly by 4-wheel-drive vehicles, snow cats, or snowmobiles. The best time for Skidooing is between January and March when the snow is fresh and plenty.

Skiing is a year-round activity and Iceland's most popular winter sport. Ski resorts offer both downhill skiing and cross-country skiing throughout the country. The main skiing season is normally from January until May or June. Summer skiing is also possible on the glaciers. Swimming is very popular in Iceland since there are many natural and man made pools in Iceland such as the Blue Lagoon near Reykjav, heated by geothermal springs. Many places also have saunas, jacuzzis and hot pots with water temperatures of up to 44 degrees Celcius/112 degrees Fahrenheit. Other than these, fishing is a common sport in Iceland. Iceland is famous for this particularly, salmon fishing, for which it is reputed to be among the best locations in the world. The main salmon fishing season is from around 20 June to mid-September. There are around 55 courses in Iceland, all of which are open to visitors.

Wildlife in Iceland is another attraction Birdwatching, whale watching and tours to the best spots around the coast are widely accepted by tourists all over. It is also possible to see dolphins. Icelandic horse trekking is another in Iceland. River rafting in the midst of a variety of rivers and beautiful is another popular activity.

The country is host to plenty of nightclubs, bars, cafes, and cinemas though most of them are in the capital. During the tourist season, there is an attractive light entertainment show in English called 'Light Nights' with traditional Icelandic stories, and folk songs.

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