

Iceland

Land of Fire and Ice

By Bill Welch

Iceland

- Iceland is a large island in the North Atlantic close to the Arctic Circle – about the size of Ohio.
- 11% of the island is covered by three large glaciers
- Iceland's highest and most extensive glacier is Vatnajökull, at 3,280 sq miles, is the largest in Europe
- Five-sixths of Iceland is uninhabited. The population is concentrated on the coast, in the valleys and in the plains of the southwest and southeast of the country.
- More than half the population lives in or around Reykjavík, the capital.
- Almost all of the central highland plateau of the island is a beautiful but barren resembling an uninhabitable moonscape. The first American astronauts were sent there for pre-mission training.
- Iceland is one of the most volcanically active countries in the world.

Photography

- Iceland is home to large seabird colonies teeming with millions of Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Common and Thick-billed Murres, Kittiwakes and Northern Fulmars.
- Snow-capped peaks, green mountains rising out of black sand, countless waterfalls, wildflowers, striated glaciers & icebergs .
- Picturesque Lighthouses.
- Aurora Borealis and frozen waterfalls in the winter.
- Sea Stacks, Icelandic Horses and quaint fishing villages.
- Grass-thatched houses.

Brief History of Iceland

- The island was settled by the Norse seafarers in the ninth century.
- They established the world's first known republic and parliament in AD 930.
- When Norway came under the control of **Denmark** in 1380, Iceland did too.
- In 1814, Norway became independent, but Iceland remained a Danish territory.
- In 1840 it was granted its own constitution.
- Full independence was granted in 1918

Brief History of Iceland

- It was not until 1944 that Iceland became a fully independent nation with its own head of state.
- The great economic collapse of the country in 2008 caused Icelanders to rise up in arms against what they viewed as a corrupt government.
- After highly visible protests, the Prime Minister stepped down and the government collapsed.
- A new coalition government was created and the country's economic and political situation has stabilized.
- In 2009, Iceland applied for membership in the EU.

Land of Fire

- The fire comes from Iceland's abundant volcanoes.
- Elemental forces bubble just below the surface across the island, heating the water in Iceland's taps and swimming pools, and creating landscapes of twisted lava and rainbow-colored mineral sands.
- The world's most reliable geyser at Geysir, which blows its top every four to eight minutes.
- Thermal springs surface everywhere, providing hot spots on the nation's beaches and heating the waters of the iconic Blue Lagoon, a surreal open-air swimming pool surrounded by a landscape of tortured black lava.

Land of Ice

- Dramatic glaciers slice down towards the coast, calving icebergs into eerie lagoons.
- Glacier tours, by snowmobile, on foot, or on the back of an Icelandic horse, are an integral part of the Iceland experience.
- In places, you can even tick off a glacier and a volcano on a single trip.
- You can find black sand beaches covered in beautiful chunks of ice.

Iceland Travel

- What lures many people to Iceland a second or third time is the quirky nature of the Icelandic people.
- Eccentric, creative and fiercely independent, the Icelanders are simply a lot of fun to be around, particularly during the endless days of summer, when the *runtur* bar crawl rages through the streets of Reykjavik, the island's miniature capital city.
- During the winter months see the northern lights in their glory, undimmed by light pollution in the least densely populated nation in Europe.
- The national airline, Icelandair, operates direct flights year round to Reykjavík from London, New York, Boston and Orlando.

Iceland Visa and Passport Requirements

	Passport required	Return ticket required	Visa required
Australian	Yes	Yes	No
British	Yes	No	No
Canadian	Yes	Yes	No
Other EU	Yes/1/2	No	No
USA	Yes	Yes	No

A passport valid for three months beyond the length of stay and issued within the past 10 years is required.

Language & Currency

- The official language is Icelandic; English and Danish are widely spoken.
- The Icelandic currency is the krona (ISK; symbol kr) = 100 aurar. Notes are in denominations of kr5,000, 2,000, 1,000 and 500.
- Coins are in denominations of kr100, 50, 10, 5 and 1 and feature Iceland's many native fish species. It is often difficult to get Icelandic money abroad, though not impossible; there are several ATMs and banks at the airport on arrival.

Weather & Climate

- Iceland's climate is tempered by the Gulf Stream.
- Summers are mild and winters rather cold.
- The *Aurora Borealis* are best seen between November and February.
- In June and July, there are nearly 24 hours of daylight in Reykjavík, while in the northern part of the country the sun barely sets at all.
- Winds can be strong and gusty at times and there is the occasional dust storm in the interior.
- Snow is not as common as the name of the country would seem to suggest and, in any case, does stay for long in Reykjavík.
- In northern Iceland that skiing conditions are reasonably certain.

Clothing

- Lightweights in warmer months, with extra layers for the cooler evenings.
- Medium- to heavyweights are advised in winter.
- Waterproof outerwear is recommended throughout the year.
- Umbrellas are not recommended because rain is usually accompanied by high wind.

Getting Around

The Ring Road



The Ring Road



Along the Ring Road

- Iceland has one main road: Route 1.
- This ring road goes all around the island and from it are smaller roads that can take you to fjords, towns, peninsulas, the highlands and many other attractions.
- Unlike in most countries where the main roads are big highways with multiple lanes, the ring road in Iceland is a fantastically picturesque 2 lane road with impressive views all around.
- Many of the bridges are one lane.

Guide to Iceland







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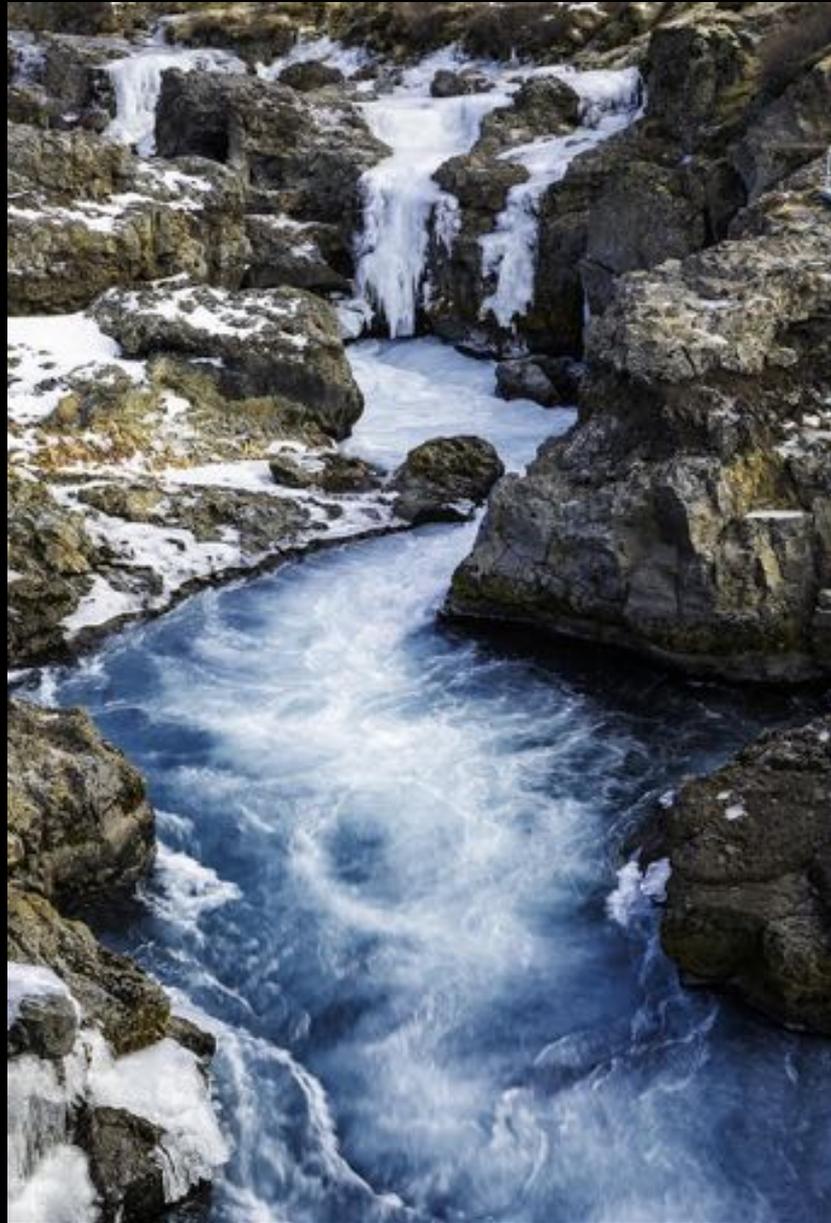


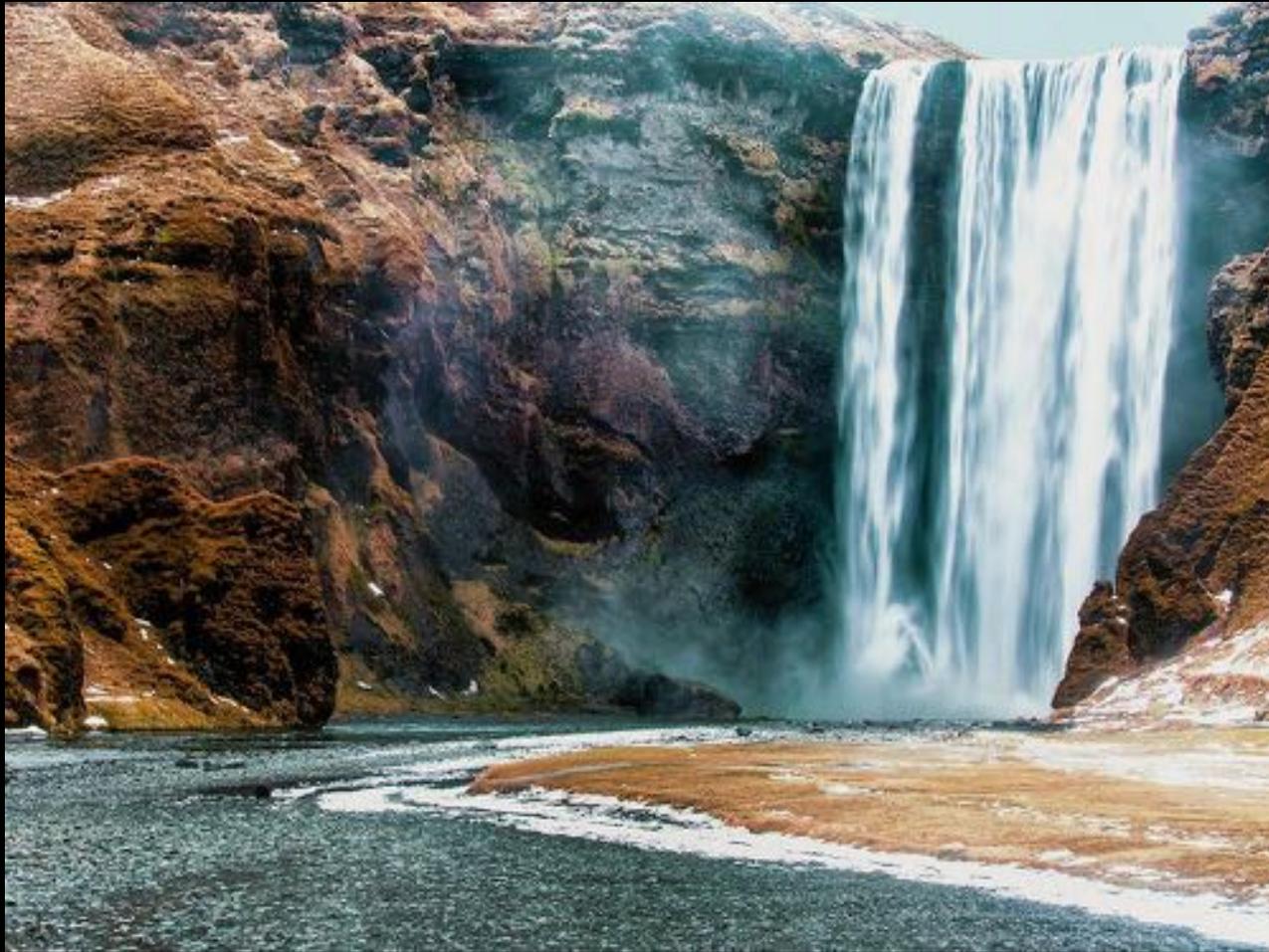














Iceland Photo Tours

Joseph Van Os

Iceland in Winter 2016

Dates: March 16–27, 2016

Leaders: John Shaw and Daniel Bergmann

Photograph the otherworldly fire and ice landscapes of Iceland—volcanic peaks, glaciers, cascading waterfalls, geothermal features—in wintertime. Explore a world where snow-clad terrain meets graphic black basalt columns, where the shifting shapes in a unique iceberg lagoon entices return visits, where impossibly-blue ice caves inspire surreal images, and where black sand beaches and fjord-laced cliffs etch the rugged coastline. At this time of the year, the aurora borealis is always a luminous possibility in Iceland's immense nighttime sky.

<http://photosafaris.com/main/tours-by-region/#northamerica>

Rod Planck

Iceland - Land of Fire and Ice

Dates: June 13 - June 28, 2016

Leaders: Rod Planck and Haukur Snorrason

Fifteen Day Tour - 10 Participants - Intermediate - Advanced

We've been to some pretty amazing places in our lives crossing both the Arctic and Antarctic circles and we still place Iceland on par with both locations for sheer natural beauty. Since Iceland is located so far north, it receives more than 20 hours of light each day during mid-summer. When the weather is cooperative we will take advantage of this bonus of daylight hours by photographing for extended periods of time.

We'll plan on photographing when the best light occurs, some days this will be between the hours of 8 PM and 2 AM. It is possible to photograph all day long if it is cloudy but, if the sun is shining; we'll go scouting or rest in anticipation of the day's best light. If everything goes as planned, our tour will be pleasantly exhausting! However, we operate with 2 vans - one for hardcore enthusiasts and one for those who'd prefer a little more laidback experience. This is another benefit of taking a tour from us -flexibility!

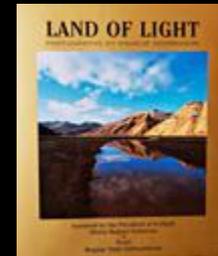
<http://www.rodplanck.com/iceland-tour.htm>

Haukur Snorrason Iceland Photo Tours

Leader: Haukur ("Hawk") Snorrason

Haukur has after 20 years of landscape photography, publishing two photo-books of Icelandic landscape and nature and making countless landscape calendars, gained an unique experience which he now uses to guide landscape photographers around Iceland. He has been working with individuals and groups from all over the world.

Haukur studied photography in Iceland 1989 - 1993 at the studio-lab Skyggna Myndverk. Since then he has been working as a freelance photographer. He calls himself Fred Flintstone of photography since he mostly still uses film for landscape and aerial (Cameras: Pentax 6x7 and Hasselblad X Pan), although he has recently started to use digital for landscape as well.



Haukur ("Hawk") is the Icelandic guide that Rod Planck uses for his photo tours. Hawk and his wife also run their own photo tour business and have a guest house. Hawk does a summer tour in July - after Rod's tour, as well as winter and autumn tours. He also does a 3-day tour in South Iceland and offers one day tours (with several location options, including a trip to Landmannalaugar and Hekla Volcano) so this might be an idea if you want to go into the interior for just a day.

<http://www.phototours.is/about-us.html>

Self-Drive Auto Tours

<http://www.icelandselfdrive.com/>

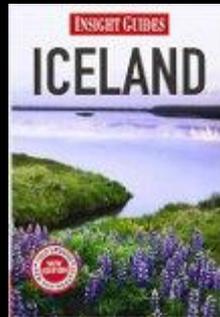
When to Go

<http://www.frommers.com/destinations/iceland/254345#sthash.xtXbgBQQ.dpbs>

Where to Stay

<http://www.visiticeland.com/plan-your-trip/accommodation>

Additional Reading



http://www.amazon.com/Lonely-Planet-Iceland-Travel-Guide/dp/1741799422/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1424793510&sr=8-1&keywords=iceland+travel

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/9812822496/ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage?ie=UTF8&psc=1