

# Iceland

 [umanon.com/travel/iceland](https://umanon.com/travel/iceland)



***Final Update: 3/19/2022***

*Note: Most of our guides are crafted with the help and input of Umphreaks who have spent years traveling or living in our intended destinations. Due to the international nature of this vacation, this guide was created nearly without Umphreak input. We would like to thank the couple Umphreaks who had been to Iceland before and recommended a few spots.*

*What we included below is a wide swath of recommendations and research that we thought might appeal to fans. We used multiple sources to try and glean as much information as possible. For cold and icy days, we have suggested a huge list of museums and taverns. For nicer days, there are tons exciting nearby outdoor adventures for one to get into. Iceland is an extremely unique place and this will be an amazing trip, and we cannot wait to invade Iceland and melt face in the ice cold with our fellow Umphreaks.*

*We suggest a couple products in this guide. Know that we are not sponsored by these companies, we get no kickbacks, and are suggesting these items from previous experience.*



## These Locations Potentially Have Special Restrictions Due to Covid-19

Please check the official website or call ahead before heading out!

### Bars / Taverns / Breweries

---

#### **Lebowski bar** - *Laugarvegur 20a, Reykjavik, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

If your bar is named “Lebowski”, it’s bound to have a bowling theme. This spot is a homage to the Best Movie Ever Made, with small references popping up throughout the bar. They sell White Russians of many different varieties – we have heard good things about the Cocoa Puffs Russian. The bathroom is Jacky Treehorn inspired. On Thursdays there is Lebowski trivia from 9-11pm. This spot is often crowded, more of your typical ‘bar bar’, with a jukebox going as opposed to live bands. The food here is also not too shabby either, greasy but good seems to be the overall consensus.

#### **Slippbarinn** *Myrargata 2, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

Casual bar that offers food and is open from morning to late. We have been told that the buffet may not be worth investing in, but otherwise brunch is often quite good. The cocktail menu is considered quite fantastic and is a relative steal during happy hour.

#### **Skuli Craft Bar** - *Adalstraeti 9, Reykjavik 101, Iceland*

Multitap craft brew bar with 14 taps on rotation, with 130 different craft beer possibilities. The room appears cozy with a modern wooden motif that is neither too sophisticated nor too rustic. Their cheese plates appear to be popular. The bar has a focus on Borg Brewery beers, but there are many many other local and Nordic options to choose from. *Guide to Iceland* suggests checking out the “Leifur”, a Nordic Saison made with arctic thyme native to Iceland. Happy hour is 4-7pm.

#### **Kaffibarinn** - *Bergstadastraeti 1, Reykjavik 101, Iceland*

By day, Kaffibarrin is a mild mannered coffee shop, by night, a busy bustling bar. There are many excellent local DJs that come through and spice up the evening atmosphere. Known for its vibrant parties and crammed dancefloor, this spot features mostly house music on the weekends. Gets busiest after midnight, so if you’re looking to rage, consider pregaming at a different bar beforehand and then show up here at 11:50pm with you gameface.

**MicroBar** *Laugavegur 86, Reykavík 101, Iceland*

A wide variety of Icelandic and Greenlandic microbrews are available at this small, basement sized draft room. During the pandemic, Microbar had to move, and only recently reopened. Please check their Instagram/Facebook for details. There is a sampler available, but you might want to share it as it's somewhat pricey, but the sample sizes are fairly large.

**Kex Hostel** *Skúlagata 28, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland*

A unique idea: create a bar in a biscuit factory that was once up for demolition. This place was going to be multilevel office space, but then the 2008 Economic Collapse occurred. Developers gave up on the spot, which was purchased and converted into a hostel, eatery and modern bar. The bar has some comfortable seating and is a unique experience due to the building. Located very close to some main thoroughfares, making this a fairly easy bar to reach between locales.

**Bryggjan Brugghus** *Grandagardur 8, Reykjavík 101 Iceland*

Bryggjan uses an age old formula for creating an exciting nightlife spot by combining live music, good food and craft brew. The brewery's offerings depend on the season, with a lighter twist in the summer and a stouty, heavier approach in the winter. The brewery offers tours with an obligatory tasting. On Sundays, Bryggjan Brugghus has Jazz starting at 9pm. The food here is supposedly also quite excellent, and we have read that the Salted Cod & Mushroom Risotto is magnificent. There are vegan options here as well. Located very close to the Saga and Maritime Museum. Open until 11pm.

**Eimverk Distillery** *Lyngás 13, 210 Garðabær, Iceland*

Iceland's first and only Whiskey Distillery, Eimverk makes their spirits with 100% Icelandic barley, and craft a variety of hard liquors including their flagship Flóki whisky, along with a gin (Vor) and a traditional brennivín (Víti). The distillery offers tours for about \$40. The tours feature a sample of each of the liquors (some reviews say 'seconds are encouraged') and are led by a guide who you through the creation process. Make sure to book ahead as tours are limited.

**Lemmy** *Austurstræti 20 101, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland*

One might ask themselves "Where can I rage some Motörhead while toastin' brews in near downtown Iceland?" and Lemmy's would have you covered. The bar itself has a stone-and-grungy sort of feel and, along with slanging tasty alcoholic libations, apparently serves excellent milkshakes as well. There is often live music here which can rage late into the eve. The music selection isn't all metal, and you're as likely to hear Zeppelin as you are to hear Slayer. They have vegan options for plant based friends if you plan on eating.





## Umphrey's McGee INTERNATIONAL

Reykjavik marks Umphrey's first appearance in a Nordic Nation and their furthest North appearance on the globe, but not their first international sojourn. THAT Umphrey's experience took place over the 4th of July in 1999 on a trip to Montreal. Since then, the band has been all the way around the globe, playing as far south as Byron Bay, Australia in 2010, and as far East as Niigata, Japan in 2006. The band's epic intercontinental appearances include four performances at Jam in the Dam (05, 06, 08 and 2010), the opening of the Brooklyn Bowl London in 2014, and over a dozen Jamcruises. Delayed by the coronavirus, Rockjavik has finally been rescheduled for March 2022!

### Breakfast / Brunch

---

#### **Reykjavik Roasters** *Karastigur corner of Frakkastigur, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

If you're looking for an excellent cup of coffee, Reykjavik Roasters has come highly recommended. It's more of a "Grab and Go" spot than a "Sit and relax and your laptop" type of joint, but all the drinks are considered high quality from the lattes to the chais. There are small finger food items and danishes on the menu as well.

#### **Braud & Co 16**, *Frakkastigur Gló Restaurant Fákafeni & Hlemmur Mathöll, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

Baked goods are a staple of Icelandic breakfasts, and Braud & Co can produce breaded deliciousness with the best of 'em. Cinnamon rolls, caramel rolls, donuts are bountiful. This is a local bread shop, located inside a beautifully painted house, has some fantastic breads. They also serve excellent coffee, and it's also located right down the street from Reykjavik roasters if you're trying to combine the two. The cinnamon rolls are vegan so everyone can enjoy. Sometimes, there's a raspberry licorice cinnamon roll. A. raspberry. licorice. cinnamon. roll.

#### **Prikið Bankastraeti 12**, *Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

Prikið is an institution in Iceland, a well-loved spot that is exalted for more than simple breakfast. Open since 1951, this cafe has an excellent bar and is roomy enough for a few tables. If you come in for breakfast, people highly recommend the "French Connection", which is a French-Toast spread with the full works. The coffee is endless. For lunch, there are burger offerings, and a highly recommended ham sandwich called "Celine Dijon". There are at least two vegan options for the plant based homies. At night, they sometimes have music



and the spot turns into more of a tavern than a café, and remains open until 1am – not late by Icelandic standards. This is an extremely popular spot on Saturday nights for live music and affordable drinks.

### **Early in the Morning** *Veghusastigur 9, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

Decent breakfast spot that gets good reviews, most of which note that food here is a bit pricey. You may want to consider prebooking a table if possible, as the spot does get quite busy and is somewhat small. Traditional breakfast favorites like eggs, bacon, toast and pancakes. Your main course is combined with toast, oats, coffee and any number of sides. In the evening, this spot changes into a laid-back wine bar.

## **Lunch**

---

### **Reykjavik Chips** - *Vitastigur 10, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

Do you love French Fries? Like, really really love French fries? ...To a point where you might think: “Man, a whole restaurant dedicated to just those particular potatoes would be fuckin’ fire”? Well, look no further. Reykjavik Chips is a true haven for the fry obsessed. This restaurant tends to lean more Fat Fry than Shoestring, and serves their fries with an amazing array of sauces, including two vegan sauces for your plant based buddies. Can be considered a bit pricey to some.

### **Café Loki** – *Lokastigur 28 101 Reykjavík, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

Cafe Loki offers Icelandic traditional dishes like meat soup, fermented shark, dried fish, several sample plates and homemade bread and cakes. Their most popular dishes are the Rye Bread Ice cream and Skyr cake. The location has a beautiful view across Reykjavik and the surrounding area. Located in a very cute two/three floor building with large windows.

### **Cafe Gardurinn** - *Klapparstigur 37, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

Healthy vegetarian spot with several vegan options. Lots of soups and sandwiches, many choices for a semi-light midday meal. The Arabian Coconut soup, the Blueberry Lemon Cheesecake comes highly recommended.

### **Dirty Burgers & Ribs** *Miklabraut 101 Beint a Moti Kringlunni, Reykjavik 105 Iceland*

This is a small spot with a limited menu that consists of ribs, burgers or pulled pork. The service is quick and the portions are fairly large. They serve decent fry portions as well. This spot is no frills but will sate your hunger if you’re looking for a place to grab a beer and burger.

### **The Coocoo's Nest** - *Grandagardur 23, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

A local spot that seems to serve all meals. There is a limited, sometime handwritten, menu that has been reviewed as “good but constrictive”. Many reviewers mentioned liking the pancakes, pastas and pizzas at this spot. I believe that they serve beers here however several folks have mentioned that they stumbled in after having “beers across the street” (probably at Bryggjan Brugghús).

### **Glo** *Laugavegur 20B, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

A mostly vegetarian/vegan local chain (with a couple meat meals), Glo creates dishes that range from healthy to comfort foods. There are vegetarian and vegan “bowls”, burgers, and wraps. Relatively affordable and definitely delicious looking, this spot should have options for all who are looking for something refreshing and bordering on healthy-ish.

## **Dinner**

---

### **Rok** *Frakkastigur 26a, Reykjavik 101 Iceland*

A fairly nice spot that has a wide range of options. They like to refer to their motif as ‘fine casual’. Much of the food is served “tapas style”. Many Icelandic staples, like cured reindeer, cod, fish stew and lamb are all available. You will need to make reservations over 24 hours in advance for this spot, unless you’re okay with sitting at the bar.

### **Apotek Restaurant** *Austurstræti 16, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland*

An Argentinian take on Icelandic cuisine. The inside of the restaurant looks extremely fancy, though it describes itself as “Smart Casual”. It appears to be quite upscale. There are large windows in the front which make for perfect people watching. The venue itself has a well-reviewed taster of Icelandic classics. They also serve a ton of fish and beer related options. The salmon is also well loved. Their cocktails are award winning, though very pricey. If you’re looking for a fancy meal, this is a good spot to investigate.

### **Reykjavik Kitchen** *Rauðarárstígur 8, 105 Reykjavík, Iceland*

A family owned restaurant located near the philological museum. The space looks very clean and modern, and the menu mostly consists of fish related entrees and starters – though there does appear to be at least one vegetarian offering.

### **Sjavargrillid Seafood Grill** *Skólavörðustígur 14, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland*

A relatively upscale joint that focuses on traditional Iceland flavors. The chef, Gústav Axel Gunnlaugsson, won Iceland’s Chef of the Year award in 2010, and afterwards went on a journey to locate Iceland’s best ingredients and recipes. This restaurant is a culmination of his collection. The interior is nice but not overwhelming. The menu has a large seafood focus, but there are other Icelandic specialties, like Grilled Puffin or Lamb. The salmon is considered the highlight of the menu. The catfish is also well recommended.

### **Fiskmarkadurinn - The Fish Market** *Aðalstræti 12, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland*

This is a very fancy place and is considered quite a delicacy by many. The meal will likely last for a couple hours. The restaurant’s vibe is very upscale with an open kitchen near the bar. The food is a fusion of Icelandic and Asian – sushi is served on the menu, alongside traditional options like reindeer. The lamb comes highly recommended, supposedly the combination of sauces it is served with makes it a highlight.

### **Resto** *Raudararstigur 27-29, Reykjavik 105 Iceland*

Resto serves Nordic classics with a heavy emphasis on seafood. Tucked away a bit from the main streets, Resto is considered a hidden gem by many. The Catch of the Day always seems to receive strong reviews online. For an Icelandic dinner, the meal is not too outrageously expensive. If you're not having fish, lamb is always the classic alternative.

**Ingolfsskali Viking Restaurant** *Efstaland Route 374, Olfuss 816 Iceland*

Do you want to dine on lamb and drink from a horn in a wooden dining room designed to replicate a Viking Food Hall? Of course you do! This restaurant is far from the city but promises one of the best traditional Scandinavian dining experiences on the island. Sample fresh cod from the day's catch. Try your hand at archery or axe throwing outside on the grounds. Looks like this place is worth the 45 minute drive from the city. Make sure to make a reservation before heading out on your adventure.

**Reykjavik Pizzeria** *Bragagata 38A, Reykjavik, Iceland, 101*

This hole in the wall is a relatively unknown local joint with tasty pizza. Reykjavik pizzeria firebakes their pizzas so that they have a delicious crispiness to them. Icelanders love pizza, as evidenced by the numerous pie slingers in Reykjavik, and while this spot may not end up on many top five lists, it just might be a hidden gem. For plant based friends, there is vegan cheese available and two vegan-specific pies.

**Hamborgarafabrikan / The Hamburger Factory** *Katrínartún 105, Reykjavík*

As the name would suggest, this spot specializes in multiple styles of the circular patty. One of the few 'chains' on our list, with three locations island-wide, this one is an Icelandic favorite that focuses on square shaped burger paddies built with an extensive (*sometimes strange*) toppings list - like a Pizzaburger! There is a plant based option that gets good reviews.



# UMPHREYS INTERNATIONAL NUMBERS



32 VENUES PLAYED  
INTERNATIONALLY  
12 COUNTRIES PLAYED  
INTERNATIONALLY  
19 CITIES PLAYED  
INTERNATIONALLY  
90 SHOWS PLAYED  
INTERNATIONALLY



## Vegan (and Vegetarian)

There are not a ton of flat out *vegan* spots, but one thing that is nice about Nordic countries is they try to make their menus fairly inclusive. Most meat serving restaurants will have at least one vegan item, often much more. The challenge is always trying to find which restaurants have the most options for all parties involved. That's why we're recommending an app for vegans: **HappyCow**. The application is an international staple for any vegan, and works a lot like Yelp but for vegan spots and places with vegan options. If you do not already utilize this application, I highly recommend it.

**(Vegan Iceland** has closed up shop since 2000 and much of the information has merged into **HappyCow**.)

Happy Cow - [Google Play](#) / [Apple App Store](#)

*Note: We have included some Vegetarian restaurants in this section that can easily veganize their cuisine. Any place that is not 100% plant based is notated as Vegetarian.*

### **Jomm Kringlan, Reykjavik 105 Iceland**

Extremely simple vegan fast food spot that is somewhat hard to find because it is located within a mall. Their big claim to fame is their simple burgers. These are made with Oumph Faux Meat, which is popular in Europe, and can be hit or miss for some folks. The burgers get mixed reviews – most agree that Jomm puts too much veganaise on their burgers - so ask them to go light on it. There are also “boxes/bowls” that can be ordered with the Spicy Oumph Box recommended to us. This place more than “gets the job done”...more of a lunch or a grab-n-go dinner type place.

### **The Bagel House Food Truck**

This Bagel Food Truck is 100% vegetarian/vegan. Some of the items do have milk/eggs/cheese, so many sure to ask, but there is absolutely no meat on the menu. A great spot for the plant based prone who are looking for something specifically “breakfast”. Would be a good “Take to Go” option so that you have something to Nosh as you run around on various adventures.

### **Junkyard Vegan Burger Food Truck**

Opened in late 2019, Junkyard has an amazing array of vegan burgers, pitas, wraps, faux meat randomness to sate any pallet. The Boss Burger, the "Doomsday Pita", and the Vegan Gyros are all highly recommended. Vegan junkfood at its finest. This truck is located towards the outskirts of town, so you'd need a ride of some sort.

### **Loving Hut** *Laugavegur 164, 105 Reykjavík, Iceland*

The famous vegan Asian inspired food chain has made its way to Reykjavik. A gigantic, completely plant based menu. I have had Loving Hut in London and enjoyed it as a cheap, plant based option. The Iceland location has gotten mixed reviews, with some raving - and others hating - the oily nature of some of the dishes. If you're looking for a huge, all vegan menu, Loving Hut has you covered.

### **Kattakaffihusid** *Bergstaðastræti 10a, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland*

A (mostly) vegan cat cafe in Iceland?! This place is 99% vegan which is why it landed under the vegan header, but does offer cow's milk upon request. The main attraction is the cats, of course, but they also have some tasty looking sandwiches. Petting kitties while noshing on grub sounds like a good way to spend an early afternoon. The "snickers bar" treat comes highly recommended, the cheese plate does not. They have many different various sandwiches, avocado toast, and cats.

### **Chickpea** *Hallveigarstígur 1, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland*

A new vegetarian restaurant where almost all of the meals can be Veganized. Specializing in our favorite - the quintessential plant based balls - the Falafel! Some of their yogurts are not plant based, so make sure to ask in advance. This is a great place for a quick bite. There's a bar to eat at but no tables.

### **Printable** [Reykjavik Vegan Spots](#) & [Reykjavik Vegan Options](#) **Quick Reference Sheets**

# THE HARPA

Harpa was designed by the firm **Henning Larsen Architects** and architect **Olafur Eliasson**, and almost wasn't completed due to the 2008 Icelandic financial crisis. The structure itself is built on a steel framework adorned with geometric shaped glass panels of multiple different colors. The **Icelandic Opera** performs at the concert hall even though the venue is designed for concerts and lacks a curtain, proscenium, or any of the traditional stage machinery. The building itself is considered quite striking, and it won the **European Union's Mies van der Rohe** award for contemporary architecture in 2013. The Concert Hall has found its way into pop-culture, having appeared in Netflix series ***Sense8*** and ***Black Mirror***.

## Late Night Food

---

### **Mandi Veltusund 3b, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland**

This is a true late-night spot. Open until 6am on weekends! Shawarma, falafel, gyros, all of your Middle Eastern favorites are here. The kebab comes highly recommended. There is often a long wait as they are one of the few restaurants open this late, but it is well worth it if you're starved at 3am. Vegan options for plant based friends.

### **Hlölli Bildshöfði 5, 110 Reykjavík, Iceland**

One of the first fast food restaurants within Iceland and it embodies all the good and bad of that cuisine in one spot. It will be tasty, but it will be gloriously unhealthy. This is a large menu with options similar to standards - the Bacon Boat is like a BLT, or the Chicken/Bacon sandwich which is similar to a club – all created to help offset your hangover.

### **The Deli Bankastræti 14, Reykjavík 101, Iceland**

The Deli is a late night pizza legend in Iceland. Great pizza, paninis and pasta. Also - Vegan Violife cheese option available for most pies for plant based friends who are hungry late night. Open until 5am.

### **Devitos Laugavegur 126, 105 Reykjavík, Iceland**

Open until 6am on Friday and Saturday, This is the major late-night-pizza competition to "The Deli". Devitos is a NYC-ish style standard, hole-in-the-wall pizza stop, and it comes with mostly positive reviews.

**Best Late Night 2020 (from Reykjavik Grapeline):** <https://grapevine.is/best-of-reykjavik/2020/02/28/best-of-reykjavik-2020-best-late-night-bite/>



## THE OPENERS

Superb openers will kick things off two of the three nights, allowing us to break in the dance floor with some high quality jams and shreddy guitars before Umphrey's even touches the stage.



A strong rhythm section guiding improvisational fun is the modus operandi of this supergroup, featuring Marc Brownstein from Disco Biscuits, Rob Marscher of the Addison Groove Project, Danny Mayer from the Eric Krasno Band, and drummer Marlon Lewis who has played with artists like Lauryn Hill and French Monatana. Their style is more varied than your standard funk, fusing elements from psychedelia, jazz and hip hop to craft thorough and interesting jams.



This Long Island Four Piece needs no introduction. Having been Umphrey's family for over a half decade, now they're going to the North with us. Looking for some study material? Check out their Real Tauk Live Series, or their most recent studio album Shapeshifter II, and we're certain you'll be looking forward to dancing around the Harpa to epic synthy, key heavy progressive rock instrumentals.

## Late Night Music

---

### Friday, March 25th

Star Kitchen @ Idno

The Vintage Caravan @ Hurrah

### Saturday, March 26th

TAUK @ Idno

Jennifer Hartswick / Brendan Bayliss @ Hurrah

### Sunday, March 27th

TAUKING McGee @ Idno

**Idnó** - Smallish venue that is 10 minutes walk from the Harpa. The capacity is ----. It sits lakeside on the tranquil Tjörnin, nearby City Hall, several museums, and a large park full of walking paths. The room itself has a bandshell sort of look with a dancefloor, and nice outdoor spaces near the water.

**Húrra** - is the smaller of the two venues. While Húrra itself is new, this location has had a stage in downtown Reykjavik for eons. From the photos, it has a rustic, semi-gothic feel, with a small stage and dance floor.

## Museums & Culture

---

**Reykjavik Art Museum Asmundarsafn** *Sigtun, Reykjavik 105, Iceland*

Dedicated to the sculptures and drawings of Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893–1982). If you are into sculptures or visual arts, Asmundur created some beautiful works. Thematically, most of

his work focused on men and women in their jobs. As time went on, his works became more abstract. The museum houses the artist's home & studio, an elegant sculpture garden with 30 of Asmundur's sculptures. A large number of his works, and related artists' works, are housed within the museum.

### **Arnarholl Statue** *Arnarholl, Reykjavik 116, Iceland*

Situated on a hill, overlooking Reykjavik Harbor's east end, is the Ingólfur Arnarson statue on Arnarholl. According to Icelandic Folklore, Ingólfur Arnarson was the founder of the country in 874 with his wife Hallveig Froadottir, and his brother Hjörleifr Hróðmarsson, though very little evidence of his settlement exists and there were probably Hiberno-Scottish monks living in Iceland before 874. Still, this statues represents Icelandic heritage and mythology, and the hill it is located on has a magnificent view of the Harpa and the surrounding bay, which itself may be well worth the jaunt.

### **Reykjavik City Hall** *Tjarnargata, Reykjavik 101, Iceland*

The architecture of the city center is nothing special, but the building is located in a beautiful quarter of the city. The Hall itself has one main attraction, a large 3D map of Iceland which allows you to see the unique topography of the island. For tourists out and about, this location also has clean bathrooms and phone lockers where you can charge your dying device. Not worth a special trip, but well worth it to pop-in if you're in the area, and definitely check out the lake nearby which is often full of swans and has a nice view of the residential area surrounding it.

### **Sculpture and Shore Walk** *Saebraut 101, Reykjavik 105, Iceland*

A gorgeous walk with the growing city on one side and the ocean on the other. Along the path are sculptures touching on a wide array of cultural and historical topics. On clear days, views of Mt Esja (alt. 2999ft) are beyond compare. A great way to get your bearings in the city, enjoy a nice walk outside and get some sun on an beautiful day.

### **The Icelandic Punk Museum** *Bankastraeti 2 | Underground, Reykjavik 101, Iceland*

Located at Bankastraeti Zero, the old public toilets in the bottom of the main street, where the old equipment is still visible among the posters and tidbits of history. The whole place has a very authentic, DIY motif, tons of posters on the walls, punk rock blasting through the speakers.

### **Einar Jonsson Museum** *Listasafn Einars Jonssonar) Eiríksgata, Reykjavik 101, Iceland*

A small sculpture museum dedicated to one of Reykjavik's most famous artists. Drawing his inspiration from Icelandic Folklore, Jonsson focused on creating art for art's sake and not being wedded to a particular style or motif. His works are both realistic and also marred in symbolism, and allow each piece to be both striking on face value, and revealing when investigated further.

### **Saga Museum** *Grandagardur 2, Reykjavik 101, Iceland*

The Saga Museum focuses on the history and folklore of Iceland as written by Snorri Sturluson. This is a wax museum with seventeen scenes that depict major elements of the Saga. The Waxworks are supposedly very well done. Visitors are given audio guides that are entertaining and informative. While the historical accuracy of these Sagas is in question, this is some of the best information that we have from the 'Viking Age' and the establishment of the country, and are required knowledge for anyone who is interested in the history of Iceland. But it is a wax museum, and if history isn't your thing, then this would not be the spot for you.

### **Kjarvalsstaðir** *Flókagata 24, 105 Reykjavík, Iceland*

This museum houses the works of artist Jóhannes S. Kjarval. He is considered by many to be the quintessential Icelandic painter. His style varied widely throughout his lifetime, drawing on many different influences. His works can be anything from soft pieces of impressionism to trippy cubic or expressionist works. They also have temporary exhibits of international artists and sculptures. Included in the city card.

### **Perlan Museum** *Varmahlid 1 | Oskjuhlid, Reykjavik 105, Iceland*

Sitting atop Öskjuhlíð Hill, the Perlan is an absolutely stunning piece of architecture, created by an immense glass dome that sits atop six water tankers. Inside, the Perlan hosts a large museum that focuses on every element of Iceland's thrilling natural environment. There is a manmade ice cave within the museum itself, created to teach visitors about Iceland's glaciers, and a world class planetarium with shows about the Northern Lights and views of the galaxy above the little island. If you want to learn some additional information about the landscapes you will adventure through in Iceland, the Perlan is the place to go.

### **Iceland Maritime Museum**

Boating has played a large role in the development of Iceland, and the Maritime Museum highlights its history in the country. Housed in an old fish factory, the collection focuses on the fishing industry, and the 'cod wars', a series of confrontations between the United Kingdom and Iceland on fishing rights in the North Atlantic. Iceland won each of the three fish related fights. Included in the city card.

### **Museum of Photography** *Tryggvagata 15, top floor*

This museum houses a vast amount of photography from and about Iceland. Their mission is to make as much of their collection available to the public as possible, and you can view thousands of modern and historical works from their archive. Included in the city card.

### **ADALSTRÆTI 10**

Built in 1762, this house in the center of Reykjavik is the oldest building in the city. When the house was built, the city was just becoming a small village. Now it is a permanent exhibit focusing on the history of Reykjavik as it grew up around this building. It's a cool place to walk past even if you're not into history.



**Natural History Museum** *Hamraborg 6, Kópavogur, Iceland*

**The Settlement Exhibit** *Adalstraeti 16, Reykjavik 101, Iceland*

This is another one of those spots that will mostly appeal to history buffs. An open excavation site in the middle of the city. Uncovered during building work, the earliest ruins of human settlement in Iceland are combined with an interactive, multimedia entrenched exhibit. There is much to learn here and it is presented in an easy-to-absorb fashion. Included on the City Card.

**National Museum of Iceland** *Suðurgata 41, 101 Reykjavík*

Focused on the history of Iceland from settlement to modernity. Full of artifacts, exhibits and information, an absolute must for history buffs. There are lots of artifacts collected from all over the country.

**National Gallery of Iceland** *Fríkirkjuvegur 7, 101 Reykjavík*

One of Iceland's oldest collection of art. Established in 1884, this museum focuses on 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> century art of all forms, but especially sculptures and paintings. Free with the city card.

**Icelandic Phallogological Museum** *Laugavegur 116, 105 Reykjavík*

Probably the strangest on our list - a museum dedicated to...penises. There is a free audio guide in English. It is not a large museum, but does contain the penises of every Icelandic species and more – 215 penises in total. Not for the faint of heart.

**Arbaer Open Air Museum** *4, 110, Kistuhylur, Reykjavík*

Open air museum representing what life was like for farmers and ranchers throughout Reykjavik's history, with buildings dating as back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are over 20 different buildings of a historical nature on the lot, along with tour guides and people on site who explain the process of ranching throughout Iceland's history. Winner of the Iceland Museum of the Year 2006 award. Included in the city card.

**Hafnarhús** *Tryggvagata 17, 101 Reykjavík*

Utilizing an old harbor warehouse, this museum focuses on the pop art of Erro (b1932), a true visual genius who focuses on collages that brings in a comic book style to pop figures and creates a style both familiar and unique. Located in one of the oldest parts of Reykjavik.

**Ásmundarsafn** *Sigtún 105, Reykjavík*

A unique modern visual art museum focusing on paintings and sculptures, especially those of Icelandic artist Ásmundur Sveinsson. Ásmundur liked to craft sculptures of people or mythology, and his works were often displayed around the city.

**Hallgrímskirkja** *Hallgrímstorg 101, 101 Reykjavík*

One of the tallest, most dramatic buildings in all of Iceland, and one of the country's best-known landmarks. It took 41 years to build the church, starting in 1945. The building's façade was said to be inspired by the mountains and glaciers that have given Iceland so much of its character and history. Initially considered "Too Old Fashioned" due to its mixture of styles,

the church has since become well loved by residents and tourists alike, who find the distinct architecture of the church fascinating. You can climb to the top of the church's tall tower which had been used as a guard post and fire watch for many years. Views from the top are said to be quite spectacular.

## COVID Considerations

---

Just one week before we all had initially planned to head out on this Iceland Extravaganza, COVID-19 swept to all nations in the world, leading to the unfortunate-but-necessary postponement of these shows in 2020. Since then, dealing with the virus remains a constant battle, but the world is adapting to live with the virus by implementing thoughtful, necessary safety precautions.

**For international travelers**, Iceland no longer has many precautions in place. On February 25, all COVID-19 related restrictions will go away. This includes all restrictions at the border for entering Iceland. That's right, check out this official announcement.

**You will need to take a COVID19 test to return to the United States.** Test results need to be **taken within 24 hours of leaving.** There is COVID19 testing at the Harpa and it is easy to schedule.

Even though restrictions are going away, COVID has been running rampant in Iceland (but is starting to slowly recede now) so make sure to take proper precautions to protect yourself while raging.

If you get sick with COVID19 while within the country, you *no longer have to* quarantine for 7 days - however, to return to the United States: "All air passengers 2 years or older with a flight departing to the US from a foreign country at or after 12:01am EST (5:01am GMT) on December 6, 2021, are required show a negative COVID-19 viral test result taken no more than 1 day before travel, or documentation of having recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days, before they board their flight." See the CDC's website for additional details.

The US Embassy in Iceland website has information on the process to test negative and get certified to return home. Because of this, travel insurance to cover the extended lodging costs is recommended.

## A FEW HIGHLY SUGGESTED SIGHTS

THE ICELANDIC PUNK MUSEUM



SKY LAGOON



ICELANDIC PHALLOLOGICAL MUSEUM



ARBAER OPEN AIR MUSEUM



PERLAN MUSEUM



THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

BLUE LAGOON



HALLGRIMSKIRKJA



KERID CRATER



LEBOWSKI BAR



EINAR JONSSON MUSEUM



REYNISFJARA BLACK SAND BEACH

### Lagoons, Geothermal Baths & Pools

**Blue Lagoon** *Nordurljosavegur 9, Grindavik 240, Iceland*

Considered to be one of the "25 Wonders of the World" by National Geographic magazine, Blue Lagoon is an extremely popular thermal reservoir located about 50 minutes from Reykjavik. The waters of the blue lagoon are Gatorade style blue with many skin rejuvenating minerals like silica and algae constantly flowing into the pool. Located in the massive, 800-year old UNESCO Geopark lava field in the center to the Reykjanes Peninsula, the lagoon gets its ice blue color due to runoff from a nearby geothermal plant. The pool is part of a resort, and has the "resort feel" to it, which means that there will be tons of families and tourists, as this is often considered a "*must do*" for many who travel through the island. Due to this, we have been told by many friends that paying extra for the more private pool will get you adequate distance from most families. There are also some fairly observant lifeguards throughout the location, which gives it a less private feel. Prices are around \$100 per person, and prebooking is required.

**Website:** <https://www.bluelagoon.com/explore>

**Sky Lagoon** *Vesturvör 44-48 200, Kópavogur, Iceland*

A new entry since this guide was published in 2000, Sky Lagoon offers an a luxurious lagoon option that is *30 minutes* closer to Reykjavik than the Blue Lagoon. The hot springs are gorgeous, with an infinity pool that stretches out into the ocean and a swim up bar. The water is very warm and clear, but lacks the neon blue colors of the Blue Lagoon. Base rates start at around \$50 or so. For about \$20 more, you can participate in Sky Lagoon's 'Ritual', which

consists of the lagoon, an ice water pool, a ritzy looking sauna that hangs over the water, and a steam room. Pretty pricey, but it makes for an excellent competitor and alternative to the Blue Lagoon. Why don't you try them both and let us know which one you preferred?

**Website:** <https://www.skylagoon.com/>

**Secret Lagoon** *Hvammsvegur, 845 Flúðir, Iceland*

Secret Lagoon is a less luxurious than the above two options and is the more rustic hot springs experience near-ish Reykjavik. Located in the Golden Circle area, these warm waters are located in a single outdoor pool that is surrounded by simple, stone facilities. The lava rocks are located right under your feet, keeping you nice and warm the entire soak. The scenery surrounding the pool is amazing. There is no Gatorade Blue colored waters, but there is also far fewer people, and the hot springs itself is not part of a luxury hotel. It's also quite a bit cheaper, close to \$30 per person. It's also further away from Reykjavik than the Blue Lagoon. So there are pros and cons. Depending on what you are going for, this will have a "More natural and private" but far "Less Luxurious" feeling to it. The water remains around 38-40 Celsius (around 100 degrees Fahrenheit) all year round.

**Website:** <https://secretlagoon.is/>

**Laugarvatn Fontana Geothermal Baths** *Laugarbraut, Laugarvatn, Iceland*

Located in the center of the golden circle, this facility is located next to a giant lake. A combination of interconnected baths and steam rooms allows travelers to soak and steam over a natural hot spring that has been in use since 1929. This place combines *some* of the qualities of Blue Lagoon and Secret Lagoon. The surrounding scenery is cool, and there is beautiful stone artwork that lines the pool, but one could hardly call the amenities rustic. There are far fewer people at Laugarvatn due to its distance from Reykjavik. Many Golden Circle bus tours include a stop at Laugarvatn.

**Website:** <https://www.fontana.is/>

**Myvatn Nature Bath** *Jarðbaðshólar, 660 Mývatn, Iceland*

Are you taking the Ring Road? Then you may want to consider a stop at Myvatn. Located very far north on the island, Myvatn is nearby Reykjahild and the Grjotagja Cave. It combines the rusticness of "Secret Lagoon" with the Gatorade blue waters of Blue Lagoon. The surrounding landscape is absolutely breathtaking and the waters seem beautiful and sparsely populated. The perfect combination of 'off the beaten path' and 'luxury'.

**Website:** <https://myvatnnaturebaths.is/>

---

*Iceland may be cold, but the population has adapted and found fun ways to keep warm in the winter time. Outside of the "Lagoons" mentioned above, Iceland also has tons of public geothermal pools – more akin to your standard summertime swimming pools. Reykjavik*

*has several of these within the city limits, many of these are included on the City Card. Because they are public “pools”, some of them will have a more family-oriented vibe, but depending on when you are there and who you are with, that may not matter at all.*

**Vesturbæjarlaug** *Hofsvallagata 107 Reykjavík*

This thermal pool is the local's favorite and is close to the university, so it often is a lively spot. This is a smaller spot than the more newly developed pools outside of the city center. There is a lap pool, several hot pots, a large jacuzzi, saunas, a gym, and a separate children's pool. This spot has a relaxed vibe that everyone can appreciate - locals and tourists, adults seeking socialization or kids seeking adventure.

**Laugardalslaug** *Sundlaugavegur 105, Reykjavík, Iceland*

The largest conventional swimming pool complex in Iceland. An Olympic size indoor swimming pool, a 50m outdoor pool, outdoor children's pool and paddling pool, two water-slides, numerous hot tubs, steam bath, and even a friggin mini golf course. This is one of the newer, massive geothermal pools, and is relatively close to the city center by comparison. This pool will be pretty energetic with socializing adults and raucous children all of the place - so there will be a slight family vibe.

**Breidholtslaug** *Austurberg 5, 111 Reykjavík, Iceland*

Jacuzzi, saunas, two outdoor and one indoor pool, two waterslides and a childrens slide, and a wading pool for the kids. This spot may have a family vibe, but it also has some excellent facilities to get a soak in if your muscles are tired from dancing. Open until 10pm.

**Árbæjarlaug** *Fylkisvegur 9, 110 Reykjavík, Iceland*

Another large facility that has facilities for both adults and children. Here there are three jacuzzis, a steam bath, a sauna, water slides and fountains for children, and an outdoor pool. Located very close to the Árbær Open Air Museum. Their hours vary so make sure to check their website for further details.

**Sundhöllin** *Barónsstígur 45a, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland*

The oldest outdoor pool in Reykjavík, originally built in 1937 but recent updated with new outdoor pools, jacuzzis, and an ice bath. This pool has a more "adult" feel than some of the others. It is the closest to the city center. There are a few strange rules: No mobile phones, not at all and dry yourself excessively before re-entering the dressing room. Popular with tourists and locals alike.

*Note: It is required to shower in the nude at most places before entering a hot tub or lagoon. Private showers are a luxury that is often an upsell item at resort-y areas - but at the public geothermal pools, you're going to be showering in the buff. Don't worry! Wash your body, get on your suit and get out into the pool!*

## **Golden Circle Route**

---



There are three primary stops on the popular “Golden Circle” tourist route in Iceland: Thingvellir, the Gullfoss Waterfall, and the Haukadalur Geothermal Area, which contains the famous geysers. There are also several spin off stops nearby the “proper route” (*marked below an asterisk*), which allow you to customize your visit and see some things (*relatively*) off the beaten path.

### **Thingvellir National Park**

About 25 miles from Reykjavik is the magnificent Thingvellir National Park, a place of ecological and historical importance. The park is associated with the Althing, the island’s national parliamentary system, which was established in 930AD and was held in the park until 1798. Designation as a national park was formally made in 1930, the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Althing. The park lies on the Mid-Atlantic ridge, forming the boundary between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. Cracks and faults are visible within the part, the largest one, called Almannagja, is practically a canyon. There are beautiful valleys and waterfalls located throughout the park, and the clear water within the tectonic fissures has made this popular scuba diving location as well. Thingvellir is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

### **Silfra Fissure\***

Located within Thingvellir National Park. Some of the clearest, cleanest water that there is on the planet. Divers can scuba here in the fissure between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates.

### **Gullfoss Waterfall**

Considered by many to be Iceland’s most beautiful waterfall, this natural epic has a unique several step plunge that carries with it hundreds of gallons of water a second. Its width, shape and strength make for a spectacular sight. The combination of breathtaking landscape, sheets of ice, and the thundering crash of the waves is unreplaceable anywhere else in the world, It is one of the most popular attractions in Iceland.

### **Haukadalur Geothermal Area**

The area is a hotbed of geothermal activity, with tons of nearby mud pools and fumaroles. The Haukadalur includes Stokkur, a giant reliable geyser that eruptions every 6 – 10 minutes, sometimes reaching up to 130 feet in height. The Great Geysir, which used to erupt up to 230 feet in the air, but in recent years it has gone completely silent, is also within this area. There are around 30 other small geothermal pools and geysers.

### **Skálholt\***

A large compound once considered the ‘most important place in Iceland’, Skálholt is pretty much a large community built up around a cathedral, and was a cultural and political center for Iceland’s religious community. The first official school in the country was founded at Skálholt, and the location served as an episcopal see for the Catholic church. It is a place of historical significance.

### **Kerid\***

A volcanic crater lake. One of several in the area, though this one is likely most picturesque, diving 180 feet from the top and 560 feet wide, with large swathes of the steep, red caldera peeping out from sparse, patchy moss. The area land owners charge an entrance fee to see the crater of 400 ISK.

### **Þórufoss\***

A beautiful waterfall that is off the beaten path. While it's less complex and grandiose than Gullfoss, it is still quite striking and set upon a beautiful backdrop. Not only that, but it offers solitude rarely found along the golden circle.

### **Sólheimar Ecovillage\***

A wonderful eco-village renowned for its ecological, artistic and community ethics. Currently housing around 100 people, Solheimar is located along the Golden Circle and is an excellent example of harmonious living. A pioneer of organic farming and recycling, Solheimar relies on geothermal energy and currently has an organically certified greenhouse, arboretum and egg production facility.

### **Thjorsardalur\***

About 45 minutes east of Solheimar is a beautiful valley called Thjorsardalur. It's somewhat off the path from the rest of the Golden Circle route. The valley contains waterfalls, a natural hot springs, and the Þjóðveldisbærinn Stöng, a farm that was buried in ash after the 1104 Hekla eruption. It was unearthed and partially reconstructed in 1974. Considered by many to be the Gateway to Iceland's Highlands, Thjorsardalur has enough around that you could make an entire daytrip of that locale itself. Make sure to do some further research on this spot if you plan to go.

### **Seljalandsfoss\***

A very tall waterfall that is extremely picturesque and occasionally freezes in the winter, making for a dramatic site no matter the season. The waterfall drops around 197ft and is part of the Seljalands River, whose origin is the volcano glacier Eyjafjallajökull. Travelers can hike behind the falls into a small cave in good weather.

# THE NORTHERN LIGHTS



- If the skies are clear and the Aurora is active, the northern lights ARE able to be viewed from Reykjavik. The best places to view from the city are close to the waterfront and away from streetlights.
- Best places within the city include Öskuhlið Hill and the Gróttu lighthouse, both of which have little light pollution, but will be popular spots when the Aurora is visible.
- Great places outside of the city to see the Northern Lights include Lake Kleifarvatn, Lake Hafnartvatn, and Reykjanesviti lighthouse.
- Further out, places like Vík, the Ásbyrgi Canyon, Jökulsárlón, and Seljavallalaug are all beautiful backdrops for seeing the sky lights.

## Northern Lights

---

### So....what are the Northern Lights?

The Northern Lights are caused by disturbances in Space to charged particles by solar winds. The disturbance to the magnetosphere causes the particles to precipitate toward our planet's surface, causing ionization which emits light of varying color and convolution.

### Where can I see the Northern Lights in/near Reykjavik?

If the skies are clear and the Aurora is active, the northern lights ARE able to be viewed from the capitol city. Many guides suggest that the best place to go is closest to the waterfront so that you can avoid some of the light pollution from streetlamps.

Strolling down the north shore scenic and sculpture walk is an excellent way to view the Northern Lights without having to leave the city. Another suggestion is to go out to the Gróttu lighthouse on the Seltjarnarnes peninsula. This is probably the most popular spot within the city to see the Northern Lights and may get packed with people. The peninsula ends at the lighthouse on Grotta Island which is filled with unique birds and a compact footbath geothermal pool. This spot is far enough from the downtown area that the Aurora Borealis should be slightly brighter than it would be within the city proper.

### Öskuhlið hill

Is a large hill on top of which stands The Perlan Museum. From the top, views of the Aurora Borealis are possible. This is a good spot to get great glimpses of the entirety of Reykjavik, along with the lightshow in the sky.

## **Kleifarvatn**

Is a large lake located south of Reykjavik about a half hour or so outside of the city. It is located right on the Mid-Atlantic fissure and is filled by water coming and going from underground. This is an excellent place moderately close to the city to see the Northern Lights without light pollution or people.

*Looking to go further from the city?*

## **Vik**

Located along a black sand beach a few hours south east of Reykjavik, the town of Vik is a cool place to listen to the waves and watch the Northern Lights. You can see the beautiful rock formations, the town's traditional church, the nearby black sand beach, and outlines of the Mýrdalsjökull Glacier to add to your view of a beautiful night sky. There are only 300 full time residents of Vik, and while the town is popular with tourists, it will be mostly free of light pollution.

## **Northern Lights Forecast Websites:**

Aurora-Service.eu - <http://www.aurora-service.eu/aurora-forecast/>

University of Alaska - <https://www.gi.alaska.edu/monitors/aurora-forecast>

Iceland Aurora Forecast: <https://en.vedur.is/weather/forecasts/aurora/>

Cloud Cover Forecast: <https://en.vedur.is/weather/forecasts/cloudcover/>

9 lies & One Truth Regarding the Northern Lights: <https://www.dangerous-business.com/northern-lights-facts/>

## **Northern Lights Related Apps:**

*(note: most apps get mixed reviews from users, some people swearing by them and other people saying that the information is completely off. We hope they end up being helpful, but use at your own risk.)*

My Aurora Forecast - Aurora Alerts Northern Lights - [Google Play](#) / [Apple](#)

Northern Eye Aurora Forecast - [Google Play](#)



## History of ICELAND

### Timeline:

- **Before 800CE:** A few Celtic Inhabitants
- **Mid800s:** Vikings Accidentally Arrive
- **874:** Reykjavik Established
- **1220:** Norway officially takes over island
- **1380:** Kalmar Union
- **1660:** Scandanavia splits, Iceland joins Denmark-Norway
- **1783:** Volcano Laki erupts, kills ~9000
- **1814:** Norway and Denmark split, Denmark keeps Iceland.
- **1874:** Iceland given relative autonomy
- **1941:** American occupies Iceland during WW2
- **1943:** Iceland becomes its own nation

Iceland was likely originally inhabited by Celtic monks, who left before/when the Vikings arrived around in the 9th century. The first permanent settlement in Iceland was Reykjavik, which may have been established as early as 874CE. After much of the island was inhabited, they established a loose confederations of tribes that held which held an annual meeting called a Þingvellir. After a few hundred years, this confederation broke down into civil war, and by 1220 Norway was officially in charge of the island. Throughout time, Norway's allegiance shifted several times between unions of with Denmark and Sweden, and Iceland's along with it. The country's economy depended on it's ability to trade with the mainland, and when climate conditions were unfavorable, Iceland suffered. In 1783 the volcano Laki erupted, causing citizens and livestock to die in large numbers. The eruption cause climatic shifts that created a harsh winter and severely disrupted Iceland's economy. As the weather grew worse, many inhabitants emigrated to America. Those who stayed behind began to work towards an independent Iceland. In 1918, Iceland became recognized as its own country, joined in a union with Denmark. Denmark remained neutral during World War Two, leading to an Allied invasion in 1940 for gain a strategic positioning against the Axis. In 1943, Saga Island gained its full independence.

## Umphreak's Anonymous' ICELANDIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Buy your alcohol in the Duty Free shop at the airport.**
- **If your phone is unlocked, pick up a Vodafone or Siminn SIM card.**
- **Take the Flybus into the city from the airport.**
- **Be sure to double check road conditions before driving out of the city.**
- **Get full insurance on rental cars.**
- **Check forecast before chasing northern lights.**
- **Google Translate is your friend!**
- **Consider a Reykjavik City Card for easy access to pools, the bus and many museums.**

## Money & Expenses

Iceland always ranks within the top ten of most expensive countries to visit in the world, often times making its way into the top five, keeping company with nations like Norway, Switzerland and Luxemboug. Iceland, like many of the Nordic countries, uses monetary units called Krona. It is represented by the lettering ISK. When doing conversions, make sure you



are using Icelandic Krona, instead of Swedish (SEK) or Norwegian (NOK), as their conversion rates are significantly different. As of the time of writing this, the 1000 ISK is worth:

Sure. Iceland is expensive. Iceland is also unlike any other place in the world. It is our opinion that, if you have the dough, to not try to cheapen out on things you love just because they cost more here than in other parts of the world. How many opportunities will there be for you to return to Iceland? For many of us this is a once in a lifetime ordeal! You've made it there, you've paid your airfare, ticket price and hotel. Now it's time to relax. If that means buying a ten dollar Nordic beer, well then savor each drop, spend a bit more time on it than you usually would, then order another one.

We've also got some Iceland on a Budget suggestions below that are excellent tips for any traveler to the island.

## SIM CARDS

---

SIM Cards may be referred to as "SIMs" or "Chips" in Iceland.

First things first - before you go buying a SIM card, make sure that your phone is *unlocked*, which means it will work on any carrier. Most Verizon phones in the United States are unlocked, and if you have a more recent Google Pixel or iPhone device, you phone will likely be able to swap SIM cards no problem. For all other devices, you want to check with your carrier before you go to make sure you device is unlocked. If it's not, getting a SIM will do you little good. - you may want to consider getting a burner or something that will just work for international trips.

Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/BKc98mKUv3k>

Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/CurOgRbxa-U>

You may also want to get a SIM Card Tool. You can always use a pushpin or a paperclip, but I find that using the SIM card tool is easier - and, honestly, it's somewhat hard to find a pushpin or paperclip - that will fit - when you need one. I've used these before.

**Siminn** is the largest carrier in Iceland and offers "Pay as You Go" plans. You can pick up a card at many retail outlets, however, we always suggest going into the Carrier's store to ensure that your service is working after you install the chip. There is a Siminn store in downtown Reykjavik as well about 30 minutes from Harpa. If you need a SIM before getting to downtown, the **Eymundsson** in the airport can provide one, however, you'll want to install and activate the chip there to make sure it works. Some folks have suggested Simmin service is *slightly* better than Vodaphone. 10gb appears to be around \$30 or so. More information is available at

<https://www.siminn.is/en/prepaid> / [https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g189970-i594-k11568327-Siminn\\_SIM\\_card\\_purchase\\_question-Reykjavik\\_Capital\\_Region.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g189970-i594-k11568327-Siminn_SIM_card_purchase_question-Reykjavik_Capital_Region.html)

**Vodafone** is the second largest carrier in Iceland and can be considered the competitor to the largest company Siminn. They also offer "Top Up" options and the SIM Card itself is free. You can get Top Up Cards at an 10-11 Convenience Stores (sorta like 7-11s in Iceland) or even get the SIM on many Icelandair flights, however, this breaks what we consider the cardinal rule of "make sure your phone is working before you leave the store". With that in mind, there are Vodafone stores in Reykjavík at Kringlan Mall and Sudurlandsbraut 8, 108.Reykjavik. It's about \$20 per 5GB. More information is available at <https://vodafone.is/english/information/>.

Both of the above carriers is going to be fairly similar as far as cost and coverage. There is only one Siminn store but it's in downtown Reykjavik, so that will work for most people. The Vodafone stores are near downtown Reykjavik, so also very convenient – there's one on the way in to town if you're driving but lost without your Google Maps. If you absolutely can't wait for your data, I hear they sell SIMs at the Duty Free store in the airport, you could buy one and then, if you had any problems, bring it to one of the stores I mentioned above. From coverage maps, it looks like they both have the same 4G coverage in Reykjavik & the Golden Road, and 3G/4G coverage along the ring road and the other major locations in Iceland. Both have English websites, making topping up and getting support easy.

## Food & Drink

---

Buying liquor in Nordic countries requires some forethought, which certainly seems annoying but is something you can clearly plan for. **Vínbúdin** is the name of the government run liquor store, if you've spent any time in North Carolina, this is sorta like ABC Stores. There are 13 Vinbudin in the Reykjavik area. Most are open until 1800, but a few are open to 2000.

***Important Tip: Once you land in Keflavik airport, you will get the chance to buy liquor at the duty-free shop. This is generally sold at a reduced price and without tax, so it is much cheaper than anywhere else in the country. You may bring in six units per person and someone at the register should be able to help. We highly suggest getting your liquor here, and buying beer with any units you have left over. Booze in Iceland is expensive. Pace yourself, but pregame nicely and then nurse your drinks at the bar.***

Unique drinks that you are only able to get in Nordic countries include **Akavit** and Iceland's signature alcoholic beverage, **Brennivin**. Brennivin literally means "Burnt Wine", and is a type of schnapps that is made from distilled potatoes and flavoured with either caraway or angelica. Because of this, and in similar nature to Akavit, it will have an "Angry Gin" type flavor for the most part. It is considered quite potent, and has been referred to by the name "Black Death" on occasion. It's an acquired taste for certain, but like black licorice, if you like it – you *really* like it.

When it comes to **tipping** - you can tip for good service if you'd like but tipping is not expected. Most of the time the gratuity is considered as part of the bill.

## Grocery Stores in Iceland

---

Grocery stores in Iceland are relatively inexpensive - but that doesn't mean cheap. If you're crafty enough, you can keep food costs only slightly more expensive than those at your standard groceries in the US and Iceland...but those additional costs will add up. Iceland has very little of its own meat or produce, and so meats or cheeses are definitely pricier than the states. Groceries are generally stocked with many familiar brands from both the US and the United Kingdom. The **Bonus Iceland** chain has been recommended to us as the best location to get both quality and familiar brand options for decent prices. They have a huge yellow logo with a pink pig mascot. **Kronan** also a big chain on the island and will have a decent selection. Most grocery stores in Reykjavik will not open until 10am.

### *Vegan Groceries*

We love to help research for our plant based homies. You are generally allowed bring up to 6.5 pounds of food into Iceland, depending on what it is. So if you have a favorite vegan dish that you couldn't live without and it's easy to pack, this might be a smart and affordable way to go for a couple meals. A vegan grocery store opened up in Reykjavik called Vegan búðin, and while it is expensive, it has *all* of your vegan necessities. A huge variety of vegan cheese and faux meats, produce, sweets, all the plant based goodies you're used to back in the states and a few European ones to explore.

We have heard that the megastore/big box store **Hagkaup** also has a lot of vegan cheese options. It is a bit more expensive than your standard grocery.

If you're looking to save some dough - both **Kronan** and **Bonus** will have vegan options. From what I have seen, there is a fair amount of fake meat options and produce in Icelandic grocery stores. There also appears to be a premade 'vegan wrap' at most groceries.

One thing to watch out for: the word 'Vega' in Icelandic means 'road', not 'vegan'. Do not confuse the two, you may end up eating animal products without intending to (as this lady did). The word for Vegan in Icelandic is just plain 'Vegan'.

## Transportation into Reykjavik from the Keflavik Airport (KEF)

---

Flybus is probably the best option for most Umphreys. With the Flybus, it *might/probably* makes the most sense to get the “*Transfer between Keflavik Airport & Reykjavik Hotels*” ticket, which takes you to the city's central station where you transfer to another bus that will take you to most of the hotels in the area. This ticket is around \$33 per person. This way you can avoid slogging your luggage around from place to place. There are lots of advantages to

the Flybus – it's easily the most frequent bus at the airport, they rearrange their schedule to accommodate the airport arrival schedule, your ticket is valid on any Skybus so if you miss one, you can snag the next one, and if you choose to prebook guarantees you a seat.

For about \$15 more per person, you can ride with Airport Direct, but there are major limitations to their system. They have you register for a particular time slot, so we are not certain what happens if you miss your timeframe due to delays. Additionally, their buses only run until 5:15pm, so you would not be able to use this service in the evening. Lastly, there is a cost for baggage over one carry-on and one checked bag. So this is the quickest option, but probably the most limited otherwise.

Taking a taxi from the airport is *not* a great idea. It will cost you around \$280 for the cab. If you split that four ways, that's still \$70 a person. Save that dough for rageing instead and take a dangolde bus.

There are rides from the Airport to Blue Lagoon, if you're looking to go directly there before checking in. Let's say you've been on a flight all night, you're exhausted but can't crash out, and you can't check into your hotel as of yet. Traveling straight to the spa for a day of lazing around might be the perfect refresher. Tickets for round trip are around \$25 per person and does not include Lagoon admission (which is around \$100). Keep in mind that all reservations at the Blue Lagoon must be prebooked.

## Parking

---

Parking in Iceland is generally free, but you do occasionally need to pay for it in downtown Reykjavik. The downtown area is split into several different zones (as illustrated on [this site](#)) - the rule of thumb is: the closer you get to Laugavegur, one of the the main thoroughfare and shopping street in the city, the more expensive it will be.

If you see a Blue "P" parking sign next to your spot, you will have to go to the machine, punch in your license plate and pay. The machines take card or coin.

There are also several multi-level garages in the downtown area who will generally charge around 100ISK - 250ISK per hour.

It is always free to park on Sundays. In most areas, it is free to park on the street after 6pm. In Zones 1, 2 and 3, parking fees are enforced from 9am - 6pm.

It's always worth it to check if your hotel has a free lot for patrons or is aware of any free or cheap parking nearby. They should point you in the right direction.

[More info.](#)

## Outlets

---

Iceland uses two prong EU outlets. There are several EU to US Outlet converters, usually covering several other regions as well. I have used several of these chunky charging bricks before, they are excellent.

Iceland outlets also run at 230 volts, which is a higher voltage than we have in the united states. Most new electronics are dual voltage and can handle between 120v - 240v, but double check for details.

More information about outlets in Iceland can be found here.

## The City Pass

---

If you are planning to engage in more than one cultural activity on their list, the City Pass seems to be an excellent deal. For around \$60/3 Days, you receive entrance into 13 museums, 12 City Geothermal Pools, the Zoo, and rides on all buses within the city limits. If you don't plan to rent a car, this is an excellent way to avoid the cold and catch some of the unique historical and artistic parts of Icelandic culture – and then go for a soak. A 72 hour pass is 6700ISK (~\$55 USD). The only major drawback to the City Pass is that it doesn't include some of the most popular museums, like The Perlan or the Icelandic Punk Museum. Make sure attractions you're interested in seeing are on the list. We've included this information in our guide for the museums that have been suggested to us.

**Website:** <https://visitreykjavik.is/city-card/front>

## VAT Tax Refund on Goods for Tourists

---

Tourists who reside abroad can claim a proportional VAT refund when shopping in Iceland. The refund is limited to purchases that are intended to be taken out of the country and amount to a minimum of ISK 6 000 (including VAT), made at a single point of sale.

The store personnel will fill out the necessary Tax Refund Cheque. The cheque and the purchased goods must be produced and made available for inspection in Iceland on departure no later than 3 months after purchase.

**The Embassy of Iceland in Brussels can not custom clear goods under any circumstances as it must be done in Iceland at the point of departure by a customs official.**

When departing from Keflavik Airport the Tax Refund Cheque can be cashed in the currency of choice. Other departure points usually offer mail-refund services.

- [Government of Iceland](#)

For more information [visit this site](#).

## On A Budget

---

*Stay at a hostel.* There are many hostels in Reykjavik, and if you're okay with a bunk bed, sleeping in the same room as other people or using a shared bathroom, you will easily be able to find a spot. The **Kex Hostel in Reykjavik** receives high ratings from Google (4.4) for as low as \$37 a night (for a bed in a giant dormitory room of 46 other beds). The **Galaxy Pod Hostel** is a little bit further away from the venue, and is a bit more expensive than Kex, but also receives high ratings.

*Make your Own Food.* Making your own food will be essential to living Iceland on a budget. This may be harder or easier depending on where you're staying, but buying food in restaurants will most certainly drive up your cost of vacation. See our "Grocery Stores in Iceland" section.

*Buy alcohol duty free.* Buying alcohol at the duty free shops in the KEF airport is also extremely helpful. Beer, wine and spirits have extremely high taxes in Iceland and, if you plan to consume, your best way to save dough is to do so at your home-away-from-home.

*Use public transit.* Consider using the Public Transit and walking. It will take longer, but it will be significantly cheaper. Renting cars or taking taxis is expensive but often more comfortable in this cold environment, but Reykjavik is extremely walk-able. You are definitely able to get from one side of the city to another in an hour or so if you hoof it. Just make sure to bundle up.

*Find free things to do.* There are tons of free options in Reykjavik if you know where to look. There are free walking tours that you can utilize (you will need to tip the guide but...) it is generally quite affordable an easy way to see the city and get tons of information. There are lots of churches that are beautiful and free to enter, and if the weather is nice, tons of parks within the city as well.

*See things using the City Pass Card.* If you have a little money to spend, you can pick up a City Pass Card (detailed in another part of this guide). For relatively not too much dough, you get to see some excellent museums, swim in some public geothermal pools, and ride the bus all for one relatively affordable price.

## When Will the Sun Set?

---

During the timeframe we will be in Iceland, the sun will start to rise around 6:55am, with full daylight being from around 7:30am – 7pm every day (a total of 11 hours), a very lengthy day - *but* there will be a distinctive day and night cycle, allowing us to get a standard amount of Rest as a vital part of the Rage > Rest > Repeat itinerary.

## Weather

---

It is very likely to be cold and windy. They say there's no such thing as bad weather in Iceland, just bad clothes – if you come prepared for the cold and you'll have a wonderful time. We've used Balaclavas like [these](#) and have found them very useful in cold weather



situations.

This year (2022), there have been an unusual number of severe snowstorms in the southwest peninsula. ***The Week In Iceland*** described it as being the type of storms they see every three to four years or so. Be careful getting around, be flexible with your plans and have alternatives incase the weather turns super sour and you have to stay in the city. Some crap weather is to be expected, but better to delay things a day than to risk your safety in a snowstorm.

## What to Pack

---

There are lots of great websites out there with extensive guides on what to pack for Iceland. We recommend [this guide](#) and [this guide](#) for helpful tips to get you started. We also made [this basic, not-exhaustive, checklist](#) that you can download and print that will give you ideas of what to stuff in your suitcase.

It will likely be cold, so - when out exploring - make sure to layer up with a base layer like thermal underwear. Wool, ski pants, snow or hiking boots all seem to be recommended as well. Obviously at the show you'll be raging and dancing hard, so standard layers or your preferred costume for the musical menagerie will be adequately warm during the show, but be prepared to be cold after the doors close and waltz to late night.

## Road Conditions

---

You have probably read *a lot* about roads being closed in Iceland. Roads close frequently due to weather conditions, even the main roads, but they do not remain closed all winter. People in other parts of the island have to get around – but, you have to remain malleable. Primary roads, referred to as S Roads, should generally be accessible, but this does not mean that they are safe, nor does it mean they are open from destination to destination. Check the Icelandic Roads website (listed below) before setting off on any adventure.

Icelandic roads stay open in conditions you would never consider driving in, conditions that would easily close down Colorado I-70 mountain passes. Snow is not considered the major danger by Icelanders, but instead it is the unruly wind that sends gravel and rocks flying at commuters. Flexibility is *key* when you are driving outside of Reykjavik – if you do not have the time/ability to wait, can't afford to lose a reservation, then driving in the winter is probably not a good choice. Taking a tour bus might be significantly safer, as the bus and its driver are conditioned for the Icelandic winter and will get you where you're going safe.

**Emergency Services in Iceland:** Dial 112

**Official Road Conditions:** <http://www.road.is/>

**How to Read the Road Conditions in Iceland:** <https://safetravel.is/blog/read-road-conditions-iceland>

**SafeTravel Site:** <https://safetravel.is/>

## Skiing

**Blafjoll** - one of two skiing hills that are relatively close to Reykjavik. This one is located on the South-West side of the city. It takes about a half hour or forty five minutes to get to Blafjoll. We believe it costs around \$35 to ski here. If you're used to skiing in Montana, Utah or Colorado, these mountains and runs will seem small, but the fact that you're skiing in a foreign country has its own novelty. With 14 lifts and several cross country runs, Blafjoll is the largest of the two ski areas.

**Skálafell** - is the smaller of the two ski areas that are relatively close. It only has four lifts, and is only open during weekends from beginning of February to middle of April, in general. This resort is almost all easy and intermediate runs, and is more a 'locals hill' than it is a ski destination, but you can definitely get a few runs in here if you're in the area.

It can be somewhat hard to figure out if the mountains are open or not - all the runs may be showing "red" on [the website](#), but you'll still see pictures on Instagram of people skiing. Make sure to check [their Facebook](#) for any recent closures and up-to-date information before you head out.

