



My Drift

Title: Iceland

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Iceland is an isolated Nordic island country in the North Atlantic, with a population of 360,400 and an area of 40,000 square miles (about the same size as Kentucky), making it the most sparsely populated country in Europe. The capital and largest city is Reykjavík (pop. 230,000), with the Reykjavík area in the southwest of the country being home to over 65% of the population. Iceland is volcanically and geologically active. The interior consists of a plateau characterized by sand and lava fields, mountains, and glaciers, and many glacial rivers flow to the sea through the lowlands. Iceland is warmed by the Gulf Stream and has a temperate climate, despite a high latitude almost entirely outside the Arctic Circle. Its high latitude and marine influence keep summers chilly, with most of the island having a tundra climate.



Iceland is 175 miles east of Greenland



Map of Iceland

Iceland is known as the ‘land of fire and ice’ and is a very scenic country. Checkout the pictures in this article.



Reykjavik

- **Reykjavík is the northernmost capital in the world.**
- **The city’s proximity to the North Pole means that it gets as little as four hours of sunlight in the winter and as much as 21 hours of daylight in the summer.**
- **One of the most popular foods in Iceland? Believe it or not, is hot dogs!**
- **It is among the cleanest, greenest, and safest cities in the world.**
- **The first permanent settlement in Iceland was in Reykjavík in 874 AD.**
- **The word Reykjavík translates literally as “smoky bay”. The name refers to the steam that rises from the hot springs and geothermal vents.**
- **Beer was illegal in the country until March 1, 1989. Now the landmark date is celebrated annually in Reykjavik as Bjordagur or Beer Day. Perhaps because they were deprived for so long, beer now accounts for 62 percent of the alcohol consumption in the country. Víking Classic is the most popular beer brand in Iceland.**
- **Reykjavík is the only Western European capital without a Starbucks or a McDonald’s.**
- **Dogs were banned in Reykjavík from 1924 to 1984. As a consequence of the dog ban, Reykjavík is still a mostly a cat city.**
- **Reykjavík is the only capital city in the world that is home to a major puffin breeding colony! An estimated 60% of the entire world puffin population nests in Iceland (3 or 4 million pairs of puffins).**



- The tallest building in Reykjavik is its famous Hallgrímskirkja Evangelical Church - Standing at 245 feet.

Now wait just a minute here –

Why were dogs banned in Reykjavik? Well, the thinking was that no upstanding dog would want to live in the big city. Dogs needed room to run and play! Dogs were welcome in the rest of the country.

And why did Iceland ban beer until 1989? The ban was left over from the country's prohibition days, which began in 1915 after the population voted in a referendum to outlaw all alcohol.



Mýrdalsjökull is a glacier in the south of the Icelandic highlands. It is the country's fourth largest ice cap, covering nearly 232 square miles.



The Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon is one of Iceland's most popular attractions due to its stunning beauty.



The Goðafoss waterfall is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Iceland. The water of the river Skjálfandafljót falls from a height of over 40 feet.



Typical Iceland small town in the winter.

As the country's name suggests, it must be cold or freezing in Iceland. Well, it is a little cold most of the year but not as bad as you might think. The following chart describes the four seasons in Iceland:



So, what's the story behind naming the country "Iceland"? Some say that Iceland's Viking settlers thought the name would discourage over settlement of their beautiful island. However, the true reason is the first Viking Norseman to reach Iceland in the 9th century named it "Snow Land" because it was snowing. This was later changed to Iceland for some unknown reason.

It is a little strange that Iceland's nearest neighbor "Greenland" is over 80% covered by ice and "Iceland" during the summer is over 80% green grass and tundra! This is the case even though 11 percent of Iceland is still covered with a permanent ice cap.



Vatnajökull Glacier and National Park

Vatnajökull is Europe's largest glacier—a piece of ice the size of Puerto Rico.



Iceland is a great place to see the Northern Lights during the winter months

Hot springs and swimming pools in Iceland



The Blue Lagoon is the most famous pool in Iceland and one of the most popular Iceland attractions. It has been named as one of the 25 wonders of the world according to National Geographic and an absolute must-see on your trip to Iceland.

Natural hot springs have been a part of Iceland's culture since the settlement era. The love for swimming and bathing is engraved in the Icelandic DNA. For centuries the people there have known the health benefits of bathing in the oh-so-wonderful warm mineral water and de-stressing and relaxing every muscle in your body after a hard day at work. Almost all Icelandic swimming pools are geothermally heated, so they are warm all year round. Swimming pools are even considered one of the most important places to socialize, work out, drink beer, and unwind.

The country is situated on one of the 'hottest spots' on earth, resulting in a lot of geothermal activity, but there are also glaciers dotted all over the country. This mixture of geothermal activity, ice and fire, means that there are numerous waterfalls, lakes and hot springs all over the island that can be enjoyed all year round, no matter what the weather is like!

Geothermal Energy



This Geothermal power plant in Reykjavik is using their underground reservoirs of steam and hot water to generate electricity and to heat and cool buildings directly.

All warm water in Iceland is geothermal; it comes boiling hot, from the ground, and straight into people's homes. Rather than needing to warm up the water it needs to be cooled down in order to enjoy it.

This results in dozens of swimming pools which are dotted all over the country - with a total of 17 in the greater Reykjavík area alone! All of these pools will provide you with soothing, warm waters that are perfect to relax in.

Unlike the swimming pools, the hot springs occur naturally. Some of Iceland's hot springs are boiling hot sulfurous gases, bubbling mud pits or spouting geysers, but others are calm pools of water that have the perfect temperature in which to bathe. Many of those have been transformed into popular bathing spots.

Iceland Volcanoes

Okay, how many volcanoes are there in Iceland? There are 130 volcanoes with over 30 of these currently active. This means wherever you might be standing in Iceland, you are near or on top of a volcano.



The most famous and active volcano in Iceland is mount Hekla, which has erupted 18 times since 1104, the last time in 2000. Other active volcanos, measured in terms of the number of eruptions besides Hekla, are Grímsvötn, Katla, Askja and Krafla.

There are lots of things to see all year but especially in the summer months:



Mount Maelifell volcano is one of the most iconic mountains in Iceland



Jökulsárlón is Iceland's most famous glacier lagoon



Seljalandsfoss waterfall



Skógafoss waterfall



Gullfoss Waterfall



Svartifoss Waterfall



Diamond Beach



Reynisfjara Black Sand Beach



Öskjuvatn Lake and the Viti Crater in remote Askja region that might be the most beautiful place in Iceland



West Fjords are a stunning, remote part of Iceland. The mountains are high and steep, and the roads are narrow



Strokkur (The Mighty Geyser) is Iceland's most visited geyser. It typically erupts every 8 minutes. Its usual height is about 60 feet, although it can sometimes erupt up to 130 feet high.



Hvannadalshnúkur is a pyramidal peak on the northwestern rim of the summit crater of the Öräfajökull volcano in Iceland and is the highest in Iceland at 6,920 feet.



Þjórsá is Iceland's longest river at 143 miles. It is a glacier river and has its source on the glacier Hofsjökull.



The Mount Esja Trail in the Landmannalaugar area provides some great hiking.

25 Fun Facts about Iceland

- 1. A majority of Icelanders believe in elves and trolls.**
- 2. There is a volcanic eruption every 4 years on average.**
- 3. There are no forests in Iceland.**
- 4. At 43.5 hours per week, they have the longest work week in Europe.**
- 5. The Icelandic language remains unchanged from ancient Norse. That means 1,000-year-old texts are still easily read.**
- 6. Babies in Iceland are routinely left outside to nap.**
- 7. There are no surnames or family names in Iceland – Icelanders use the traditional Nordic naming system.**
- 8. Consumption of Coca-Cola per capita is higher than in any other country.**
- 9. Iceland banned all strip and sex clubs.**
- 10. Roughly 85 percent of Iceland's energy is from renewable resources, and well over half of that is geothermal alone.**
- 11. Icelandic horses display two additional gaits as compared to all other breeds.**
- 12. Icelanders watch more movies than any other nation.**
- 13. Iceland is home to one of the world's oldest democracies; established in 930.**
- 14. In Iceland owning a pet snake, lizard or turtle is against the law.**
- 15. The country's national sport is handball.**
- 16. Iceland does not have an army, navy or air force.**
- 17. Mosquitoes do not exist in Iceland.**
- 18. The Icelandic police don't carry guns. Crime in Iceland is very low and violent crime is practically nonexistent.**
- 19. Icelandic telephone directories list Icelanders by first name alphabetically.**
- 20. 98% of Icelandic population has a Internet connection.**
- 21. Raw puffin heart is considered a delicacy.**
- 22. Iceland makes up for its lack of fast food with its bevy of downright weird traditional foods. Things like whale, puffin, dried fish, fermented shark, sheep's head, and even pickled ram's testicles.**
- 23. The city of Akureyri is Iceland's second largest city with a population of about 18,500.**
- 24. Forbes lists Iceland as the best country for personal freedom in the world.**
- 25. 80% of the country remains uninhabited.**

Well, that's it. I think Iceland is a very interesting country. Don't you?

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