

BY THE BLOG VINCENT.VOYAGE



ABOUT 250 PAGES OF ESSENTIAL INFORMATION
ABOUT ICELAND

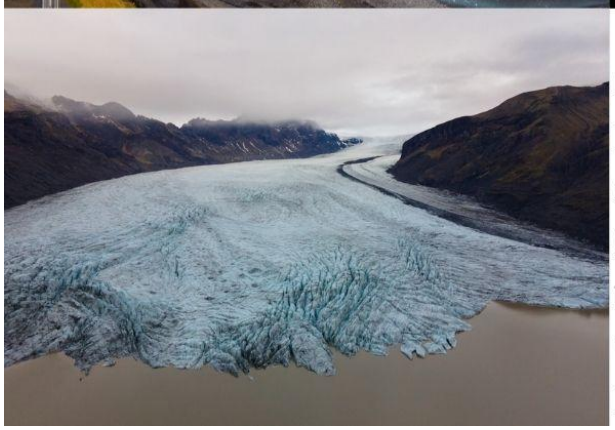
# ICELAND

## YOUR MUST-HAVE TRAVEL GUIDE *v2*





REYKJAVIK
SOUTH COAST
MYVATN & NORTH
SNAEFELLSNES
WESTFJORDS
RING ROAD



NORTHERN LIGHTS
ITINERARIES
ACCOMMODATION
ACTIVITIES
TRANSPORT
PLANNING
INTERACTIVE MAPS



Welcome to this guide dedicated to discovering Iceland, its most beautiful places, its activities and all the practical info to make your trip go smoothly.

This is a guide in constant evolution that has existed since 2024, starting with a first version of a few dozen pages. So it has grown a lot!

I decided to make this **guide completely free**, available to **everyone**. No payment needed, no subscription, no email address.

If you'd like to **help** keep the content completely free and **encourage me** in this work, there are several ways to do it. Because no, the Vincent Voyage blog is not a job at all and it doesn't pay the bills. **Your contributions let me spend more time on it**.

- Use the *Booking* and *Getyourguide* links you'll find in this guide. I get a small percentage and for you it costs nothing extra

- If you're planning your holidays, even if it's not Iceland, use these links (always the official links, obviously). They contain my little ID that tells *Booking* or *Getyourguide* that I'm the one sending you. Same for car rental, I use *Discover Cars*, which I really like.

    - *Book your accommodation on Booking.com*
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Feel free to bookmark these links! Thank you so much! 😊



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# ICELAND

## MENU AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION

*version 2*


THE MAP OF ICELAND ..... 10

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN ICELAND ..... 12

THE BEST ACTIVITIES IN ICELAND ..... 20

SEEING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS ..... 21

*General information* ..... *21*

*Resources and blog articles* ..... *21*

*The northern lights guides in Iceland* ..... *22*

WALKING ON A GLACIER ..... 24

*With transport from Reykjavik* ..... *24*

*Sólheimajökull – meet directly on site (next to Vik)* ..... *25*

*Skaftafell – meet directly on site* ..... *25*

SEEING PUFFINS AROUND THE COUNTRY ..... 26

VISITING AN ICE CAVE ..... 28

*Visiting an ice cave from Reykjavik* ..... *28*

*From VIK, the Katla ice cave tour* ..... *29*

*From Skaftafell and Jokulsarlon* ..... *29*

SEEING WHALES ..... 31

*Whale watching from Reykjavik* ..... *31*

*Whale watching in Husavik* ..... *32*

*The other places to see whales in Iceland* ..... *33*

ENJOYING THE HOT SPRINGS ..... 34

*The best hot springs* ..... *34*

*All the free and paid hot springs* ..... *36*

REYKJAVIK ..... 40

GETTING TO REYKJAVIK BY PLANE ..... 41

HOW TO GET FROM KEFLAVIK AIRPORT TO REYKJAVIK ..... 42

*Getting to central Reykjavik* ..... *42*

*Getting between the airport and the Blue Lagoon* ..... 44
*Where to stay near Keflavik airport* ..... 45
HOW TO GET AROUND REYKJAVIK AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ..... 46
*Do you need to rent a car to visit Reykjavik and the area around it?* ..... 46
*Where to rent a car in Reykjavik?* ..... 47
*Getting around Reykjavik without a car* ..... 48
*Reykjavik bus map* ..... 49
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO SEE IN REYKJAVIK ..... 50
*The city centre* ..... 50
*Reykjavik's museums* ..... 53
*Guided tours* ..... 56
THE BEST THINGS TO DO IN REYKJAVÍK ..... 58
*Seeing whales and other cetaceans* ..... 58
*Seeing the northern lights* ..... 59
*Combining the northern lights with another day trip* ..... 61
*Relaxing in one of the many spas* ..... 62
*The other activities* ..... 67
*Day trips from Reykjavík* ..... 69
*The Reykjavík City Card* ..... 70
AROUND REYKJAVIK IN A DAY ..... 71
*Visiting the Snaefellsnes peninsula* ..... 71
*Walking on the Solheimajokull glacier* ..... 72
*Discovering the South Coast of Iceland* ..... 74
*Discovering the Golden Circle* ..... 76
EXAMPLE ITINERARIES FROM REYKJAVIK ..... 77
*How long to stay in Reykjavik* ..... 77
*Itinerary for 4 full days in Reykjavik* ..... 77
WHERE TO STAY IN REYKJAVIK ..... 79
THE GOLDEN CIRCLE ..... 83
THE FINEST SPOTS ON THE GOLDEN CIRCLE ..... 84
*Gullfoss waterfall* ..... 84
*The geysers at Geysir* ..... 85
*The Thingvellir site* ..... 86
*Bruarfoss waterfall* ..... 87
*The Kerid volcano* ..... 87

HOW TO VISIT THE GOLDEN CIRCLE ..... 88
*Visiting the Golden Circle with an operator/guide* ..... 88
*Visiting the Golden Circle by car* ..... 89
WHERE TO STAY IN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE ..... 90
SOUTH COAST OF ICELAND ..... 92
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES ON THE SOUTH COAST ..... 93
*Skógafoss, Seljalandsfoss and other waterfalls* ..... 93
*Vik i Myrdal and the black sand beaches* ..... 95
*Dyrholaey* ..... 101
*The Solheimajokull glacier* ..... 102
*The Fjadrargljufur canyon* ..... 103
*The Vestmann Islands and the puffins* ..... 104
*The abandoned village of Nuppstadur* ..... 106
*The abandoned DC3 plane* ..... 107
*Skaftafell park* ..... 108
*The Svinafellsjokull and Skaftafellsjokull glaciers* ..... 110
*The Jokulsarlon lagoon and Diamond Beach* ..... 111
*The Fjallsarlon lagoon* ..... 114
*The Mulagljufur canyon* ..... 116
*The Eldhraun lava fields* ..... 117
*The Vestrahorn* ..... 118
WHERE TO STAY ON THE SOUTH COAST ..... 119
*6 recommended places to stay around Vík í Mýrdal* ..... 119
*3 recommended places to stay around Skaftafell* ..... 120
*3 recommended places to stay near Jökulsárlón* ..... 121
*3 recommended places to stay near Höfn and Vestrahorn* ..... 121
ALL THE ACTIVITIES ON ICELAND'S SOUTH COAST ..... 122
*Hiking on a glacier and ice climbing* ..... 122
*Visiting an ice cave* ..... 123
*Seeing puffins on Iceland's south coast* ..... 124
*The other fun activities* ..... 125
PRACTICAL INFO ON ICELAND'S SOUTH COAST ..... 127
*How to get around this region* ..... 127
*How long to spend there* ..... 127
*Visiting the south coast in a day from Reykjavík* ..... 128

EAST ICELAND ..... 129
*Stuðlagil canyon* ..... 131
*Hengifoss waterfall* ..... 131
ICELAND'S NORTH COAST ..... 132
MÝVATN AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ..... 133
*Lake Mývatn* ..... 133
*Dimmuborgir* ..... 135
*Hverir* ..... 136
*The Waterfalls of the North* ..... 137
*The Arctic Henge* ..... 138
*Sleeping in Mývatn* ..... 139
HÚSAVÍK ..... 140
*What to do in Húsavík* ..... 140
*Seeing whales and puffins from Húsavík* ..... 141
*Sleeping in Húsavík* ..... 142
AKUREYRI ..... 143
*Seeing whales in and around Akureyri* ..... 144
*Visiting the north coast from Akureyri* ..... 145
*The other activities in Akureyri* ..... 145
*Where to stay in Akureyri* ..... 146
WHERE TO STAY ON THE NORTH COAST ..... 147
*3 places to stay in Mývatn* ..... 147
*3 places to stay in Húsavík* ..... 147
*3 places to stay in Akureyri* ..... 148
PRACTICAL INFO ABOUT ICELAND'S NORTH COAST ..... 149
*How to get around this region* ..... 149
*How long to spend there* ..... 149
THE WESTFJORDS ..... 150
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN THE WESTFJORDS ..... 151
*Dynjandi waterfall* ..... 152
*How to visit the Hornstrandir reserve* ..... 153
THINGS TO DO IN THE WESTFJORDS ..... 154
WHERE TO STAY IN THE WESTFJORDS ..... 155
PRACTICAL INFO ABOUT THIS REGION ..... 156

*How to get around this region* ..... *156*
*How long to spend there* ..... *157*
THE SNÆFELLSNES PENINSULA ..... 158
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN SNÆFELLSNES ..... 159
WHAT ACTIVITIES TO DO IN SNÆFELLSNES ..... 160
WHERE TO STAY ON THE PENINSULA ..... 161
*3 places to stay in Stykkishólmur* ..... *161*
*3 places to stay in Grundarfjörður* ..... *162*
*3 nice places to stay in Snæfellsnes* ..... *162*
PRACTICAL INFO ABOUT SNÆFELLSNES ..... 163
*How to get around this region* ..... *163*
*How long to spend there* ..... *163*
*Can you do it as a day trip from Reykjavík* ..... *163*
*Visiting Snæfellsnes from Reykjavík with an agency* ..... *164*
THE REYKJANES PENINSULA ..... 165
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN REYKJANES ..... 166
WHERE TO STAY ON THE PENINSULA ..... 168
*Sleeping in Keflavík close to the airport* ..... *168*
*3 recommended places to stay in Grindavík* ..... *169*
*3 great places to stay on the Reykjanes peninsula* ..... *169*
PRACTICAL INFO ON REYKJANES ..... 170
*How to get around the region* ..... *170*
*The tours for visiting Reykjanes from Reykjavík* ..... *170*
*How long to visit it* ..... *171*
THE BLUE LAGOON ..... 172
LANDMANNALAUGAR ..... 173
A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO LANDMANNALAUGAR ..... 174
HOW TO GET TO LANDMANNALAUGAR ..... 175
*Coming by car / campervan* ..... *175*
*Coming by bus* ..... *176*
*Coming with an agency* ..... *177*
PRACTICAL INFO ON LANDMANNALAUGAR ..... 178
*When to visit Landmannalaugar* ..... *178*
*How long to visit Landmannalaugar* ..... *178*

KERLINGARFJÖLL....179
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WATERFALLS....180
EXAMPLE ITINERARIES....191
ICELAND IN 4/5 DAYS....192
*Without a car, exploring around Reykjavík....192*
*Itinerary with a car, seeing the essentials around Reykjavík....196*
ITINERARIES FOR ONE WEEK IN ICELAND....200
TWO WEEKS IN ICELAND – THE RING ROAD....206
*How long do you need to see Iceland on the Ring Road....206*
*Can you do the Ring Road without a car....206*
*Which itinerary along the Ring Road....207*
GENERAL INFORMATION....221
HOW TO GET TO ICELAND....222
*Getting there by plane....222*
*How to get from Keflavík airport to central Reykjavík....223*
*Getting there by boat....225*
WHEN TO GO TO ICELAND....226
HOW LONG TO STAY IN ICELAND....227
HOW TO GET AROUND ICELAND....228
*Getting around by bus....229*
*Getting around by car....230*
*A few winter driving tips (and not just winter!)....231*
*Road closures in Iceland....232*
RENTING A CAR IN ICELAND....234
*What kind of car should you rent?....234*
*Things to watch out for....234*
*Which company should you rent from?....235*
*How much does a car rental cost in Iceland?....235*
*The per-kilometre tax....236*
DISCOVERING ICELAND BY MOTORHOME / CAMPERVAN....237
*Why discover Iceland by motorhome....237*
*Renting a motorhome or a campervan, 4WD or not....238*
*Which company to rent your campervan or motorhome from....240*
*Where do you sleep when you're in a van? The wild camping question....241*

*Can you do it all year round?* ..... *242*
HOW TO ORGANISE YOUR TRIP ..... 243
*Which questions to ask first* ..... *243*
*When to make your bookings* ..... *244*
*When to book the activities* ..... *244*
BOOKING ICELAND THROUGH AN AGENCY ..... 246
*The EVANEOS agency for travelling to Iceland* ..... *246*
*Discovering Iceland in a small group with Guide to Iceland* ..... *247*
*The self-drive itineraries by Guide To Iceland* ..... *248*
WHAT IS THE TYPICAL ICELANDIC WEATHER LIKE ..... 249
WHAT TO WEAR IN ICELAND ..... 250
PRACTICAL INFORMATION ..... 251
*What languages do people speak in Iceland* ..... *251*
*Local currency and payment - How to pay on site* ..... *251*
*Do you need a visa to come to Iceland* ..... *252*
*Safety in Iceland* ..... *252*
ABOUT ME ..... 253
SOCIAL MEDIA ..... 254
HOW TO SUPPORT THE BLOG AND THE FREE CONTENT ..... 255
THE OTHER FREE GUIDES ..... 256

# THE MAP OF ICELAND

*Find out more in [this article about how it works]*

# MAP OF ICELAND

I love maps, it's so easy to find your way around when they're well made.

So I've created an Iceland map for you, on Google Maps, where you'll find:

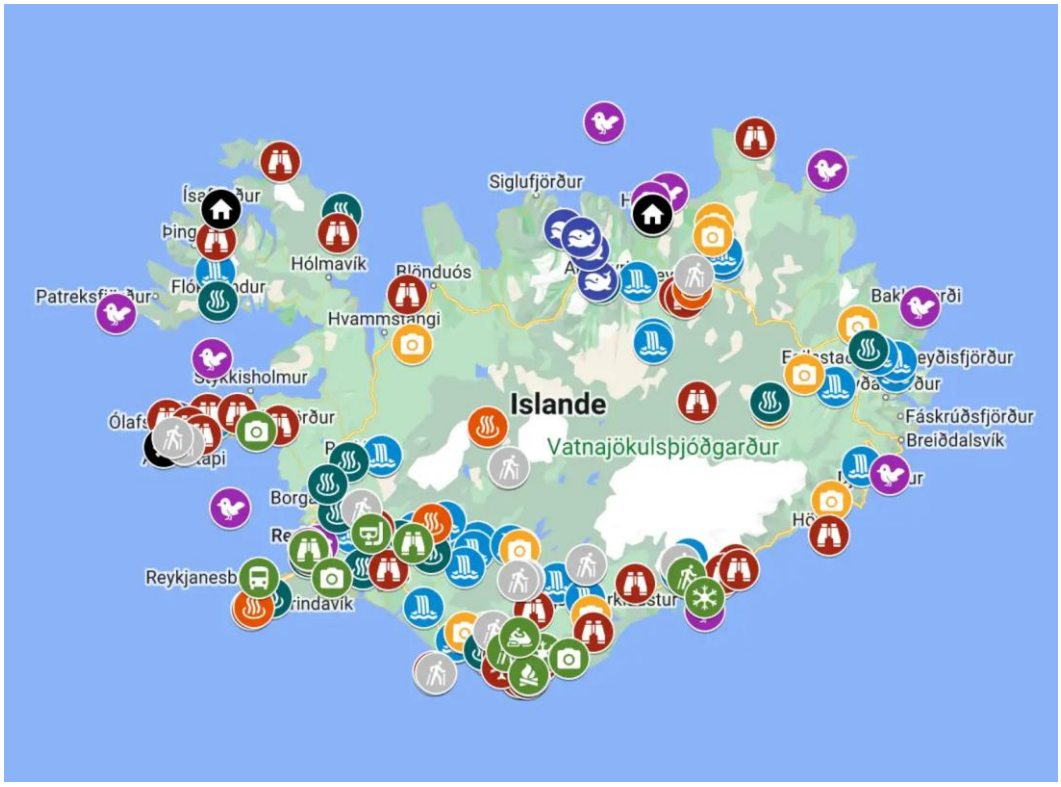
- The most beautiful places
- The hikes
- Specific features like waterfalls, hot springs…
- Restaurants
- Accommodation
- And every bit of useful information for your stay, basically!

This map works as a system of layers. Each layer matches a theme. Only want to see the most beautiful places or the waterfalls? then you untick the other layers to remove the activities or the accommodation, for example.

The other way round, if you want to see the hotels, then untick the rest.

It really is super simple to use!

⭐ ***Click here to open the map!*** ⭐



# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN ICELAND

*Here's a small sample of the most beautiful places in Iceland. Each region mentioned here gets its own very detailed section later in the guide*
*You can discover more in this article*

## *THE BLUE LAGOON*








**Iceland: the official Blue Lagoon — Comfort package**

★★★★½ **4.6/5 · Very highly rated** · 6,019 reviews · valid 1 day · from age 2 · book early

The official Blue Lagoon: milky blue geothermal seawater in the middle of a UNESCO geopark, 20 min from Keflavík. The Comfort package = entry + towel + drink + silica mask included. Book ahead: the popular slots sell out fast.

- 1 h entry slot · unlimited access to sauna, steam room, cold lagoon, quiet zone
- Towel + drink at the in-water bar + silica mask at the mask bar
- ⚠️ Expensive but a one-off experience · wheelchair accessible · armbands for ages 2-8

Free cancellation

From **€126**

Check availability

## REYKJAVIK










**Reykjavík: walking food tour · 5 restaurants · 6-8 dishes**

★★★★★ **4.9/5 · Exceptional** · 1,916 reviews · 3 h · Wake Up Reykjavík · book early

A 3 h food tour in Reykjavík: 5 restaurants, 6-8 tastings of lamb, seafood, Icelandic hot dog and... fermented shark (yes, you have to try it). Funny, passionate guides (Katrín, Ben, Thomas, Heidi). A list of tips by email afterwards — perfect for starting a trip.

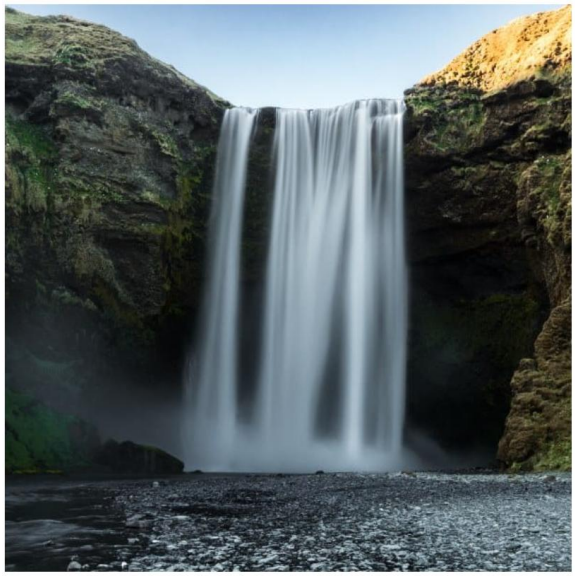
- 3 h · 5 stops · 6-8 dishes · departs from Harpa Concert Hall (blue backpack)
- Local guides who adapt the pace · dietary needs taken into account at booking
- ⚠️ In English · not wheelchair accessible · can sell out fast

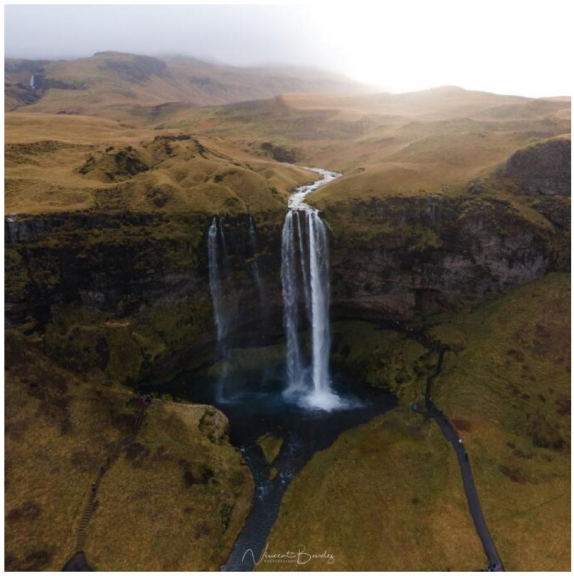
Free cancellation

From **€131**

Check availability

## SELJALANDSFOSS & SKOGAFOSS





## VIK AND DYRHOLAEY











# THE GLACIERS OF THE SOUTH COAST








# JOKULSARLON LAGOON AND DIAMOND BEACH

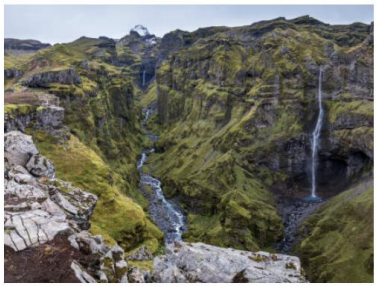








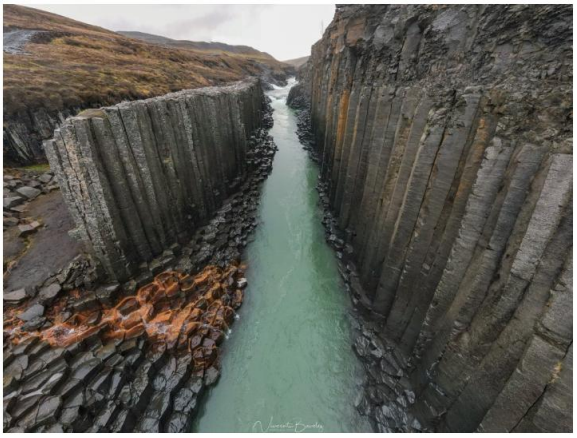
## MULAGLJUFUR CANYON


## VESTRAHORN




## STUDLAGIL CANYON

## LAKE MYVATN AND HVERIR





## THE WATERFALLS OF THE NORTH




## DYNJANDI AND THE WESTFJORDS





# THE SNAEFELLSNES PENINSULA













**Reykjavík: Snæfellsnes peninsula + Kirkjufell in a small group**

★★★★½ **4.6/5 · Very highly rated** · 474 reviews · 12 h day · small group, 12 max

Snæfellsnes, nicknamed "little Iceland" — 12 h in a small group (12 max): Mount Kirkjufell (the most photographed in the country), Djúpalónssandur beaches, Ytri Tunga seals, Búðakirkja black church and Arnarstapi. Passionate guide, less busy than the Golden Circle.

- 12 h · small group, 12 max · Reykjavík pickup · wifi on board
- Kirkjufell + Djúpalónssandur + Arnarstapi + Búðakirkja + Ytri Tunga seals
- ⚠ In English · food not included · Ytri Tunga closed in Dec/Jan

Free cancellation

From **€120**

Check availability

## LANDMANNALAUGAR





## KERLINGARFJOLL





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# THE BEST ACTIVITIES IN ICELAND

*Read the full article on [the best activities to do in Iceland]*

# SEEING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

## *General information*

Yes, **you really can see the northern lights in Iceland**. For that you need to be there on the right dates, which means from late August to mid-April. Then you need to be a bit prepared: you have to be mobile and know where to go depending on the cloud cover.

- From late August to mid-April
- Not an easy activity because of the very teasing weather

**Here are the tips to give yourself the best possible chance:**

- Assume there are lights every single night
- Be mobile, keep the option of moving around
- You usually head for the Reykjanes area or towards the south coast
- Check the cloud cover, sites like *Ventusky* or *Windy* let you know where the clouds are, hour by hour
- Get away from city lights, which stop you seeing the lights properly
- Find a spot out in nature with a clear view (to the north above all)
- Don't hesitate to drive a lot of kilometres because the weather can really change from one place to another
- Be patient because you never know when the lights will appear, it's a surprise every time
- Careful, it's going to be cold!
- And finally, don't hesitate to go with a guide. The agencies know where to go and how it all works.

## *Resources and blog articles*

- *The best northern lights **agencies** in Reykjavik*
- ***Seeing** the northern lights in Iceland*
- *The tips for properly **hunting** the northern lights*
- ***Where** and **how** to see the northern lights*

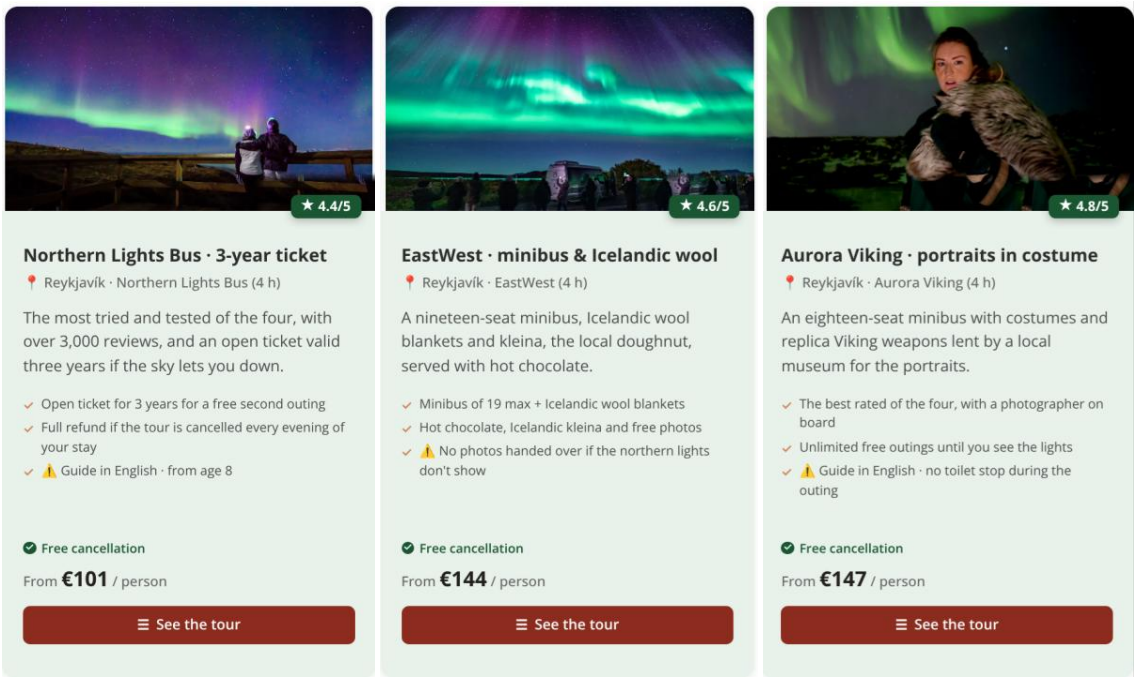




## *The northern lights guides in Iceland*

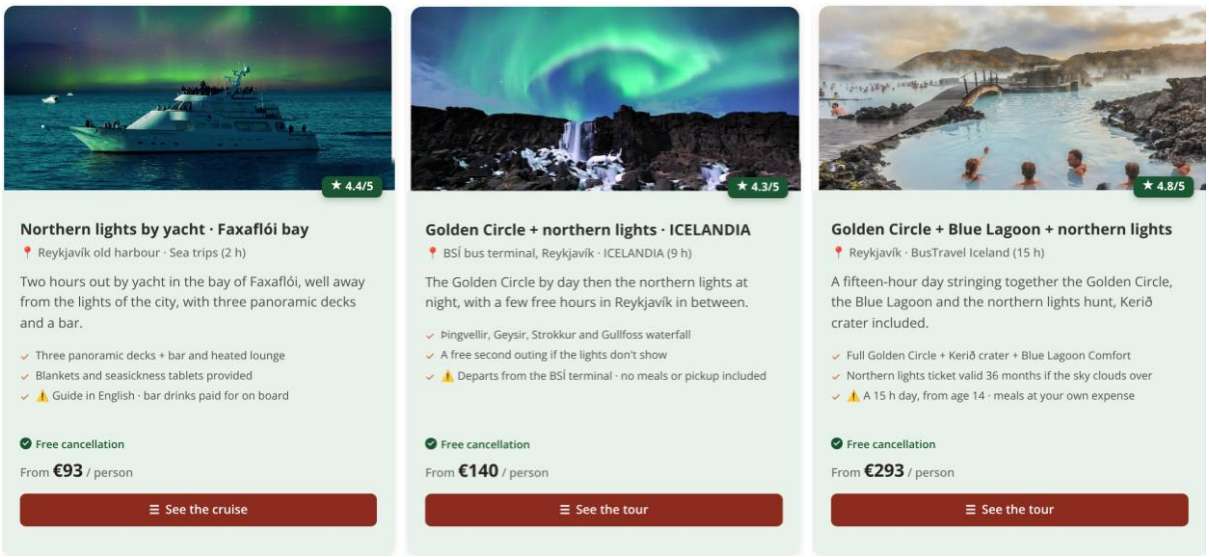
Here are the main guides **in Reykjavik**

- ***NORTHERN LIGHTS BUS***, €64 (cheap!), this is the most popular northern lights trip. It's a bus, but it's a well-regarded company. And they give you another go if you don't see the lights
- ***NORTHERN LIGHTS BUS – MINIBUS***, €89, this one is the small-group version. So it's really not bad at all, and they also offer a second chance
- ***EAST WEST***, €127, by minibus. One of the best-rated agencies with 4.7 on Getyourguide. Ideal for going out in a small group
- ***AURORA VIKING***, €140, in a minibus of 18 people maximum. A very good reputation and above all you can go out again for free if you don't see any lights
- ***ULTIMATE ICELAND AURORA EXPERTS***, €190 in a very small group with one of the best guides on the island. A benchmark agency!
- ***NORDUR TRAVEL***, €120, minibuses and above all a 98% recommendation rate!
- ***ARCTIC YETI***, from €100, it's a 4x4 minibus so it lets you get away from the usual roads and venture a bit further inland
- ***DAVID THE GUIDE***, from €89, Christian is one of the most respected guides on the island
- ***ICELAND EVERYWHERE TOUR***, from €109, excellent feedback for this minibus agency



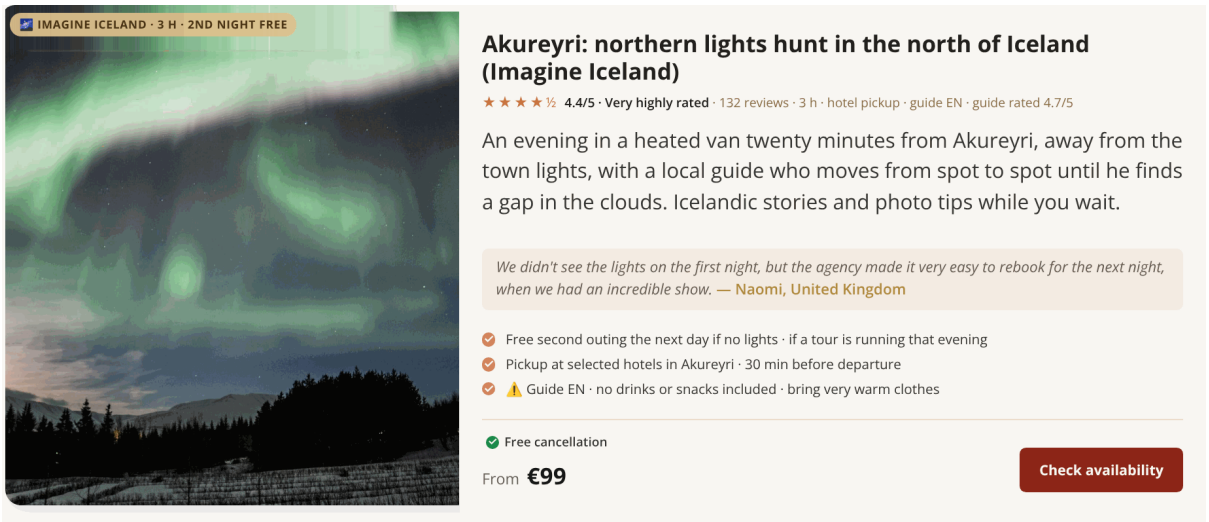
For **different experiences** with the northern lights:

- ***GOLDEN CIRCLE*** – go and see the northern lights after discovering the superb Golden Circle, Iceland condensed into one day! Bus trip, from €120
- ***SUPER JEEP*** – see the northern lights in a seriously impressive vehicle that can take you absolutely anywhere! In a very small group and for €160
- ***WHALES AND NORTHERN LIGHTS*** – set off on a 6-hour cruise to see the whales and then carry straight on to the northern lights, for €150
- ***NORTHERN LIGHTS CRUISE*** – go and see the northern lights by boat from €80




For guides **outside Reykjavik**:

- ***MYVATN*** – hunting the lights in the Lake Myvatn area, €175
- ***AKUREYRI*** – in a small group among the splendours of northern Iceland, €116



# WALKING ON A GLACIER

It's a really great experience! Learning to walk with crampons, trying not to slip, but above all moving across an impressive immensity. And as a bonus, the view is even more beautiful up there!

Walking on a glacier is risky without a guide or equipment. A glacier moves, it lives, and in Iceland the weather can be unpredictable. So going through an agency is essential, unless you're very experienced, to avoid crevasses and other dangers.

Several glaciers are accessible on the south coast:

- **Solheimajokull**, near Vik, a must-do close to Reykjavik, easy to reach on a day trip from the capital.
- **Svínafellsjökull**, in Skaftafell park, huge, steep and magnificent.
- **Falljökull**, also in Skaftafell, just as impressive.

From Reykjavik, the most accessible is Solheimajokull. From Vik, it's often the best choice too, unless you're ready to drive 2 hours to Skaftafell.

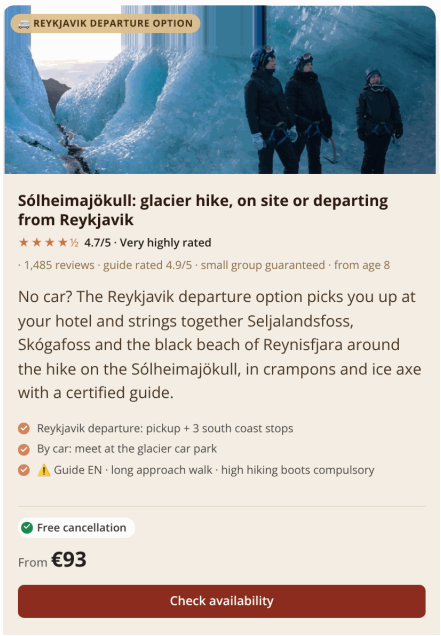
Excursions usually last 3 hours, with 1 to 1.5 hours of walking on the glacier, but some can go up to a full 3 hours.

And good news: it's an affordable adventure, with prices from €90!

## *With transport from Reykjavik*

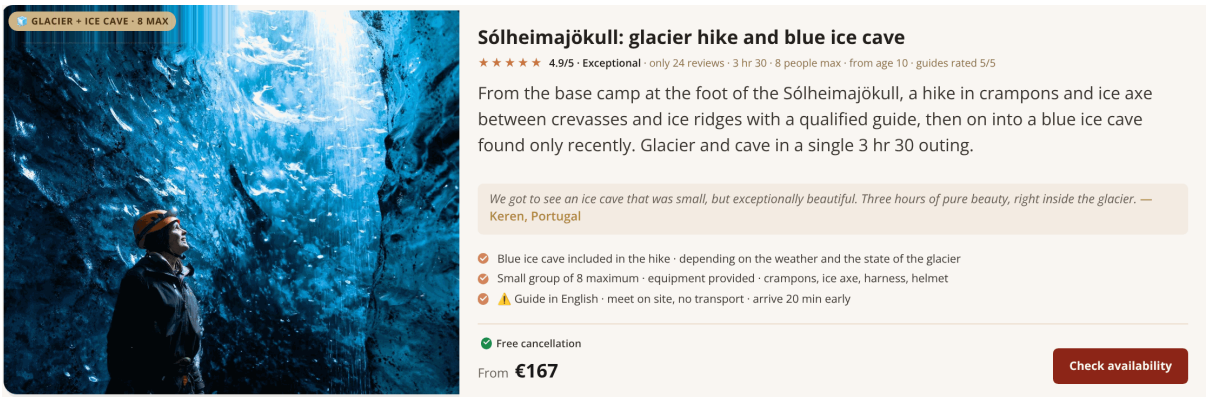
- Glacier walk and south coast tour (*more information*)
- Glacier hike with possible pick-up in Reykjavik (*more information*)
- Glacier hike and introduction to ice climbing (*more information*)
- The best seller: big south coast tour, short walk on the glacier (*more information*)



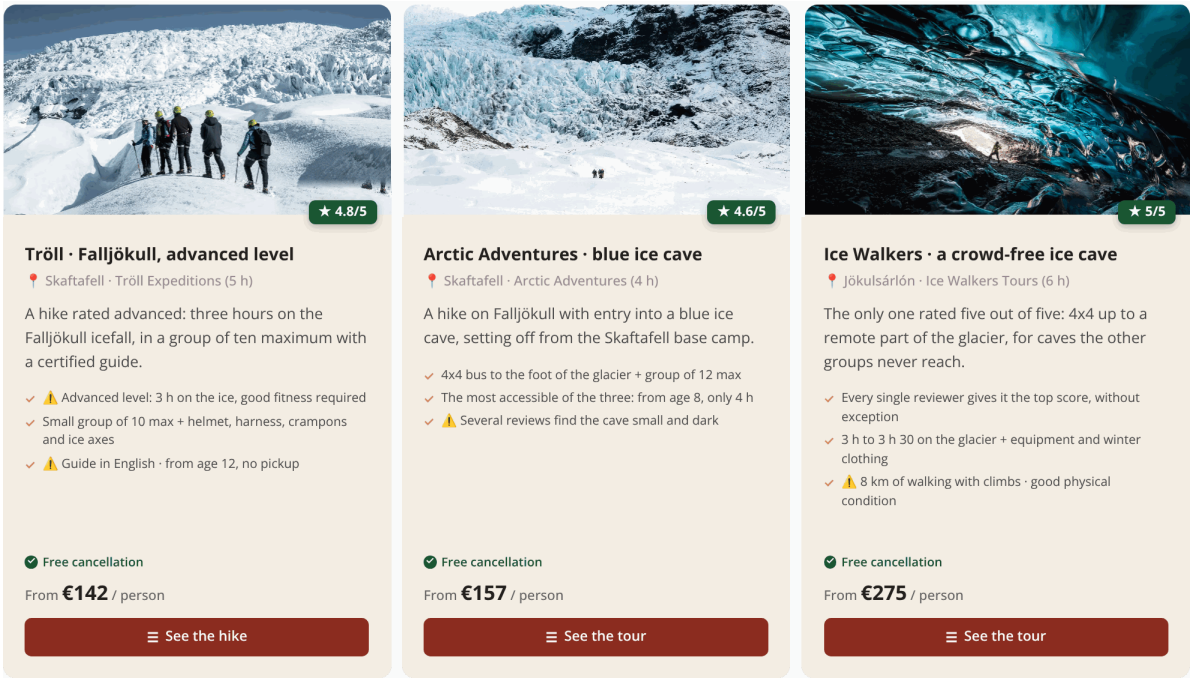
## *Sólheimajökull – meet directly on site (next to Vik)*

- Glacier hike and visit of the blue ice cave (*more information*)
- Guided glacier hike (*more information*)




## *Skaftafell – meet directly on site*

- Jökulsárlón: glacier hike to an ice cave (*more information*)
- Blue ice glacier hike on Vatnajökull – €99 (*more information*)
- Blue ice cave and glacier hike (*more information*)
- Advanced-level hike on the Falljokull glacier (*more information*)
- Easy-level group hike on Falljokull (*more information*)



# SEEING PUFFINS AROUND THE COUNTRY

You're going to fall in love! They're the cutest birds out there, and lucky for you, the world's biggest colonies are in Iceland!

These little clowns take over the whole island for several months a year, **from late April to late August**.

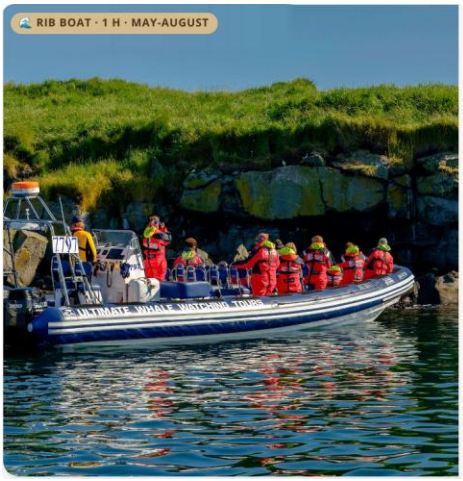
You'll find them all around the island, mainly:

- On the north coast, you can see them near **Akureyri** and above all—**Husavik**, in particular at **Tjörsnes** (*more info*)
- There's a huge colony at **Latrabjarg**, in the **Westfjords** (reached by a superb road to the end of the world)
- On the **south coast**, on the cliffs of **Dyrholaey**
- At **Cape Ingolfshofdi**, you cross a black sand beach on a tractor (*more info*)
- From **Reykjavik** with a boat trip out to Lundey and Akurey islands (*more info*)
- The world's biggest colony is on the **Westman Islands** (*which you can visit from Reykjavik*)
- There are loads of them in the East Fjords, for example at **Borgafjördur (***more info***)**
- And also in the **Westfjords**, leaving from Isafjordur (*more info*)

In the article below, I list *all the options for seeing puffins in Iceland* !








## Reykjavik: puffin watching by rigid inflatable boat

★★★★★ 4.8/5 · Exceptional · 406 reviews · 1 h · departs from the old harbour · from age 10 · guide rated 4.9/5

An hour in a rigid inflatable boat out into Faxaflói bay, leaving from the old harbour, to run as close as possible along the islets where the puffins nest, with a naturalist guide who talks you through their behaviour. Gannets, Arctic terns, and sometimes a whale as a bonus.

*We did three different ones in Iceland... this one was the best! We're coming back for a second trip before we head home.* — David, United States

- Right up against the islets, closer than on a standard boat · warm overalls provided
- Puffins there from May to August only · nesting around the islands
- ⚠️ Guide in English · not advised if you have back problems · bring your binoculars

Free cancellation

From **€92**

Check availability




### Gentle Giants · Húsavík by RIB boat

📍 Húsavík · Gentle Giants Whale Watching (2 h)

A rigid inflatable boat from Húsavík, the Icelandic capital of whales, with a pass by the puffin island.

- Local family business, 12 passengers max on board
- Puffin island then Skjálfandi bay by RIB boat
- ⚠️ No whale: a standard cruise offered free, no refund

Puffins from around 15 April to 15 August

Free cancellation

From **€149** / person

☰ See the trip




### Elding · marine biologist on board

📍 Reykjavík old harbour · Elding (2 h)

A RIB boat leaving from the old harbour of Reykjavík, led by a marine biologist, with the crew's photos thrown in.

- Small group of 12 max with a marine biologist on board
- Overalls, gloves, goggles and a toilet on board
- ⚠️ From age 10 and 1.45 m · return past the Harpa skyline

Puffins from around 20 April to 15 August

Free cancellation

From **€170** / person

☰ See the trip




### Hafnarhólmi · puffins on foot

📍 Seyðisfjörður · BusTravel Iceland (5 h)

A day in east Iceland: the Hafnarhólmi puffin colony, the village of Borgarfjörður Eystri and Gufufoss waterfall.

- The only one on land: watching from the Hafnarhólmi platform
- Lindarbakki turf house and the Álfaborg elf rock
- ⚠️ Designed for cruise stopovers · no meals or drinks

Puffins nesting over the summer

Free cancellation

From **€199** / person

☰ See the tour

# VISITING AN ICE CAVE

This one is amazing, and a must. A must because visiting an ice cave isn't something you get to do often, or anywhere. With the sheer number of glaciers you find in Iceland, this really is the perfect country to go deep inside one, into the belly of Vatnajokull or Katla.

And it's an amazing thing to do because glaciers are alive. They move, they melt, they come back. So the caves are different every year. Some disappear, new ones form year after year. And since the glaciers differ too, some sitting on volcanoes for instance, the caves come in different colors.

You can visit them on the south coast of Iceland, sometimes starting from Reykjavik, but mostly around Skaftafell and the Vatnajokull ice cap.

The blue cave (and the ones at Jokulsarlon) can only be visited in winter; the Katla cave is open all year

*One really important thing: ice caves change from one year to the next, since the glaciers melt and re-form!*

## *Visiting an ice cave from Reykjavik*

Unless you set off on a full expedition, the only two ice caves you can reach from Reykjavik on a day tour are Katla and the one in Langjokull. And they're worth it!






## *From VIK, the Katla ice cave tour*

If you're in Vik, you can also visit the Katla ice cave directly, which is handy and cheaper!




## *From Skaftafell and Jokulsarlon*

The most famous ice caves, the natural ones, are here in Vatnajokull. You have several starting points (Skaftafell or Jokulsarlon) and several options. The ice cave tour usually also includes a walk on the glacier (which is what I'd recommend), and otherwise it's "just" the cave visit, which is already pretty good.

**From Skaftafell**, two operators offer the same thing, the cave visit plus the glacier walk, and they're rated the same: *Troll.is* and *Arctic Adventures*.



**From Jokulsarlon**, there are far more options here, since this is the departure point for the main trips.

- There's *Local Guide of Vatnajokull* which runs the best ice cave trip
- *Glacier Trips* is also an excellent company




For the combos of **ice cave + glacier walk** from Jokulsarlon, go through the excellent agency *Glacier Trips*.



# SEEING WHALES

Iceland is an ideal place to watch whales. And the best part is that you can see them all year round! **Some periods are better than others (from April to September), but you really can see them at any time of year**.

You can spot them just about everywhere, but there are 4 places in particular that run trips. **Husavik** is the best known, plus two more—**Akureyri** and **Reykjavik**, which is very convenient. There are options at Snaefellsnes too, leaving from Grundafjordur, but not all year.

Another big plus is that it isn't expensive at all! (well, relatively speaking). Prices start at €80, half what you'd pay in Norway, for example.





## *Whale watching from Reykjavik*

There are loads of options and plenty of operators, not all of them equal, but here's what's worth a look:

- The *classic cruise with Sea Trips*, the one I took a few years ago, nothing to complain about, it's good
- Whale watching on *a smart yacht*, that's not bad either!
- You can also see them *by RIB boat*, which gets you closer and gives you more of a thrill
- There's also the option of a cruise to see BOTH whales AND puffins. *More info here* !
- Or the combo of *whales + Northern Lights*. That one does depend quite a bit on the weather, but if it's good, it's a great alternative!



★ 4.5/5

**Sea trips · the classic cruise**

📍 Reykjavík old harbour · Sea trips (3 h)

The benchmark trip in Reykjavík, on a big boat with heated cabins, backed by more than eleven thousand reviews.

- Half the price of the two other options
- Heated cabins, toilets, bar and wheelchair access
- Free return ticket for 3 years if you see nothing

Free cancellation

From **€89** / person

See the cruise



★ 4.7/5

**Special Tours · RIB express at 32 knots**

📍 Reykjavík old harbour · Special Tours (2 h)

A rigid inflatable running at 32 knots with suspension seats, which gets far closer to the whales than the big boats.

- Entry to the Whales of Iceland museum included in the ticket
- Overalls, life jacket, gloves and goggles provided
- ⚠️ From age 10 and 1.40 m · not advised if you have back trouble

Free cancellation

From **€168** / person

See the trip



★ 4.3/5

**Reykjavik Sailors · whales + auroras**

📍 Reykjavík old harbour · Reykjavik Sailors (6 h)

Two trips out to sea on the same day: whales in the afternoon, northern lights in the evening, with a long break in between.

- Two cruises in one booking, whales then northern lights
- Free seasickness tablets + wheelchair access
- ⚠️ The lowest rating of the bunch · the boat is sometimes shared

Free cancellation

From **€174** / person

See the cruise

## *Whale watching in Husavik*

Husavik is considered THE best place in Iceland to see whales. So if you're passing through, you really should make the most of it, they're there all year round.

- *Gente Giants* takes you out on its traditional Icelandic boat to see them
- They and Husavik Adventures run RIB boat trips to *see whales and puffins*



★ 4.6/5

**Friends of Moby Dick · heated lounge**

📍 Húsavík · Friends of Moby Dick (3 h)

A fast boat with a proper heated indoor lounge, with tables and toilets, to warm up between two sightings.

- The only one of the three with a heated indoor space and two toilets
- IceWhale member: responsible watching code of conduct
- ⚠️ Not wheelchair accessible · return voucher valid 2 years

Free cancellation

From **€82** / person

See the cruise



★ 4.6/5

**Gentle Giants · oak boat**

📍 Húsavík · Gentle Giants Whale Watching (3 h)

A traditional Icelandic oak boat, the historic vessel of Húsavík, run by a local family business.

- Traditional oak boat, certified by GetYourGuide
- Wheelchair accessible on prior request
- ⚠️ Open deck with no enclosed space · can get crowded

Free cancellation

From **€85** / person

See the cruise



★ 4.8/5

**Husavik Adventures · RIB & puffins**

📍 Húsavík · Husavik Adventures (2 h)

The best rated in Húsavík: a twelve-seat rigid inflatable that pushes out to the puffin island of Lundey.

- The best rated of the three trips out of Húsavík
- 12 passengers max: nobody fights over the view
- ⚠️ From age 8 and 1.30 m · puffins from 15 April to 15 August

Free cancellation

From ~~€150~~ **€128** / person

See the trip

## *The other places to see whales in Iceland*

It's mainly in the north of Iceland, as you'll see, that you get the best options and the most whales, and it's also far less touristy than Reykjavik.

- **Akureyri**, also an excellent spot since it isn't far from Husavik, with *Whale Watching Akureyri*
- **Árskógssandur**, not very far from Akureyri, on a very pretty traditional boat, with *North Sailing*
- Still in the north (the best region!) at **Hauganes**, with *Whale Watching Hauganes*
- At **Dalvik**, we're staying in the same area because it's the village just above! With *Arctic Sea Tours*
- On the **Snaefellsnes** peninsula (for a change!) you can see them *from Olafsvik*
- In the **Westfjords**, leaving *from Isafjordur*, it's possible too!




**North Sailing · far from busy quays**

📍 Árskógssandur, 30 min from Akureyri · North Sailing (2 hr 30)

A traditional oak boat leaving from a small fishing village, thirty minutes from Akureyri and its packed quays.

- The best rated of the three and far less busy
- Hot chocolate and a cinnamon bun served on board
- Duration adjusted to the whales' activity: from 1 hr 45 to 3 hr 15

Free cancellation

From **€91** / person

See the cruise




**Akureyri · tiered viewing decks**

📍 Akureyri · Whale Watching Akureyri (3 h)

A two-hundred-seat fast boat with tiered viewing platforms, in the longest glacial fjord in Iceland.

- The most tried and tested boat of the three
- Heated lounge, large picture windows and free WiFi
- ⚠️ Up to 200 passengers · return ticket for 2 years if you see nothing

Free cancellation

From **€92** / person

See the cruise




**Ólafsvík · orcas and sperm whales**

📍 Ólafsvík, Snæfellsnes · Guide to Iceland (3 h)

Breiðafjörður bay, the best place in Iceland to come across orcas and sperm whales, from the Snæfellsnes peninsula.

- Orcas and sperm whales, rarely seen elsewhere in Iceland
- No minimum age: the most open to families
- ⚠️ Guide in English, German or Icelandic · February to October

Free cancellation

From **€109** / person

See the cruise

**SEE ALL WHALE WATCHING TOURS IN ICELAND**

# ENJOYING THE HOT SPRINGS

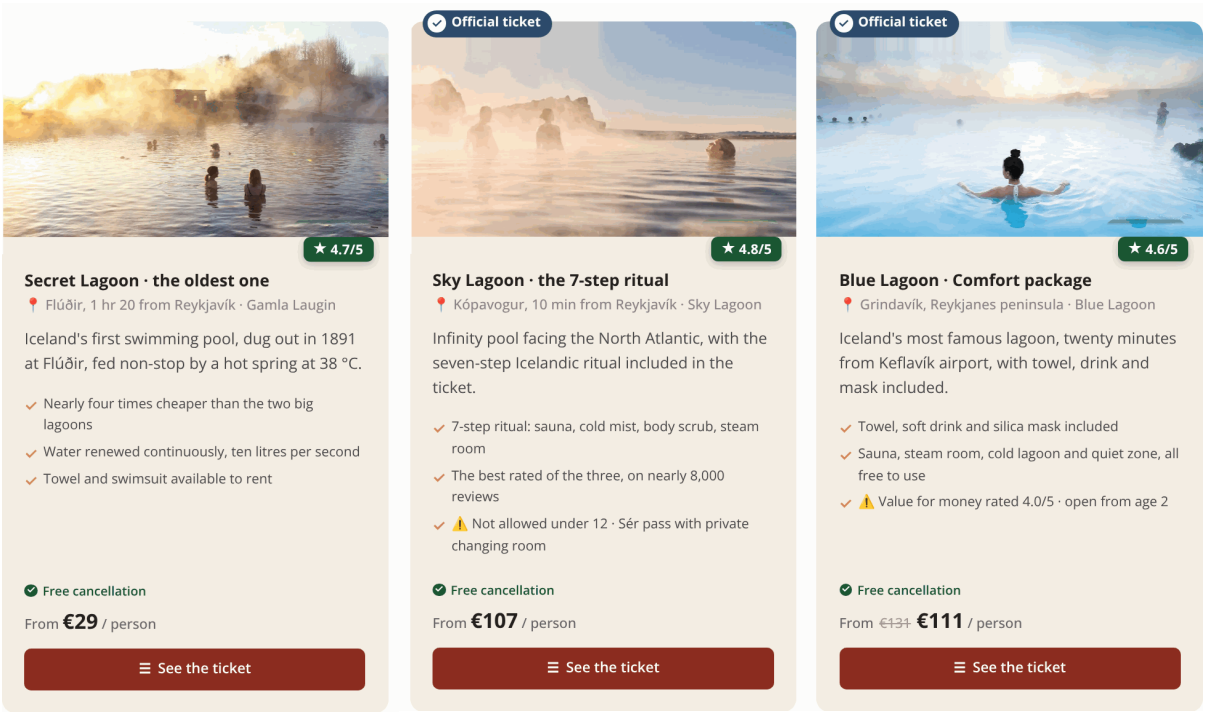
## *The best hot springs*

Oh, it feels so good! On my last two trips to Iceland, I finished with a stop at the Blue Lagoon. Traveling by van, enjoying a splendid setting while doing absolutely nothing, and being a stone's throw from the airport, it was just perfect. No regrets!

But the Blue Lagoon isn't alone, other thermal spas compete with it and look really great!

**Around Reykjavik**, you'll find:

- The ***Blue Lagoon***, the benchmark. It has been disrupted by the various eruptions, which shows how much the site really does sit in the lava fields!
- ***Sky Lagoon***, set among the lava rocks with a view over the ocean. Gorgeous setting, relaxed mood, and spa treatments at prices a touch gentler than the Blue Lagoon.
- ***Secret Lagoon*** (not so secret any more), the oldest natural pool in Iceland. More affordable hot baths, perfect for a cheap relaxing break, around €30. Visitors love it! But it isn't the same kind of service as the previous two (hence the price).



Not far from Reykjavik, towards the Golden Circle and Selfoss, there are 3 great ones, in particular *Reykjaböð Hot Springs* which has magnificent facilities.



★ 4.3/5

**Fontana · the steam room on a geyser**

📍 Laugarvatn, on the Golden Circle · Fontana (2 h)

A steam bath built straight over an active geyser, with a jetty and a swim in Lake Laugarvatn if you fancy it.

- Steam room heated by a real geyser rumbling under your feet
- Swim in the lake, Finnish sauna and cold pool
- ⚠️ Ticket to print · from age 10, must be able to swim

Free cancellation

From **€41** / person

☰ See the ticket



★ 4.6/5

**Krauma · six pools and total quiet**

📍 Deildartunguhver, Borgarfjörður · Krauma (4 h)

Six pools fed by Deildartunguhver, the most powerful hot spring in Europe, with a rest room and a fireplace.

- Six pools — five hot, one cold — and two steam rooms
- Relaxation room with a crackling log fire
- Ticket valid 4 hours, the most generous of the three

Free cancellation

From **€44** / person

☰ See the ticket



★ 5/5

**Reykjaböð · the newest one**

📍 Reykjadalur valley, 35 min from Reykjavík · Reykjaböð (2 to 3 h)

The brand-new lagoon in the Reykjadalur valley, thirty-five minutes from Reykjavík, with its open-air hot-cold ritual.

- Outdoor ritual: sauna, double cold plunge and Kneipp pool
- Towel included + Signature option, 9 experiences
- ⚠️ Only just opened: 10 reviews so far

Free cancellation

From **€68** / person

☰ See the ticket

And if you're **up north**, the benchmark is ***Myvatn Nature Baths***. The equivalent of the Blue Lagoon, but surrounded by volcanic craters, in the superb Myvatn region. A simply magical setting. And that's not all! Because in Akureyri there's the ***Forest Lagoon***. They're really good at coming up with names for their lagoons

And I've just discovered that Husavik has a great one too, the ***Geothermal Sea Bath***



Official ticket

★ 4.7/5

**GeoSea · sea baths on the cliff**

📍 Húsavík · GeoSea Geothermal Sea Baths

Geothermal seawater pools perched on a cliff at Húsavík, facing Skjálfandi bay and the Arctic Circle.

- The most spectacular view: whales visible from the water
- Steam room, swim-up bar and Sóley Organics products
- ⚠️ Towel, swimsuit and robe for hire, not included

Free cancellation

From **€52** / person

☰ See the ticket



Official ticket

★ 4.5/5

**Mývatn Baths · the volcanic lagoon**

📍 Mývatn · Earth Lagoon Nature Baths

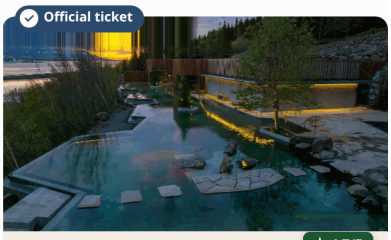
The big lagoon of the north, fed by a borehole two thousand five hundred metres deep, reopened brand new in 2026.

- Facilities completely rebuilt, reopening in July 2026
- Steam rooms, bar in the water and Kvika café looking over the valley
- ⚠️ Strong sulphur smell · towel for hire

Free cancellation

From **€58** / person

☰ See the ticket



Official ticket

★ 4.7/5

**Forest Lagoon · in among the birches**

📍 Vaðlaskógur, facing Akureyri · Forest Lagoon

Two pools at 37 °C in the middle of the birch trees, with a panoramic Finnish sauna and a cold pool at 11 °C.

- The only one of the three with towel and drink included
- Finnish sauna at 80 °C with a fjord view + cold pool
- No sulphur smell, unlike the Mývatn baths

Free cancellation

From **€70** / person

☰ See the ticket

In the east there's a really good one at Egilsstadir as well: the *Vok Baths*.




See the full list of free and paid hot springs just below.

## *All the free and paid hot springs*

♥ **= my favorites.** *Click the names followed by an arrow → to book, and on 🎈 to open the map.*
*Adult prices checked in October 2026 (€1 ≈ 136 ISK), and they change often, so check before you go.*

| Hot spring | Adult price | Town | Region | Opening hours | Good to know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♥ Sky Lagoon → | From 14,990 ISK (≈€110) | Kópavogur (Reykjavik) | Capital region | Year-round. Winter 10am-9pm, summer until 11pm | Time slot to book, ages 12 and up |
| ♥ Blue Lagoon → | From 11,990 ISK (≈€88) | Grindavík | Reykjanes | Jan-May 8am-8pm · Mid-June-Aug 7am-11pm · Otherwise 8am-10pm | Volcanic area: check the state of the site beforehand |
| Hvammsvík Hot Springs → | From 5,900 ISK (≈€43) | Hvalfjörður | West | Daily 10:30am-8:30pm | Baths at the edge of the fjord, ages 10 and up |
| **Hreppslaug** | 1,750 ISK (≈€13) | Skorradalur | West | May-Oct 1pm-10pm (June-Aug Tue-Sun, weekends otherwise). Closed in winter | Historic pool from 1928, no booking |
| Krauma → | 7,900 ISK (≈€58) | Reykholt | West | Daily 11am-9pm | Next to Deildartunguhver, restaurant on site |

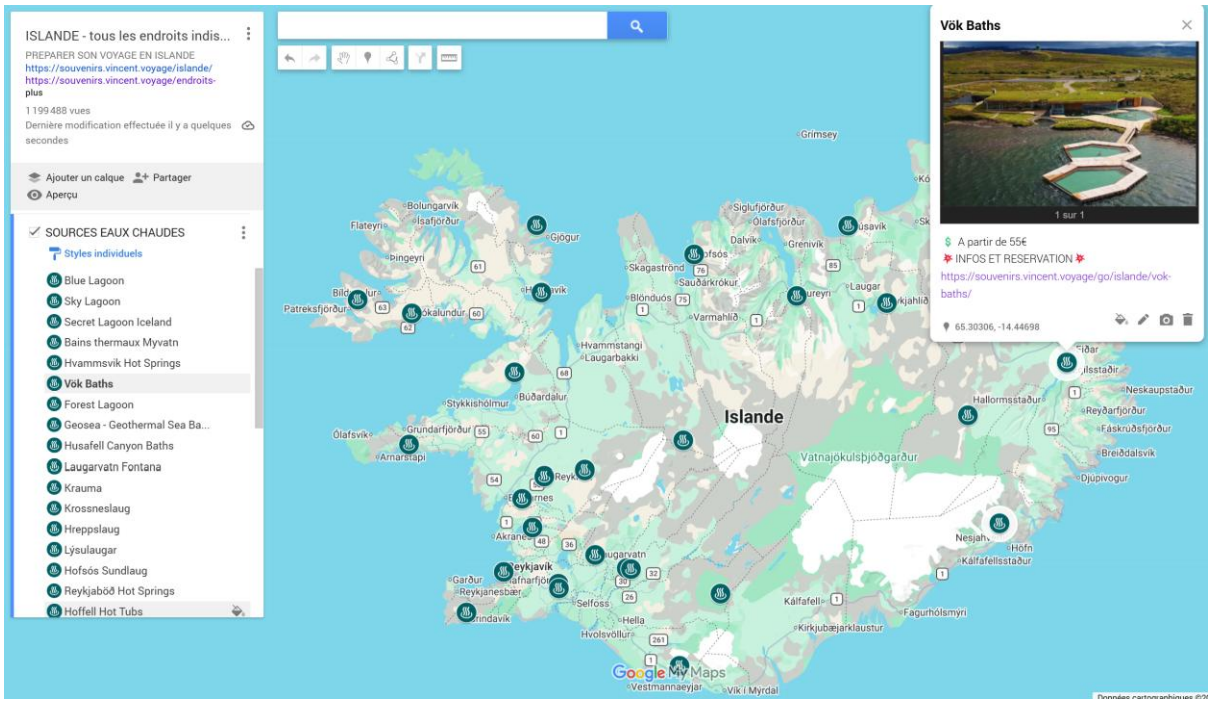
| Hot spring | Adult price | Town | Region | Opening hours | Good to know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canyon Baths → | From €52 (≈7,100 ISK) | Húsafell | West | Year-round, guided departures by reservation | Guided tour only, 64 steps |
| **Lýsulaugar** | 1,800 ISK (≈€13) | Lýsuhóll | West (Snæfellsnes) | Mid-May-Aug 11am-9pm · Sept-Dec reduced hours | Green mineral water, no chlorine |
| **Guðrúnarlaug** | Free | Laugar (Sælingsdalur) | West (Dalir) | Open access | Small pool, changing hut, no shower or toilet |
| **Hellulaug** | Free | Flókalundur | Westfjords | Open access 24/7 | No changing room, view over the bay |
| **Pollurinn** | Free | Tálknafjörður | Westfjords | Open access 24/7 | 4 pools, changing cabin, no toilet |
| **Drangsnes Hot Pots** | Free (donations welcome) | Drangsnes | Westfjords (Strandir) | Open access 24/7 | 3 baths at the water's edge, showers opposite |
| **Krossneslaug** | ≈1,000 ISK (≈€7), honesty box | Norðurfjörður | Westfjords (Strandir) | Mid-May to late August. Closed in winter | Pool facing the ocean, bring cash |
| **Hofsós pool** | Municipal pool rate | Hofsós | North | Summer 7am-8pm (weekends 10am-8pm) · Winter reduced hours | Infinity pool facing the fjord |
| ♥ Forest Lagoon → | 7,490 ISK (≈€55) | Akureyri | North | Daily 10am-midnight (winter: to be checked) | Deep in the forest, booking recommended |
| GeoSea → | 7,490 ISK (≈€55) | Húsavík | North | Daily, around 12pm-10pm in winter | Seawater: take off silver jewelry |
| Earth Lagoon Mývatn (formerly Mývatn Nature Baths) → | From 7,900 ISK (≈€58) | Reykjahlíð (Mývatn) | North | Daily 12pm-10pm | New name, expansion under way |
| ♥ Vök Baths → | 7,690 ISK (≈€56) | Egilsstaðir | East | Mid-June-mid-Sept 10am-11pm · Winter 12pm-10pm | Floating pools on Lake Urriðavatn |
| **Laugavallalaug** | Free | Near Kárahnjúkar | Highlands (East) | Open access, June to September only | 4x4 required, hot water waterfall |

| Hot spring | Adult price | Town | Region | Opening hours | Good to know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Hoffell Hot Tubs** | 4,900 ISK (≈€36) | Höfn | South-East | May-Sept. 10am-9pm · Oct.-Nov. and Feb.-Apr. 12pm-9pm | 4 pools + sauna, near the glacier |
| **Seljavallalaug** | Free (donations) | Skógar | South | Open access 24/7 | Water sometimes lukewarm, no shower, no toilets |
| **Reykjadalur Hot Spring** | Free (paid parking) | Hveragerði | South | Open access 24/7 | 3 km hike, crampons recommended in winter |
| ♥ Reykjaböð Hot Springs → | From 8,900 ISK (≈ €65) | Hveragerði | South | Summer 10am-10pm · Winter 10am-9pm (Fri.-Sun. 10pm) | Opened in Sept. 2026, Reykjadalur without the hike |
| Laugarvatn Fontana → | 7,490 ISK (≈ €55) | Laugarvatn | Golden Circle | Summer 10am-9pm · Winter 11am-9pm | Renovated in 2026, bread baked in the hot sand |
| Secret Lagoon → | 4,500 ISK (≈ €33) | Flúðir | Golden Circle | Summer 10am-8pm · Winter 10am-7pm | Oldest pool in Iceland (1891) |
| **Hrunalaug** | 3,000 ISK (≈ €22) before 2pm, 3,500 after | Flúðir | Golden Circle | May-Aug. 9am-10pm · Nov.-mid-March 10am-8pm · Otherwise 9am-9pm | Natural spring, 1 hr 30 max, no booking |
| **Landmannalaugar** | Free (parking 1,500 ISK/car) | Fjallabak | Highlands | Open access, road open roughly from June to Sept. | 4x4 required, parking to be booked in season |
| **Hveravellir** | 500 ISK (≈ €4) | Kjölur | Highlands | Access roughly from June to Sept. (route 35) | Gravel track, 4x4 recommended |

**Good to know before you get in**

- **Shower is compulsory before bathing:** in Iceland you wash without a swimsuit in the changing rooms before going into the water. That is the rule everywhere, luxury lagoons included.
- **Book the lagoons:** Sky Lagoon, Blue Lagoon, Forest Lagoon and Vök work in time slots, and they are often full in high season.
- **The free springs are wild:** no changing room, no shower, sometimes no toilets. Bring a towel and sandals, and leave nothing behind you.
- **Municipal pools (sundlaug):** the cheapest way to soak in hot water, generally between 1,500 and 2,000 ISK.

- **In winter:** the Highland springs and most of the Westfjords ones are out of reach. Check the road conditions on umferdin.is.




⭐ ***Click here to open the hot springs map!*** ⭐



# REYKJAVIK

*What you will find in this article*

# GETTING TO REYKJAVIK BY PLANE

Right, I am not going to reinvent the wheel. Iceland is an island a long way from everything, so of course the best way to get there is to fly (Vincent, also known as Captain Obvious!).

Iceland's international airport sits at Keflavik, right at the far end of the Reykjanes peninsula and a good hour's drive from Reykjavik.

The VERY good news is that plenty of airlines fly to Keflavik from France and the rest of Europe. And if you book early, it is not expensive. The flight takes 3.5 hours.

From the UK, direct flights leave from London (Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton, Stansted), Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow all year round, plus Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle, Liverpool and Leeds in winter. Airlines (from-prices, return):

- easyJet, from £60
- British Airways, from £110
- Icelandair, from £140
- Jet2, from £190

EasyJet's headline fares only include a small under-seat bag, so you're realistically looking at £120–150 with a cabin bag. British Airways, Icelandair and Jet2 all include a cabin bag in their base fare, so the gap is smaller than it looks.

**COMPARE FLIGHTS TO GET THE BEST PRICE!**



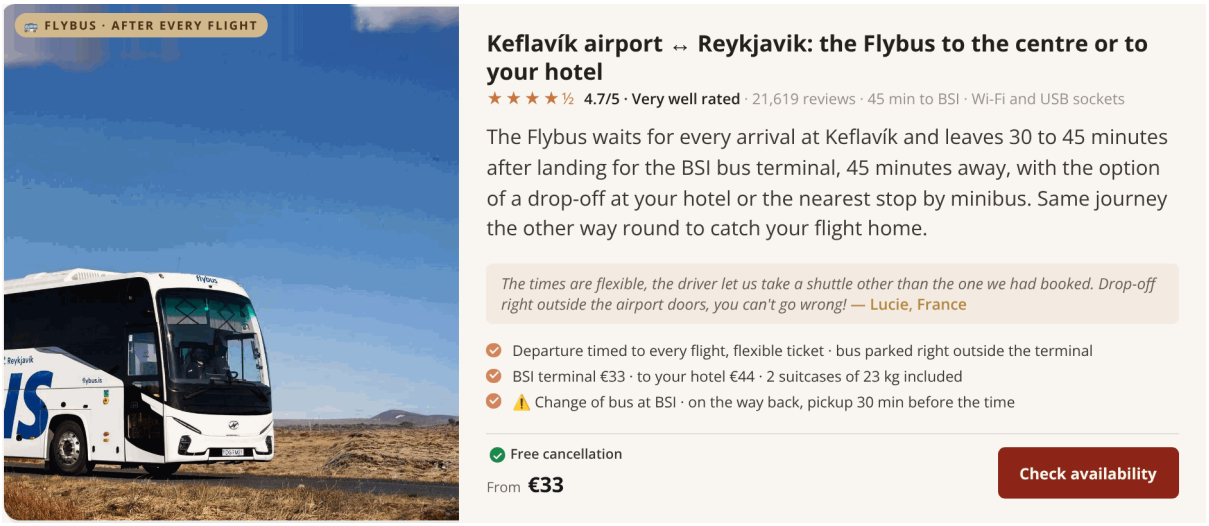


# HOW TO GET FROM KEFLAVIK AIRPORT TO REYKJAVIK

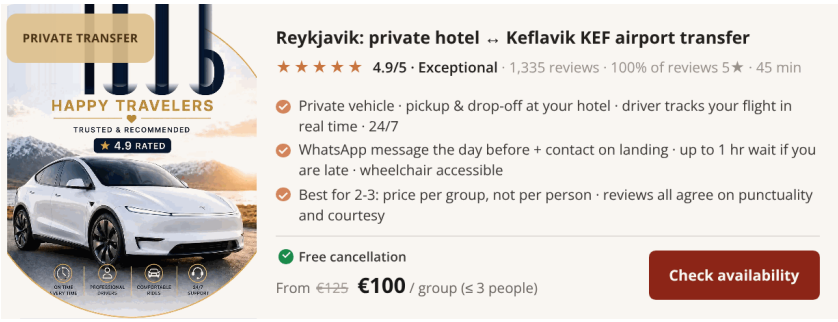
## *Getting to central Reykjavik*

This part is really simple. As I said, the airport is quite far from the city. And if it is far, it is expensive. You have several options:

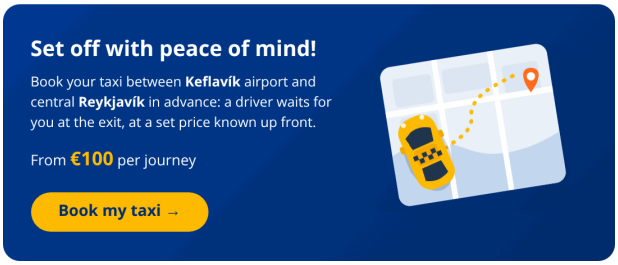
- **By bus**, the cheapest option. It starts at €33, and you are dropped either at the bus terminal or at your hotel (or right next to it). One company runs all of it, Flybus (Airport Direct no longer exists). If you go for the hotel drop-off (which I recommend over the terminal, which is a long way from the centre), you finish the trip in a minibus, very handy.
  In the Reykjavik – Airport direction there is one bus an hour from 3am to 10pm
  In the Airport – Reykjavik direction the buses are tied to flight arrival times, at worst 45 min after the plane lands:
  - **Flybus** – *info and booking*



- By **private driver** – the most convenient option. You order a driver and he picks you up at the airport at the agreed time. Prices sit right on top of taxi fares, from €110, and depending on the size of your group you can ask for a bigger vehicle
    - *Book your driver at the airport*




- By **taxi** – the simplest option. Yes it is expensive, but they are there, waiting for you. Prices are around €150, and watch out for the night rates, which I believe are fairly insane.
  There is no Uber or any other ride-hailing app
  By booking your taxi in advance *via Booking*, prices are far lower.




- By **public bus** – that is line 55, running roughly every 2 hours. The ticket costs about €16. Look above all at the Straeto transport website, *this is the line*.
  So why not, if you would rather wait. The price is not much lower than the direct bus, so if the timings work out for you and the stops suit you, it does the job.

## *Getting between the airport and the Blue Lagoon*

Hey, two birds with one stone!

There are buses running from the airport to the Blue Lagoon and back. Which is really handy.

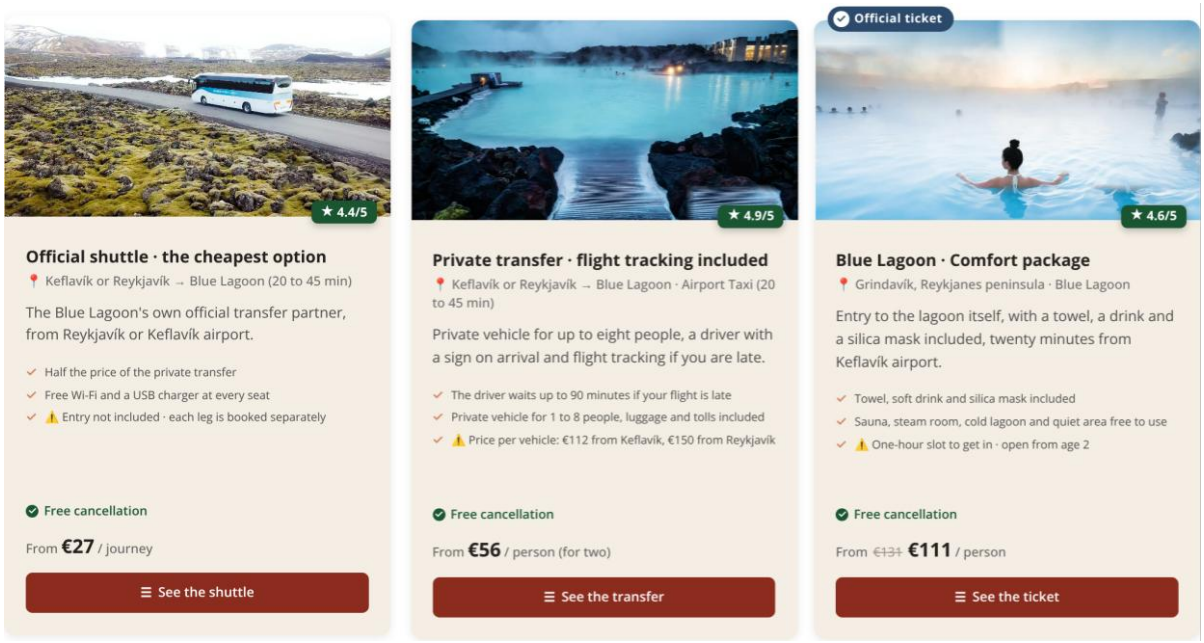
There are not dozens of them a day though, so check carefully against your flight.

Bus times between the airport and the Blue Lagoon:

- From the airport to the Blue Lagoon: 7:30am, 9:30am, 12:30pm, 4:30pm
- From the Blue Lagoon to the airport: 12pm, 2:30pm, 4pm

The ride takes **about twenty minutes** and costs **€27**

- *Info and booking*



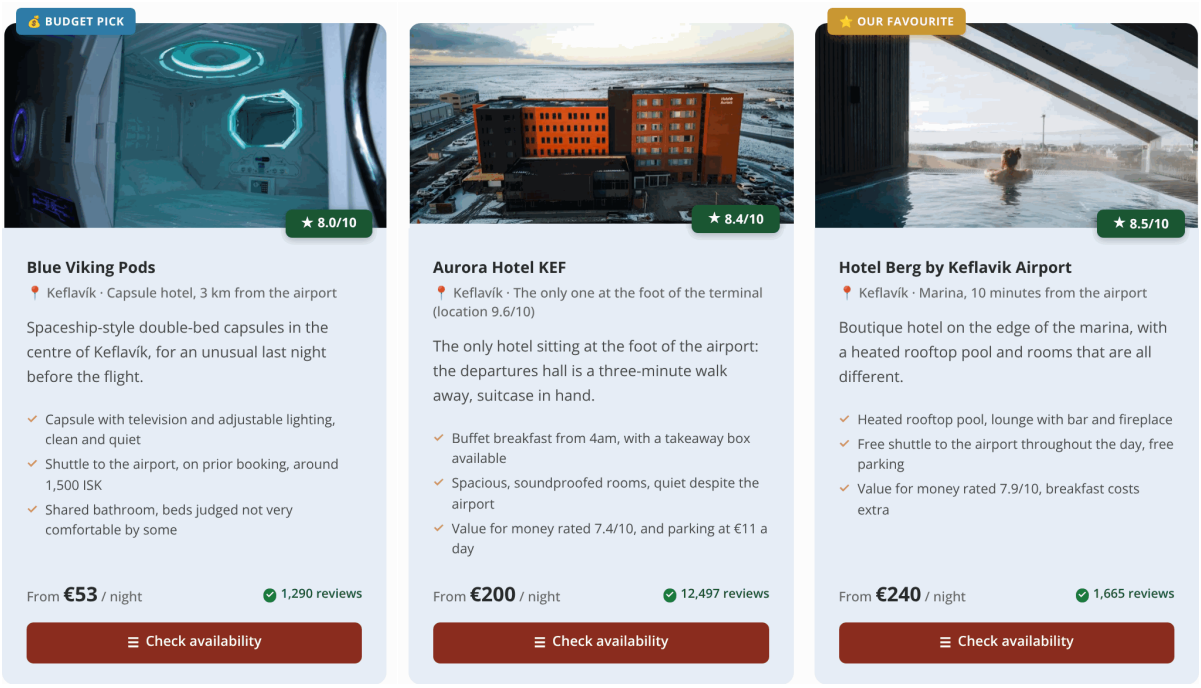
## *Where to stay near Keflavik airport*

Normally I would have pointed you to some lovely places to stay in Grindavik, a really nice little town about twenty minutes from Keflavik. Except that for the past two years it has been closed off regularly because of the various eruptions.

So as soon as it reopens for good (I hope for their sake it is soon!), I will add those places here.

In the meantime, it is mostly very practical hotels and guesthouses **a stone's throw from the airport**. The upside is that it costs far less than Reykjavik. And it is very handy for catching your flight without any stress.

And honestly, hanging around there for a bit is not daft at all, because it lets you explore the Reykjanes peninsula, which is very pleasant.




FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN KEFLAVIK!

# HOW TO GET AROUND REYKJAVIK AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

## *Do you need to rent a car to visit Reykjavik and the area around it?*

It depends. **The city itself is very easy to visit without a car**. On foot or by bus, it works perfectly well.

For the surrounding area, though, if you leave the city (I hope you do, otherwise what a shame!) public transport gets complicated. For the Golden Circle, for instance, there are buses, but they do not cover all the sites. So you can reach Geysir and Gullfoss, but not Thingvellir or Kerid.

**So to get out of the city:**

- Either you rent a car
- Or you go through agencies that take you to the tourist spots (Golden Circle, Iceland's south coast, Snaefellsnes…)

**My advice** –

- if you have a driving licence, renting a car is better
- if you are not confident, know that driving here is fairly easy BUT do not force yourself. You always have to keep an eye on the weather, but do not put pressure on yourself. The agencies are not expensive and let you range around Reykjavik without any worry

*If you are staying in Reykjavik and want to explore around it, a car is not essential, but you will have to go through the agencies.*



## *Where to rent a car in Reykjavik?*

If you set off planning to rent a car, the best thing is to pick it up straight **at Keflavik airport**.

If you book early, rentals are not that expensive, from €25. It does climb in high season (a lot of demand), and if you book at the last minute it can easily go over €100

I will write you a very complete section on renting a car in Iceland. But know this: you absolutely must compare! Compare prices, compare agencies, compare dates from one day to the next. And do read the reviews from previous customers.

And compare the comparison sites too! They do not have the same deals, so sometimes one is better than the other. I mostly compare with *Discover Cars* and *Rental Cars*. Two safe bets, and that is where I rent pretty much everywhere in general.

Once again, pay attention to the agencies' ratings, unlimited mileage and insurance. And the type of car if you want to take the F-roads (the 4x4 ones).



## *Getting around Reykjavik without a car*

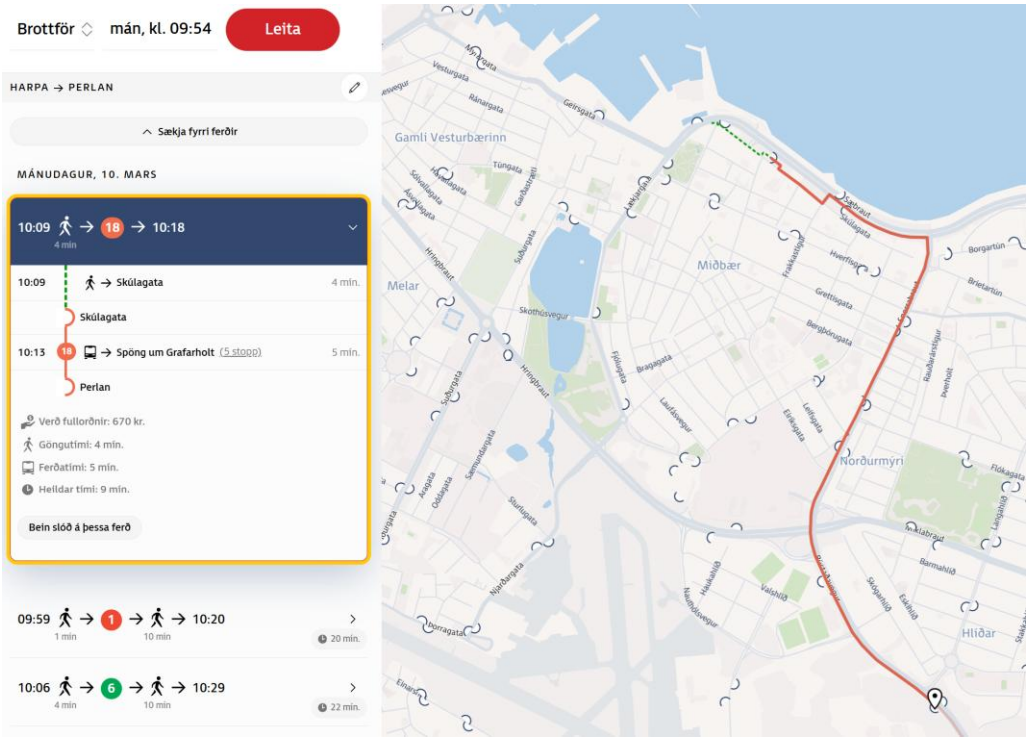
Getting around town is dead simple. It is a tiny city, well, the centre is tiny, so **you can do everything on foot**.

That said, if your accommodation is a touch out of the way, or if you want to go somewhere like Perlan, which is 45 min from the seafront, you can take the bus.

**The bus network, which works well, is called Straeto**.

Use the website or the app, there is *a journey planner that works well*, telling you very clearly which lines to take, the times and the stops.

I have used Harpa to Perlan as an example below.



## *Reykjavik bus map*

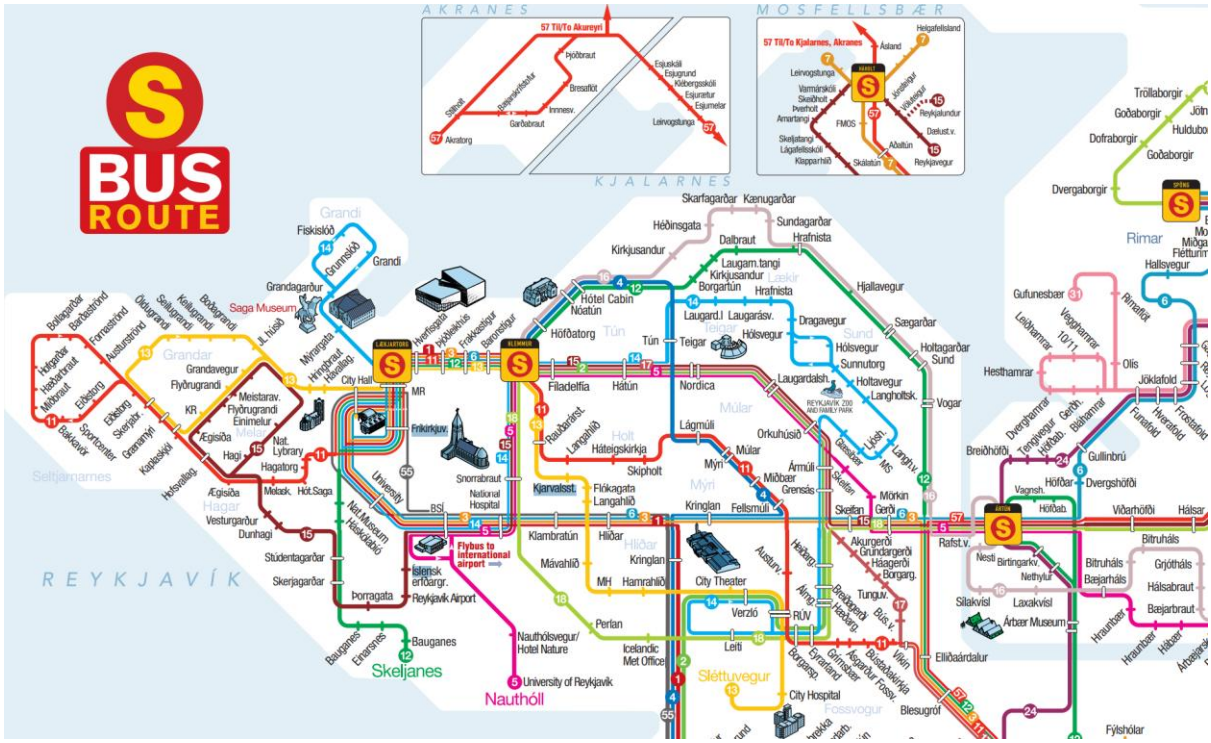
You can download the full Reykjavik bus map [by clicking here](#).

When it comes to **prices**, this is where it stings a bit:

- a journey costs 670 ISK, so €4.50
- if you use the same payment method, you are charged for a maximum of 3 journeys a day

The **timetables** –

- it starts at 6:30/7am on weekdays, 9:30am on Sundays
- it generally finishes around 11:30pm
- you can see *[all the line timetables here](#)*



# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO SEE IN REYKJAVIK

## *The city centre*

Reykjavik is not the kind of imperial capital with dozens of monuments to see. It is a really pleasant city though, with nice neighbourhoods, street art, typical houses and a great seafront. And one heck of a wind.

The best way to discover Reykjavik is to wander, enjoy yourself, without really setting a goal. Well, yes, do treat yourself, but there is no long list of places you absolutely have to see.

**Hallgrímskirkja, Reykjavik's surprising church**

It is the symbol of the city. Unique architecture, and much like the Arctic Cathedral in Tromso you cannot really say it is beautiful, but that is exactly what makes its charm! It looks out over the city from its little hill and is very easy to reach from the centre.





**The seafront**

Really pleasant, well, when there is not too much wind! It is a lovely walk. You can start from the Höfði lighthouse and go to the Ingólfsgarður lighthouse, passing Sun Voyager and Harpa. I would carry on to the docks where the whale-watching boats leave from, it is nice.



**Crossing the centre along Laugavegur**

Laugavegur is an essential street in the city. Let us say that by following this street and a few little detours (like Skólavörðustígur), you will see the main part of it. That is to say the pedestrian section with its really nice cafés, wooden houses covered in street art, lovely street decorations, a shopping stretch… in short, I would say it is the (touristy) heart of the city and it is good fun!





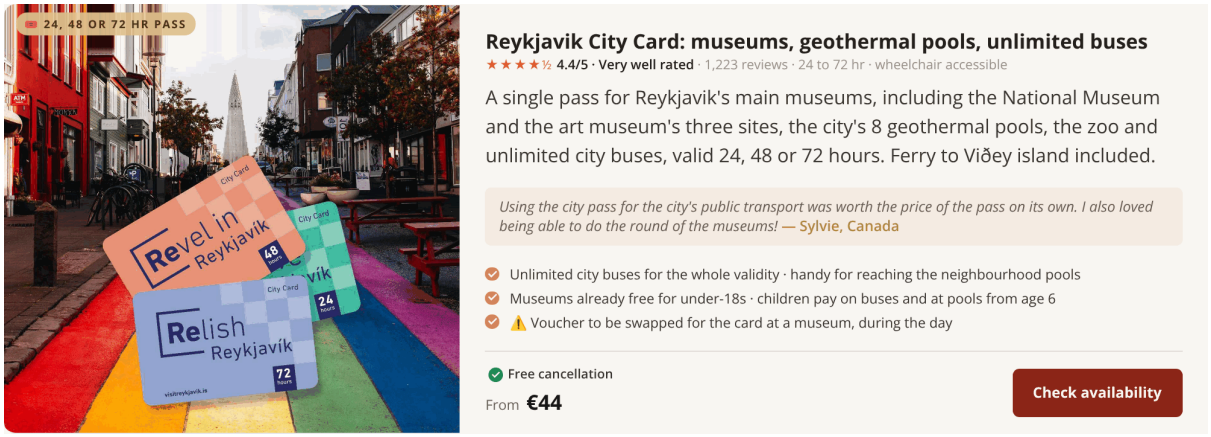

**Enjoying Reykjavik's street art**

In the centre there are a huge number of facades carrying street art. It is really pretty, very alive, and it genuinely adds something because it is good-natured (very much like the city itself, in fact).

I could not really tell you where exactly, because you come across it everywhere, so my advice would be to really keep your eyes open, and that will not be complicated 😳





## *Reykjavik's museums*

Inevitably, in a country with that kind of history, you find interesting museums. But not only about Vikings! Because Icelanders are a little bit out there (in the good sense), you also find some fairly surprising places. Let us have a look!

### The northern lights museum

A new museum devoted to the northern lights, run by aurora obsessives. It is an (almost) must for learning more about the phenomenon and how it forms. You can discover the myths and legends surrounding the lights, and there are interactive displays too. On the other hand, everyone says it is expensive for what it is.

- **Opening hours** – 9am to 7pm
- **Price** – €28
- *Info and booking*




### The phallus museum

Yes yes, you read that right! I did tell you Icelanders were different. The one place where jokes in bad taste are allowed without moderation! You will find phalluses from around 300 different species, from the handball team to the blue whale. And you can picture what the gift shop looks like!

- **Opening hours** – 10am to 7pm
- **Price** – €28
- *Info and booking*



## The punk museum

Another offbeat museum, on the arrival of punk in Iceland, how it influenced the country, local culture, music and art in general. Funny thing, it is set up in some old public toilets!

- **Opening hours** – 10am to 6pm
- **Price** – around €12 (it has probably changed since)
- *More info*

## Perlan Museum – Wonders of Iceland

A little outside the centre, the Perlan museum is THE best attraction in the city. If you were only going to do one, this would be it.

The building is a bit odd, surrounded by 6 hot water tanks that supply the city's houses. Inside this museum you find the whole of Iceland: a reproduction of an ice cave and an exhibition on glaciers, a 360° planetarium where you can watch a northern lights show, an exhibition on volcanoes, and a reproduction of the Latrabjarg cliffs to learn more about the local birds (including the puffins, of course)

- **Opening hours** – 9am to 9pm
- **Price** – €47
- *Info and booking*



## Saga museum

In Iceland, a saga is an epic prose tale recounting the adventures of heroes, often drawn from historical events or legends. So this museum plunges visitors into Iceland's Viking history through wax figures and period objects. You can dress up as a Viking and discover the Icelandic sagas in an interactive way.
Fine, put like that it sounds a touch cheesy, but actually not at all (okay, yes, a tiny bit)!

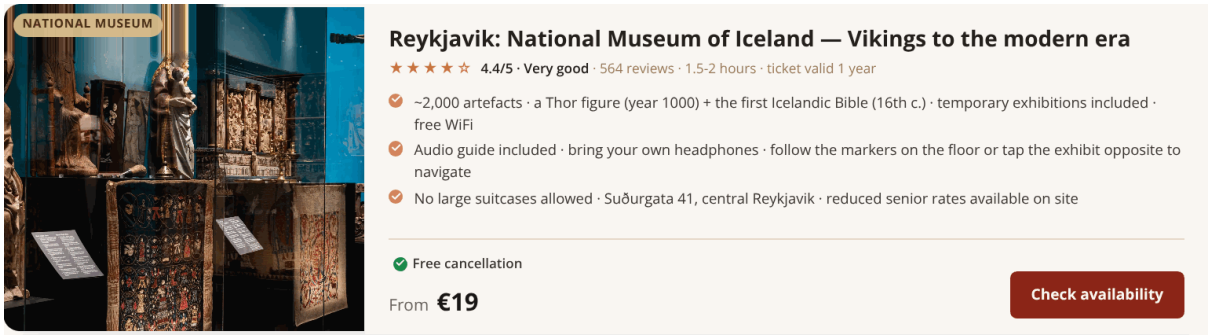
- **Opening hours** – 10am to 5pm
- **Price** – €24
- *Info and booking*




## National Museum of Iceland

To stay with the Viking theme, among others, the national museum gives an overview of Iceland's history, from the Viking age to the present day. You can see archaeological treasures, everyday objects and works of art that tell the story of the country

- **Opening hours** – 10am to 5pm
- **Price** – €20
- *Info and booking*



# *Guided tours*

## Discovering Reykjavik

In some cities where the history is really strong and/or surprising, taking a guided tour can be a genuinely interesting option. Especially right at the start, to soak up the country's history and atmosphere and work out which places are the nicest and the most important.
There are usually a few themed guided tours that can bring something different.

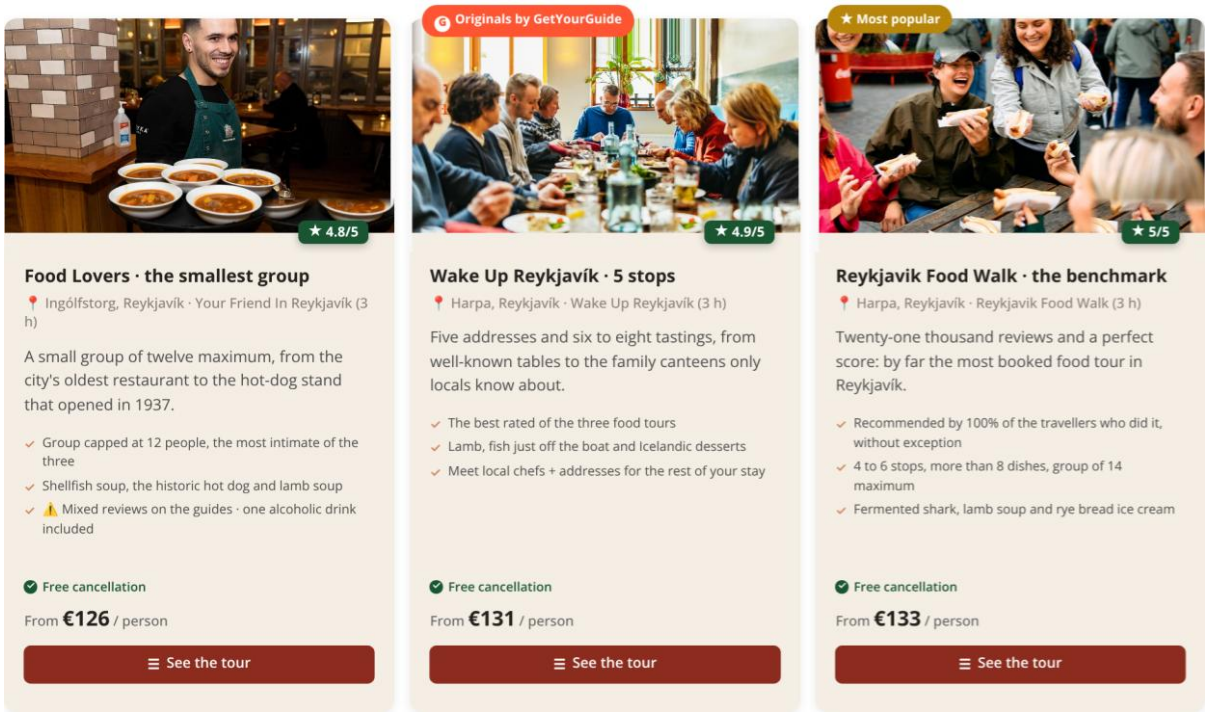
Right, I did not find anything completely different (apart from at extravagant prices), so it is the classics, Vikings and cats!






## Food tours to discover Icelandic cuisine

Iceland is a country apart, that is nothing new, but it goes all the way into its food. Special, if I may put it that way, different, surprising. Dishes you find nowhere else, and above all a cuisine in full evolution, bringing out flavours rather than just feeding you and keeping the cold out (and making you forget that it is cold).
That is why doing a food tour can be something really interesting in a country where you never quite know what you are going to land on 😄




In the same way you now find **local breweries** that are worth the detour, and given the price of beer, going through a guide is not a bad idea!



# THE BEST THINGS TO DO IN REYKJAVÍK

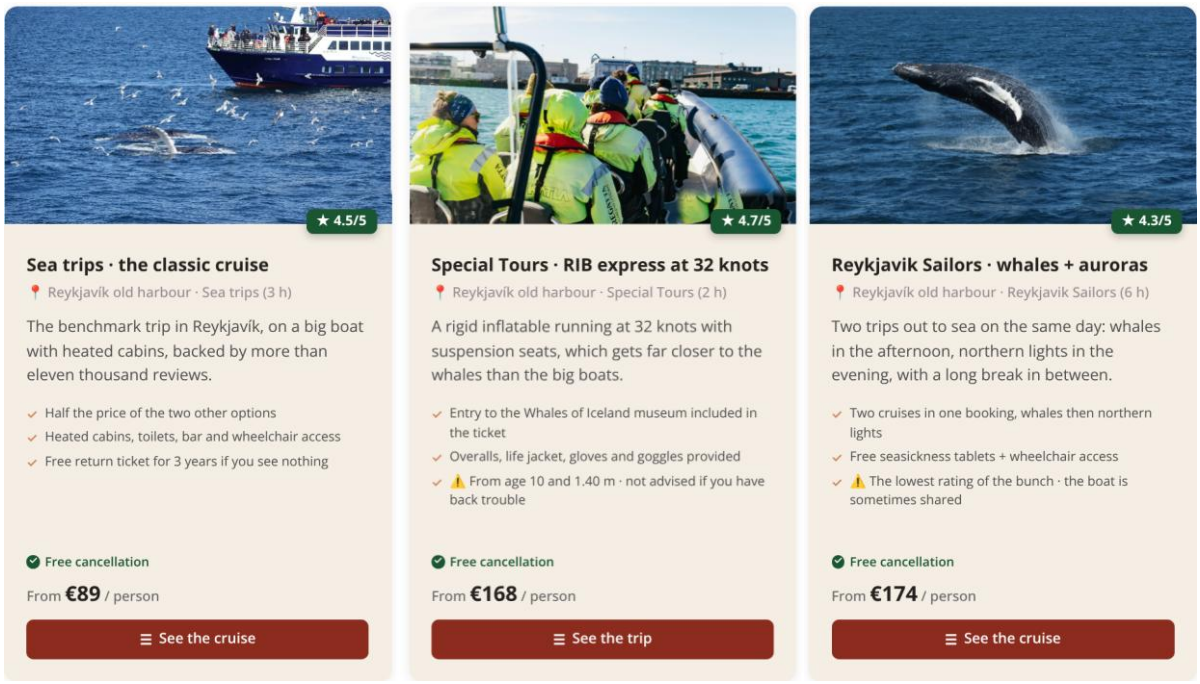
## *Seeing whales and other cetaceans*

As we saw earlier, **whale watching** is a major activity in Iceland. And you can do it in any season!

Reykjavík is no exception, it's one of the main places to see these gentle giants. That said, even though you can see them all year round, April to October is the best season, especially the summer months because there are more different species and in bigger numbers. So it's paradise!

But even in the "low season" there are obviously animals to see. Orcas, loads of dolphins, pilot whales (the ones with no nose), other kinds of whales (humpbacks in particular). Anyway, don't hesitate!

Especially since all the boats leave from the harbour in the city centre, so it's very easy to get to.



## *Seeing the northern lights*

Right, if you're in Reykjavík at the right time of year, it would be a shame not to take the chance to try to **see the northern lights**.

Obviously, you need **a clear sky**. And you know as well as I do that Icelandic weather loves to tease, so it's no sure thing! That said, a nice surprise is always possible, haha!

So here you've got several options. **Without a car**, if the sky is clear in Reykjavík and you don't want to go anywhere, you can try to see them from the waterfront, even though it's very brightly lit. Otherwise you can head to the Grótta lighthouse.

If you do want to move around, you need to know where the clouds are. For that, **check the cloud cover** on apps and sites like Windy and Ventusky. You'll know hour by hour where the clouds are going to be, which is super useful if you have a car. Sometimes 50km is enough, or even just a drive around Reykjanes and there you go! Clear sky and no light!

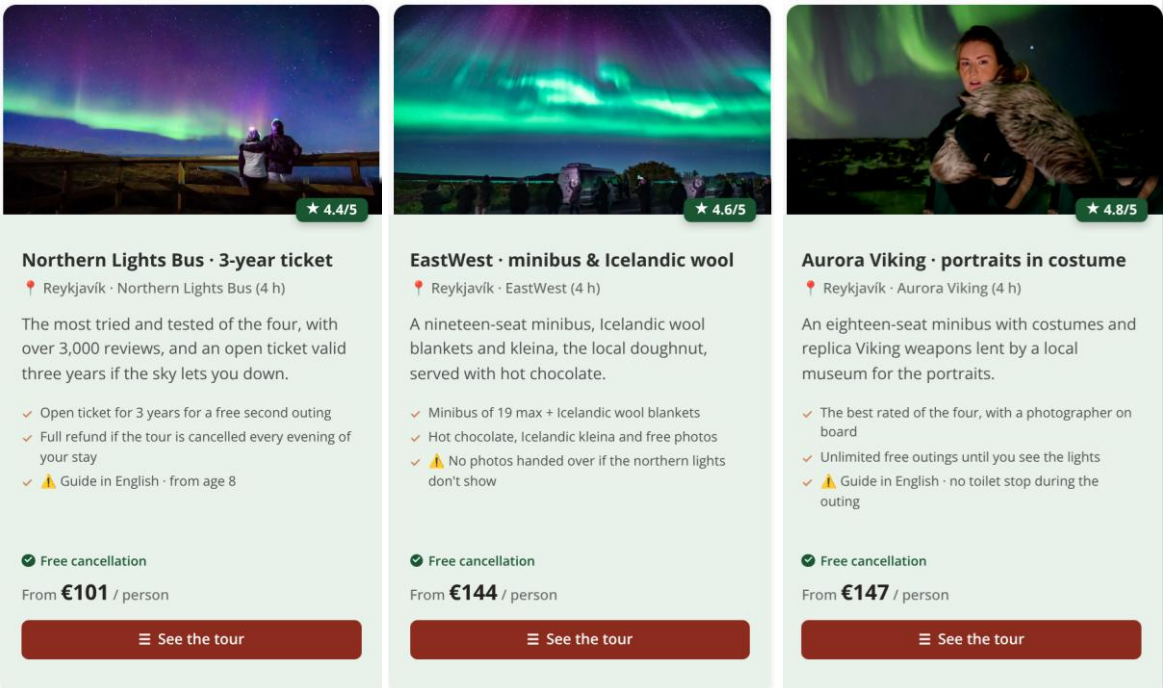
Most tours head to **Reykjanes**, sometimes towards the highlands or the Golden Circle to find cloudless sky, but it obviously changes every time.

In this article I explain *how to be a good aurora hunter* !





Before getting into the thick of it, here are 3 recommended operators.



If you want to see the northern lights far from light pollution and you don't have a car, then you'll need to **go through a tour operator**. In the next article I list *the best northern lights operators in Reykjavík*. But here's a good summary so you don't have to read the whole thing.

*Click the operator's name (→) to check availability and book. Prices per person, as a guide.*

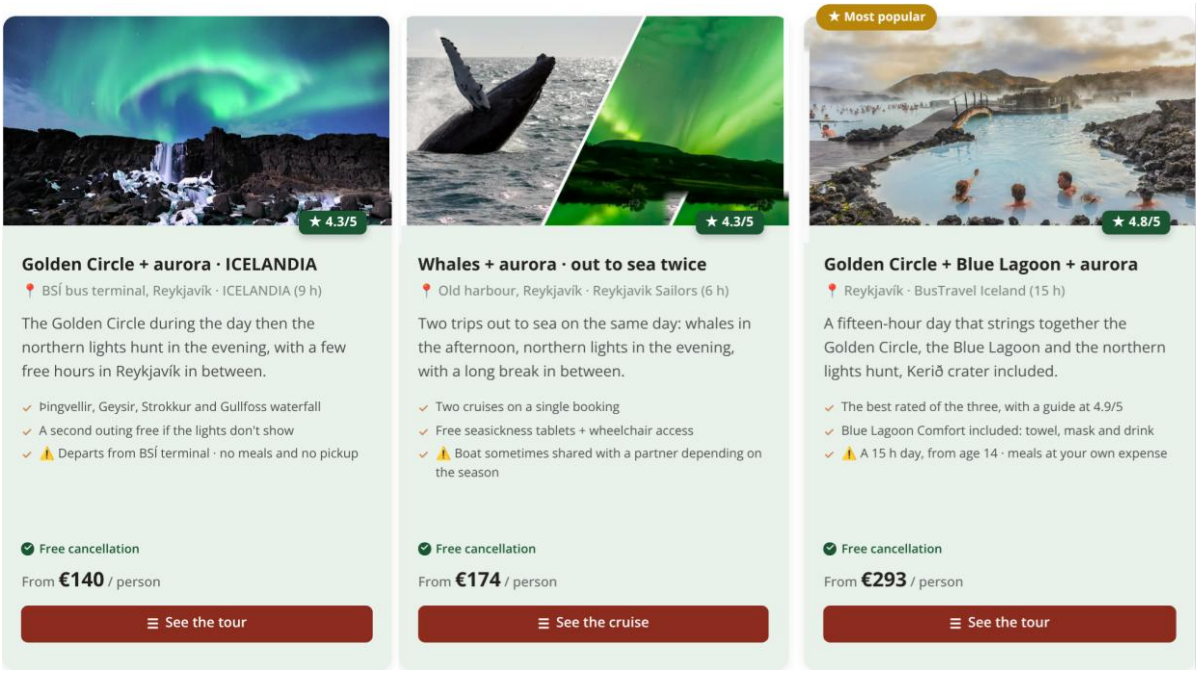
| Operator | Price | Format | Second chance | Why choose it |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northern Lights Bus → | **€64** | Bus | Yes | The most popular and the cheapest northern lights trip. It's a bus, but a well-regarded company. |
| Northern Lights Bus – Minibus → | **€89** | Minibus | Yes | The small-group version of the Northern Lights Bus. Not bad at all! |
| East West → | **€127** | Minibus | — | One of the best-rated operators (4.7 on GetYourGuide). Great in a small group. |
| Aurora Viking → | **€140** | Minibus (18 people max) | Yes, free | Very good reputation. You go out again for free if you don't see any aurora. |
| Ultimate Iceland Aurora Experts → | **€190** | Very small group | — | A benchmark operator, with one of the best guides on the island. |
| Nordur Travel → | **€120** | Minibus | — | 98% recommendation rate! |
| Arctic Yeti → | **From €100** | 4x4 minibus | — | The 4x4 lets you leave the usual roads and venture further inland. |
| David the Guide → | **From €89** | Small group | — | One of the most respected guides on the island. |
| Iceland Everywhere Tour → | **From €109** | Minibus | — | Excellent feedback for this operator. |

## *Combining the northern lights with another day trip*

And this one is great, and above all really practical. You can make a far more interesting day of it than just the northern lights, if you don't have a car!

Some operators offer the following combos:

- *Blue Lagoon + northern lights*, so you're nice and relaxed before seeing the lights. Very popular, and the best-rated day out!
- The version with *the Sky Lagoon* on top of the northern lights trip
- *Golden Circle tour + northern lights* (ideal in terms of flexibility for seeing the lights)
- There's also *whales + northern lights*, nice one, combining the two most popular activities in Reykjavík
- And then there's the ultimate combo: *Golden Circle + Secret Lagoon + Northern Lights* !



## *Relaxing in one of the many spas*

A real classic! And honestly, it feels so good! I've been to the Blue Lagoon twice, both times at the end of a campervan trip. So I really needed to relax. And honestly, it's great. Well, I'm not going to sing the praises of the Blue Lagoon in particular, because other thermal spas and pools have opened since and they're very good too!

So this really is an activity I recommend.

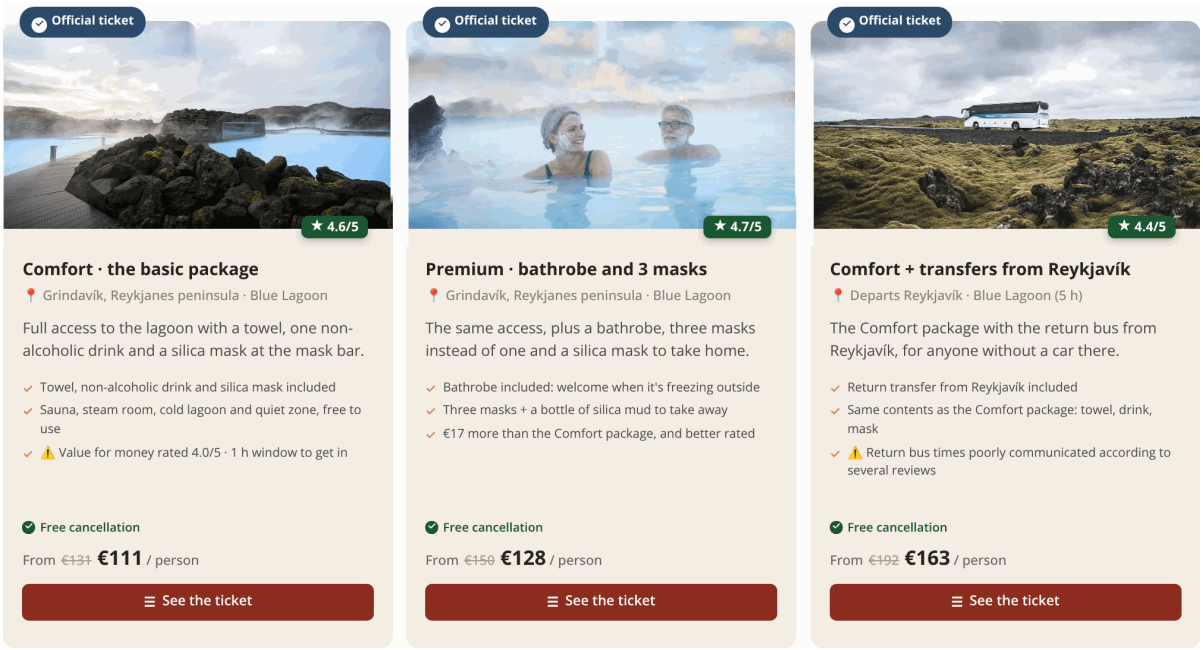
### The Blue Lagoon

Located on the Reykjanes peninsula, it's the best-known thermal spa. And it really is top notch! Gorgeous setting, and it had a few hot moments these past months with the various eruptions. But it's holding on!

- *Opening hours:* 7am / midnight (depending on the season)
- *Price:* from €110 (depending on times, days and ticket types)
- *Transport:* you can get there under your own steam, but luckily, if you don't have a car, you can take the bus from Reykjavík (or from Keflavík airport). Super handy!
- ***Info and booking:***
    - Standard ticket: *regular version*, *premium version*
    - *With transport from Reykjavík*
    - *Transport only*

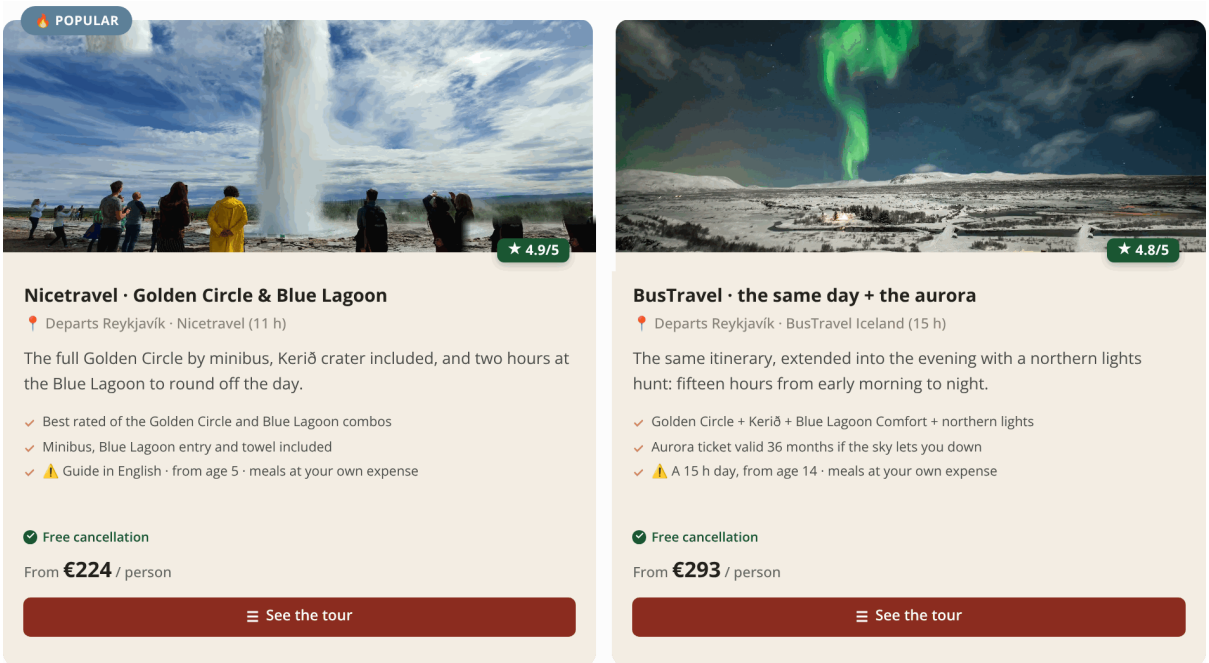







The Blue Lagoon can also be visited as a combo with the Golden Circle and other rather nice activities:

- *Blue Lagoon and Golden Circle*
- *Blue Lagoon and northern lights*



## The Sky Lagoon

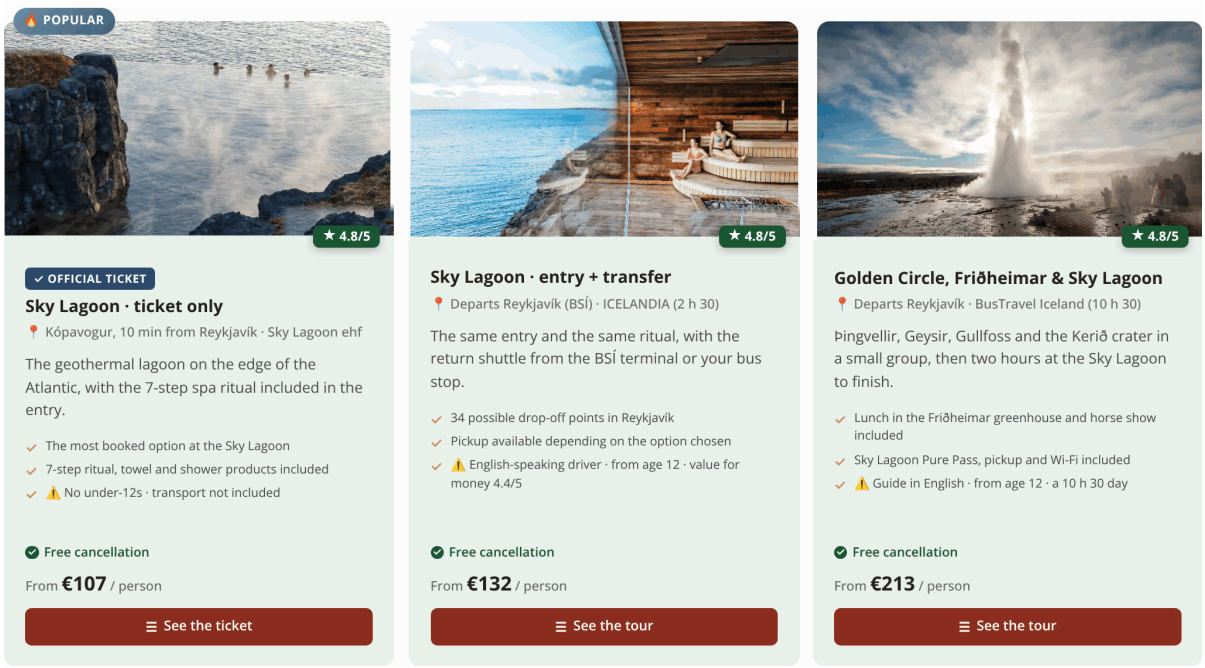
A new benchmark on the outskirts of Reykjavík! Quick to reach, it's also a fairly upmarket spa in a crazy setting. I haven't been yet, but it's planned for the next trip! Is there a big difference with the Blue Lagoon? Well yes, in the colour of the water and the setting (just as beautiful, but different).

But otherwise, treatments, pampering, sauna, relaxing. It's all the same!

- *Opening hours:* 8am / 11pm (depending on the season)
- *Price:* from €105 (depending on ticket type and treatments, days, time…)
- *Info and booking:*
  - *Standard ticket*
  - *With transport from Reykjavík*
  - *Sky Lagoon with a Golden Circle tour*







## The Secret Lagoon

Right, the big trend is giving thermal baths slightly wow/mysterious names. So after the Sky Lagoon, here comes the… Secret Lagoon, ta-daaa! More authentic, in the sense of more natural and quieter, it's a real thermal pool without the treatments and the facilities. It's cheaper, it's further away. And there's no transport.

So a car is essential, or you go through an operator that combines it with the Golden Circle. Because it sits at Flúðir, 1 hr 30 from Reykjavík.

- *Opening hours:* 10am / 8pm
- *Price:* from €28
- *Info and booking —*
    - *Entry ticket*
    - *Secret Lagoon with a Golden Circle tour*













## Reykjavík's municipal pools

No, we're not talking about the kind of swimming pool you know back home. In the Nordic countries, municipal pools are real havens of peace, complexes where you can spend hours because you get heated pools, outdoor and indoor, sauna, steam room, slides… basically everything you need to enjoy yourself! And that's where the locals go, regularly.

So here are the two main pools in the city, **Sundhöll** and **Laugardalslaug**

- **Sundhöll**
  - *Opening hours:* 6:30am / 10pm
  - *Price:* €9
  - *Location:* next to Hallgrímskirkja church
  - *More info*

- **Laugardalslaug**
  - *Opening hours:* 6:30am / 10pm
  - *Price:* €9
  - *Location:* next to the zoo, a little way out of the centre
  - *More info*





## *The other activities*

I've told you about the museums, the incredible Perlan, the northern lights, the whales, and the guided tours, in particular the ones on Icelandic food.

There are other activities in town that are worth it, let's take a look!



★ 4.7/5

**Sea fishing & barbecue on board**

📍 Reykjavík old harbour · Special Tours (2 h 30)

Cod, haddock and halibut in Faxaflói bay, then your catch grilled on the boat on the way back.

- The crew shows beginners how it's done
- Tackle, protective clothing and the barbecue included
- ⚠ Guide in English · hotel transfer costs extra

Free cancellation

From **€145** / person

≡ See the trip

🔥 POPULAR



★ 4.6/5

**Puffins of Lundey & Akurey**

📍 Reykjavík old harbour · Special Tours (1 h)

An hour on an old wooden boat out to the two puffin islets, engine cut so you can watch them.

- Puffin sightings guaranteed 100 % · binoculars on board
- Engine cut off the islets to watch the birds
- ⚠ Guide in English · value for money 4.4/5 for one hour

Free cancellation

From **€55** / person

≡ See the trip



★ 4.4/5

**Whales of Iceland museum**

📍 Fiskislóð, Reykjavík · Whales of Iceland

Twenty-three life-size whale replicas in the largest museum of its kind in Europe, visited at your own pace.

- Audio guide in 17 languages, English included
- Documentaries on a loop · wheelchair accessible
- ⚠ Value for money rated 3.9/5: allow about an hour

Free cancellation

From **€29** / person

≡ See the ticket



★ 4.9/5

★ A TRAVELLER FAVOURITE

**Snorkelling in the Silfra fissure**

📍 Þingvellir · Troll.is (3 h, 6 people max)

Swim between the American and European plates, in glacial meltwater of unreal clarity.

- 90 % of reviewers give it the top score, a record
- Drysuit, PADI guide, GoPro photos and transfers included
- ⚠ Must swim and understand English · 145-200 cm, 45-120 kg, 69 years max

Free cancellation

From **€126** / person

≡ See the tour

🔥 POPULAR



★ 4.7/5

✓ OFFICIAL SHOW

**LAVA SHOW · real molten lava**

📍 Grandi, Reykjavík · Icelandic Lava Show (50-75 min)

The only show in the world that pours lava at 1,100 °C in front of an audience, a few metres from the seats.

- A host talks you through the pour live
- Free Grandi shuttle from the city centre
- ⚠ Show in English only · not advised for under-5s

Free cancellation

From **€49** / person

≡ See the ticket



★ 4.9/5

**Eimverk distillery · Flóki whisky**

📍 Garðabær, 15 min from Reykjavík · Eimverk (1 h 15)

Iceland's only whisky distillery, shown round by its own team, with a tasting of Flóki, Vor gin and brennivín.

- Small groups, sometimes an almost private tour
- Tasting of 3 spirits and transfers included
- ⚠ Tour in English or Icelandic · no under-18s

Free cancellation

From **€41** / person

≡ See the tour

POPULAR



★ 4.7/5

### FlyOver Iceland · the immersive flight

📍 Grandi, Reykjavík · FlyOver Iceland (35 min)

Seats hung in front of a spherical screen, with wind, mist and smells: glaciers, volcanoes and fjords roll past under your feet.

- Skip-the-line included, no queue at the desk
- Wheelchair accessible · seasonal shuttle from the centre
- ⚠️ The 35 min flight is rated short (4.4/5) · 102 cm minimum · not if you get vertigo or travel sick

Free cancellation

From **€39** / person

≡ See the ticket



★ 4.9/5

### Fagradalsfjall · the locals' hike

📍 Reykjanes · 2Go Iceland Travel (4-6 h, 8 people max)

Eight kilometres over the 2021 lava with guides from Grindavík who lived through the eruptions and tell it from the inside.

- 93 % of reviewers give this hike the top score
- Transfers from Reykjavík, poles and winter crampons provided
- ⚠️ Guide in English · 8 km and 300 m of climb · red lava never guaranteed

Free cancellation

From ~~€151~~ **€139** / person

≡ See the hike



★ 4.8/5

### Helicopter over Reykjanes

📍 Reykjavík · GlacierHeli (40 min, 5 people max)

Forty minutes over Fagradalsfjall, Grindavík and the recent lava flows, with a possible landing on the lava.

- 100 % of reviewers give this flight the top score
- Pilot commentary throughout · skip-the-line included
- ⚠️ 4 passengers minimum to take off · weather and lava not guaranteed

Free cancellation

From **€449** / person

≡ See the flight



★ 4.7/5

### Raufarhólshellir lava tunnel

📍 40 min from Reykjavík · Arctic Adventures (1 to 3 h)

A real lava tube you walk through with a helmet on, bristling with ice stalactites in winter.

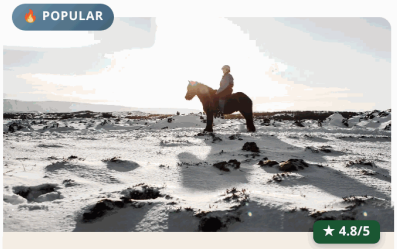
- The moment the guide turns the lights off
- Caving kit provided · departures guaranteed all year
- ⚠️ Guide in English · 1 h in the tunnel, rated short (4.4/5) · from age 6

Free cancellation

From **€59** / person

≡ See the tour

POPULAR



★ 4.8/5

### Icelandic horses across the lava fields

📍 Hafnarfjörður, 20 min from Reykjavík · Íshestar (1 h 30 to 2 h in the saddle)

The mossy lava fields at a walk then at the tölt, the gait unique to the Icelandic horse, with groups split by level.

- Gentle horses and groups split by level
- Overalls, boots and helmet provided · French-speaking staff sometimes on hand
- ⚠️ Briefing in English · from age 7 · 110 kg maximum

Free cancellation

From **€115** / person

≡ See the ride



★ 4.9/5

### Buggy safari up to Reykjavík Peak

📍 Departs Reykjavík · Safari Quads (2 h 30 in all)

An hour of 4×4 buggy on mixed ground up to the summit above the city, with coffee at base camp on the way back.

- Automatic 4×4 buggies, roll cage and seat belts
- Pickup, helmet, overalls and gloves included
- ⚠️ Driver: 18 and a valid licence · two to a buggy, solo option costs extra

Free cancellation

From **€175** / person

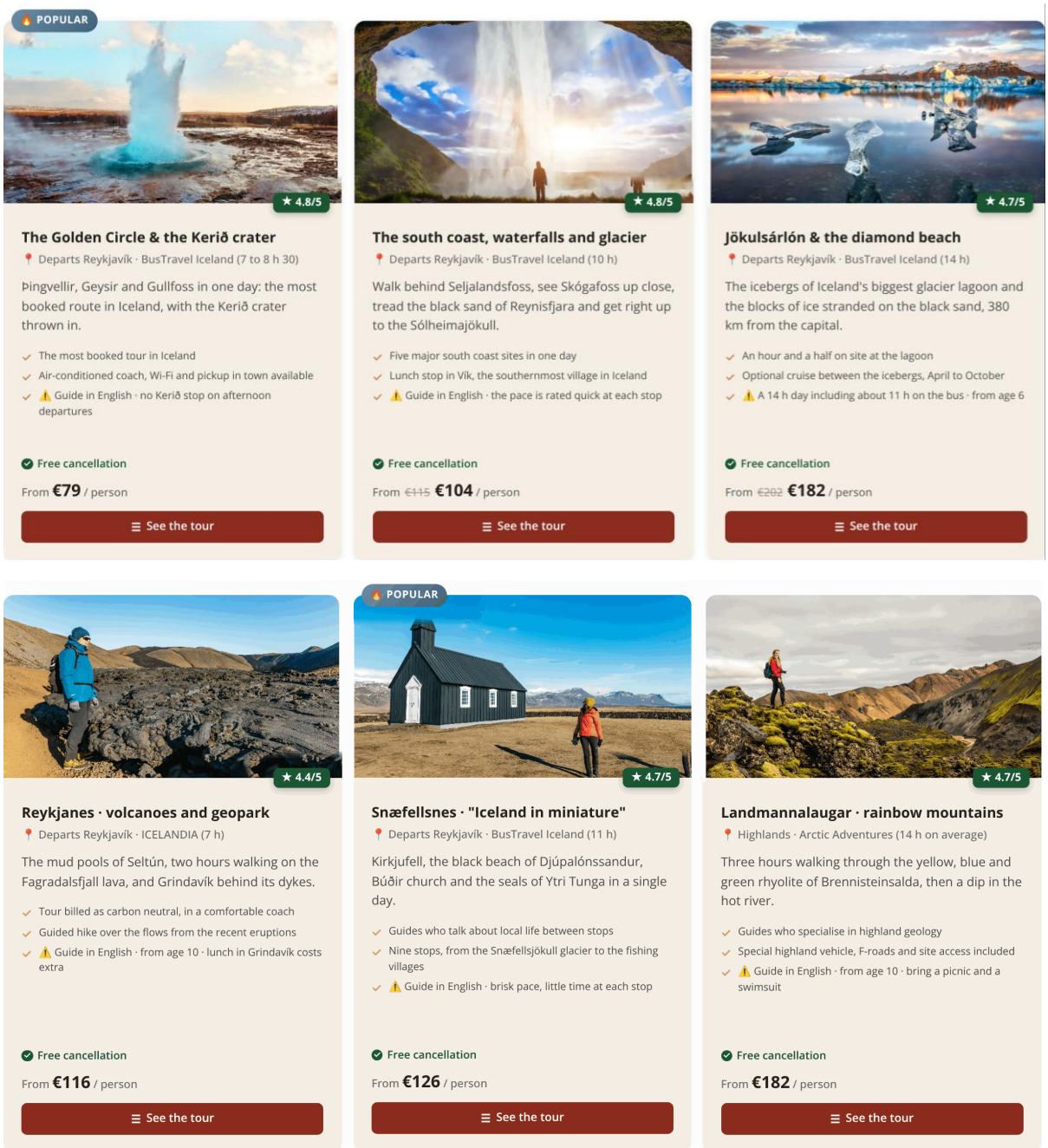
≡ See the safari

## *Day trips from Reykjavík*

If you don't have a car, you can still visit the surrounding area, just not by public transport. The regions you can easily visit from Reykjavík are:

- *The Golden Circle*
- *The south coast*, the black sand beaches and the waterfalls
- The south coast as far as *the Jökulsárlón lagoon*
- *Landmannalaugar*
- The *Reykjanes peninsula*
- The *Snæfellsnes peninsula* (unmissable, in my opinion!)

Here's the key information, but all of this is covered in detail in the sections dedicated to those regions.



## *The Reykjavík City Card*

As in a lot of cities, there's *a card that bundles a great many attractions*, mostly museums, plus transport, the thermal pools and quite a few discounts.

**Museums**

That said, the best-known venues aren't included, apart from the National Museum of Iceland. So let's say these are the slightly more under-the-radar places, but ones with a very good reputation (Maritime Museum, Museum of Photography, Settlement Exhibition…)

**Transport**

Another plus, it covers **local transport** in Reykjavík! So that's cool. But, I can see you coming, no, it doesn't include the buses to the airport (shame!) or the buses to the other regions.

**Spas and pools**

There's no entry or discount for complexes like the Blue Lagoon or Sky Lagoon. On the other hand you get free entry to the city's 8 thermal pools.

**Discounts**

You get decent discounts on the city's most expensive attractions: 10% off Perlan, 50% off the northern lights centre, 10% off the Saga Museum, 20% off the phallological museum…

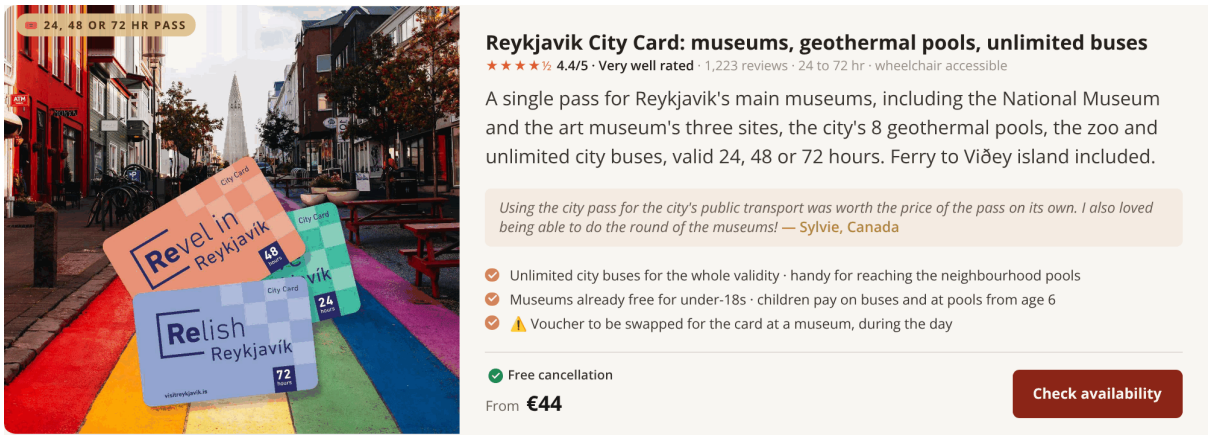
**Prices**

- 24 hrs: €34 / 48 hrs: €45 / 72 hrs: €56

**Is it worth it?**

Hmm, given the attractions included and their normal prices, I'd say that over 24 hours it isn't really worth it. The 48-hour card is, though, mainly thanks to the discounts.

If you're not planning to visit any museums, then no, there's no point buying it



# AROUND REYKJAVIK IN A DAY

You can easily use Reykjavik as a base and head out of town either for activities like walking on a glacier, or to explore a whole region (the South Coast, Snaefellsnes…). With or without a car, there are loads of options close to the capital, so let's go through them all!

## *Visiting the Snaefellsnes peninsula*

This is my favourite region in Iceland and it's within striking distance of Reykjavik. Ideally I'd suggest giving it 2 days if you have a car. But if you don't drive, there are tour operators that take you to the main spots in this magical region. Craters, lava fields, volcanoes, the famous Kirkjufell mountain and superb hikes!






**By car:**

- Leave early, stop at the Gerðuberg cliffs and their basalt columns, then the Ytri-Rauðarmelskúla volcano right next door
- Head to Grundafjordur via road 56, which crosses fantastic landscapes including a field of craters
- Then go to Kirkjufell, the iconic mountain, and the waterfall right beside it
- Loop around on road 575, passing the black sand beaches
- And do the walk from Arnarstapi to Hellnar

**With a tour operator** on a day trip from Reykjavik, there are plenty of options, with small variations in what you see:




**THE SNAEFELLSNES TOURS FROM REYKJAVIK**

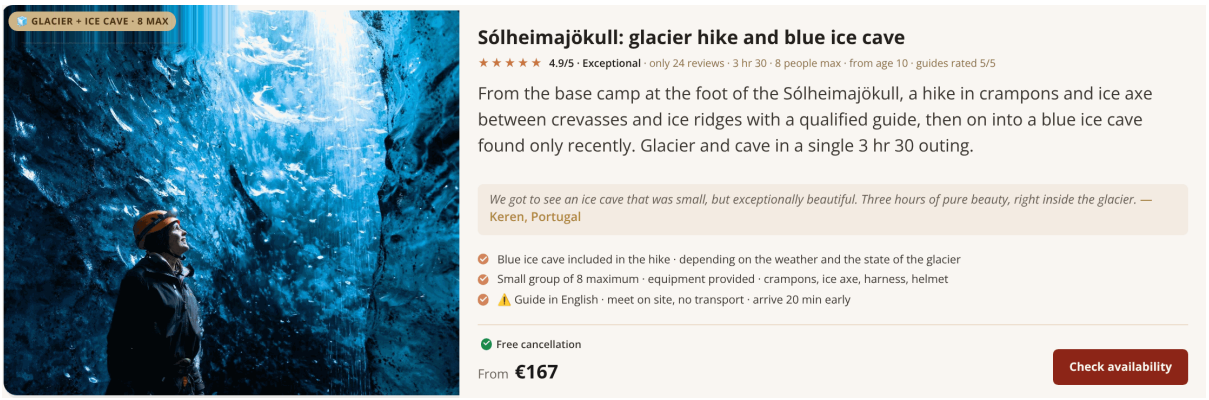
## *Walking on the Solheimajokull glacier*

This is the closest glacier to Reykjavik, easy to reach whether you drive or go with an operator. So it's the one you aim for when you're based in the capital. It sits just before Vik i Myrdal, about 2 hr 30 of driving.

One point: unless you are VERY experienced (mountain guide level), you cannot go onto the glacier by yourselves. It's far too dangerous.

**By car:**

- Some operators meet you directly on site
- 2 hr 30 of driving from Reykjavik, 35 min from Vik
- Operators on site: *Troll Expeditions*, *Arctic Adventure*, *David the Guide*



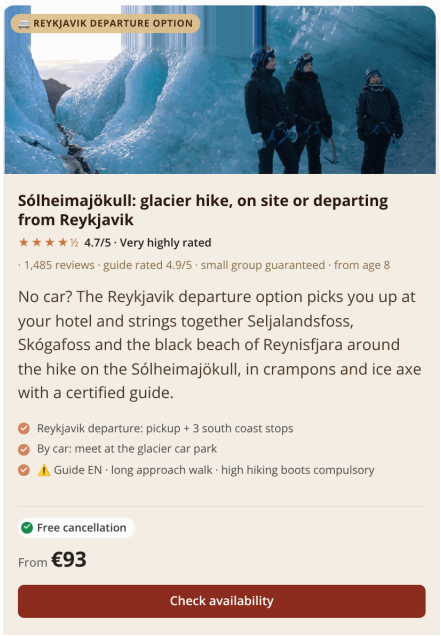





**With an operator from Reykjavik:**

- Transport from Reykjavik is included (bus or minibus depending on the operator)
- It's often an 11/12-hour day
- Some operators make photo stops at places like Skogafoss
- 2 hr 30 of driving from Reykjavik
- Operators from Reykjavik:




**ALL THE TOURS ON THE GLACIER**

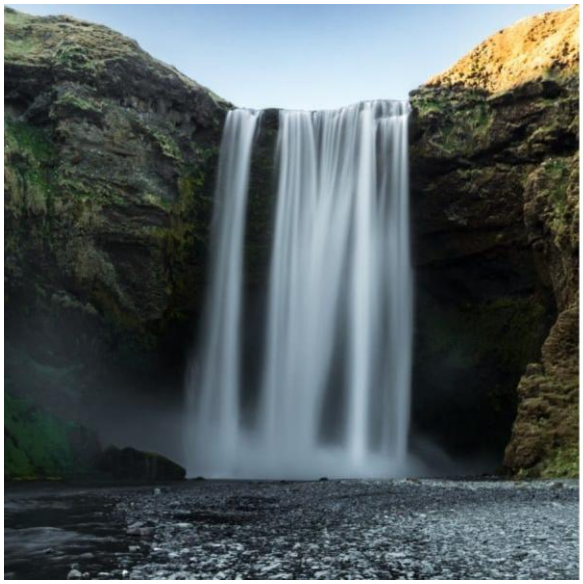
## *Discovering the South Coast of Iceland*

This is THE most emblematic area of Iceland, and the busiest too, but quite simply because this is where you'll find the most sites to see. And sites that really put on a show!

In one day from Reykjavik, if you have a car, you'll struggle to make it all the way to Jokulsarlon and back. Because that's still 400km each way, so 800km round trip.

But here is, **by car**, the route I'd recommend over one day (leaving early, mind you, and getting back late )

- The waterfalls of Seljalandsfoss, (Gljúfrabúi if you have time), Skogafoss
- A stop at the Sólheimajökull glacier
- Dyrholaey, Reynisfjara beach, and the black sand beach at Vik
- The Fjaðrárgljúfur canyon
- The Skaftafellsjökull and Svinafellsjökull glaciers
- The Jokulsarlon lagoon and Diamond beach (this one is tough to reach if you have to drive back to Reykjavik, 4 hours of non-stop driving to get home)









Visiting the South Coast **with a tour operator**

Luckily, if you don't drive, you can still see the main sites in a day. You lose a bit of flexibility, but very honestly, the programmes on offer are really good.

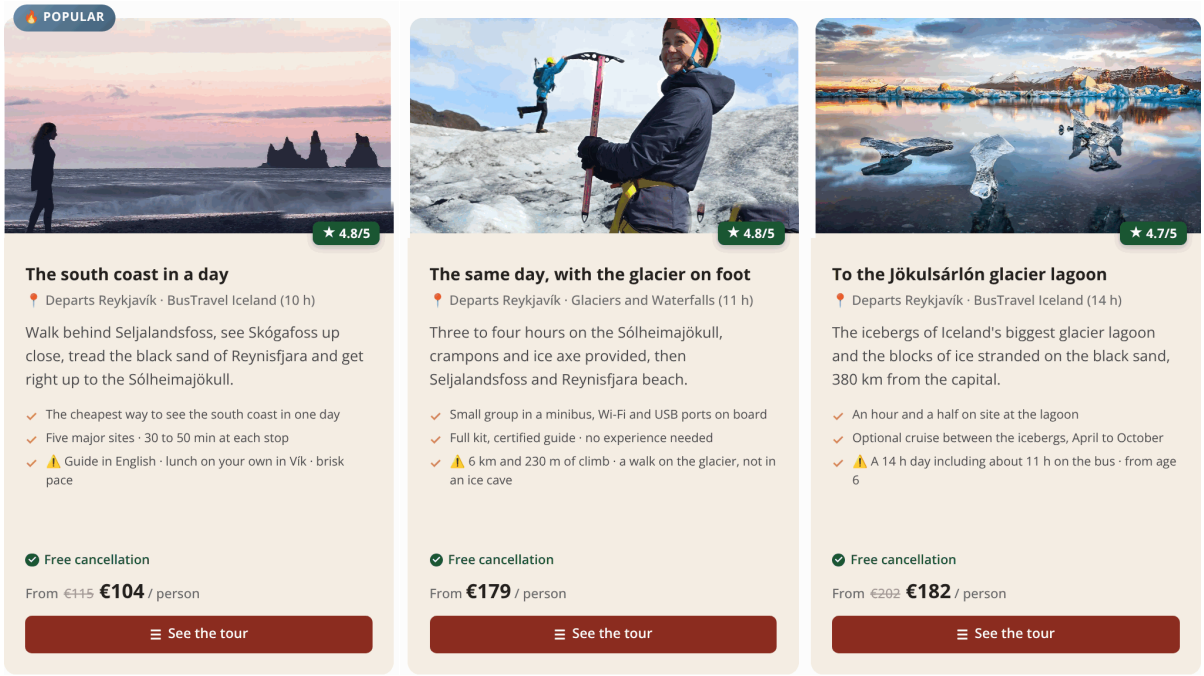
It also has the advantage of not being too expensive. On the other hand, some programmes can be pretty long and get you back late. But it's worth it!

You also need to pay attention to group size. It's usually a coach, but there are small-group departures. I'll point all that out.

The classic programme includes:

- Seljalandsfoss waterfall
- Skogafoss waterfall
- A stop at the Sólheimajökull glacier
- The black sand beach at Reynisfjara
- The lunch break is usually in Vik

And there are variants too. Some push on to Jokulsarlon, some add a glacier walk. Anyway, here are the options



## *Discovering the Golden Circle*

Yes, the Golden Circle is a must. And yes, it's very easy to visit in one day, whether by car or with an operator. By bus it's trickier, because you'll only be able to reach Gullfoss and Geysir, which is already something.

The Golden Circle is Iceland in concentrated form and I'd say it's an excellent introduction; for me it should be your first outing, a real taste of what's coming next.

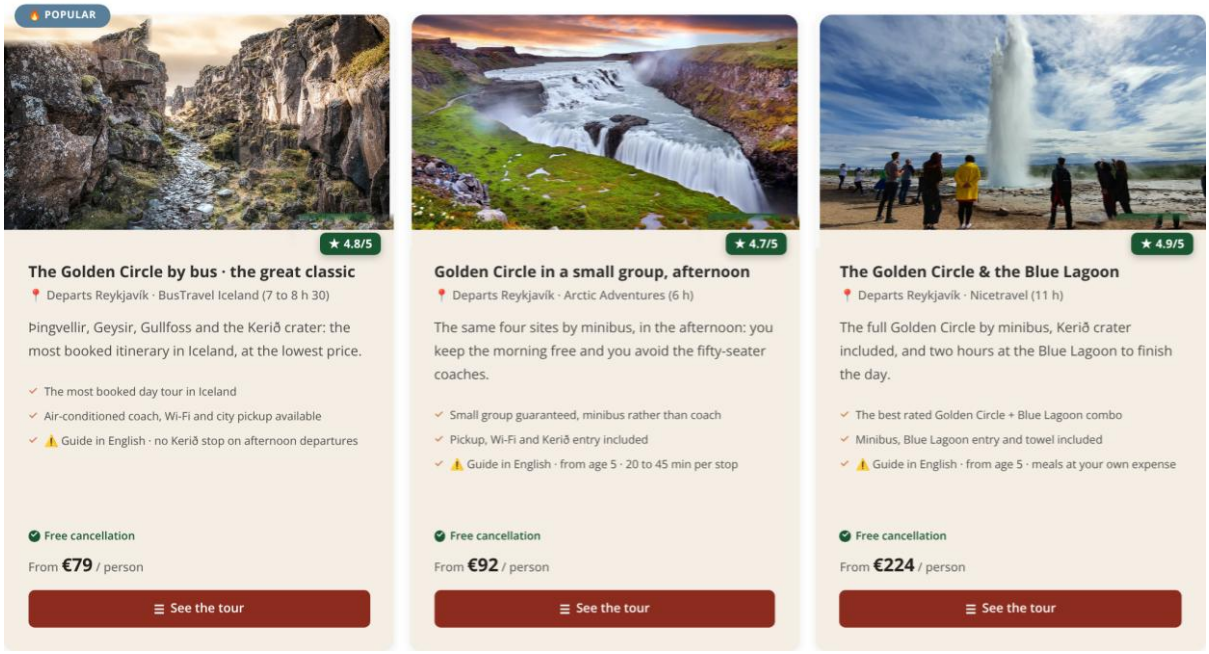
You'll find the following sites:

- Geysir, the famous geysers
- Gullfoss, one of the most impressive waterfalls in the country
- Thingvellir, an emblematic place in Icelandic democratic life
- Kerid, a very pretty crater
- And if the season allows, Bruarfoss waterfall (with a lovely walk thrown in!)





**With a tour operator**, it's also very simple. It takes a good full day and it isn't especially expensive, from €70.



# EXAMPLE ITINERARIES FROM REYKJAVIK

We've already gone through everything you can see and do in Reykjavik. That's quite a lot! So now I'm going to suggest a few itineraries, with or without a car, to see what you can do using Reykjavik as a base.

For itineraries with several bases, you'll need to look a bit further on. Here we're focusing on Reykjavik and its surroundings.

## *How long to stay in Reykjavik*

In itself, Reykjavik is a pretty little city that doesn't need a huge amount of time. So here I'd say **1 or 2 days** to enjoy the city, but **with the activities and the surroundings, you can easily stay 5 days** or even a week, if you don't have a car. Because if you do have a car, spending a week based in Reykjavik isn't necessarily ideal.

Staying in Reykjavik and heading out in all directions for several days is a very good idea.

## *Itinerary for 4 full days in Reykjavik*

With 4 days, you can very easily use Reykjavik as a base, with or without a car. Here's an example covering the essentials for a first trip to Iceland:

*I'm not setting aside a whole day for Reykjavik itself; that happens before and after the excursions. You'll always have time to see the city.*

- **Day 1: the Golden Circle**
  - Either by *renting a car*
  - Or with *a small-group tour*

- **Day 2: a whale watching trip**
  - With *Sea Trips Reykjavik*

- **Day 3: a run along the South Coast of Iceland**
  - Either with your car again
  - Or *with a tour operator*

- **Day 4: city and relaxing**
  - in the morning you head to the *Perlan museum*
  - in the afternoon you go and relax *at the Blue Lagoon*

- **If it's the right season, go out and see the northern lights**
  - If you have a car, you can head to Reykjanes or go wherever the clouds allow (using Windy or Ventusky, for example)
  - Otherwise *book with an operator*

If you're staying longer, say a week, here are the extensions I'd recommend:

- Stay a 2nd day on the South Coast
- Spend a day in Snaefellsnes

With that, you'll have a great week and see everything there is around Reykjavik.



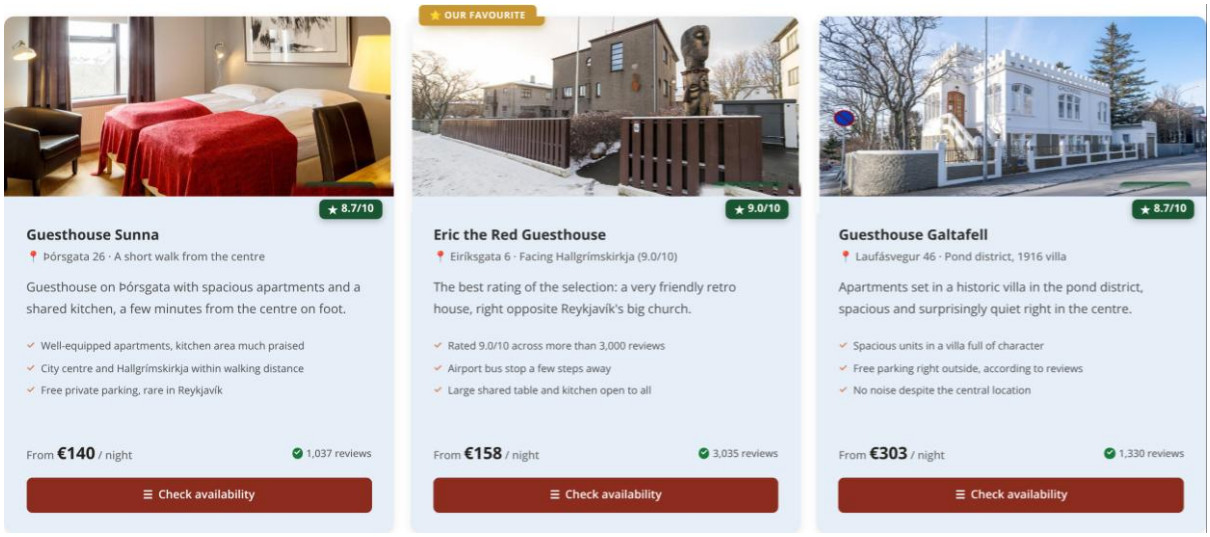
# WHERE TO STAY IN REYKJAVIK

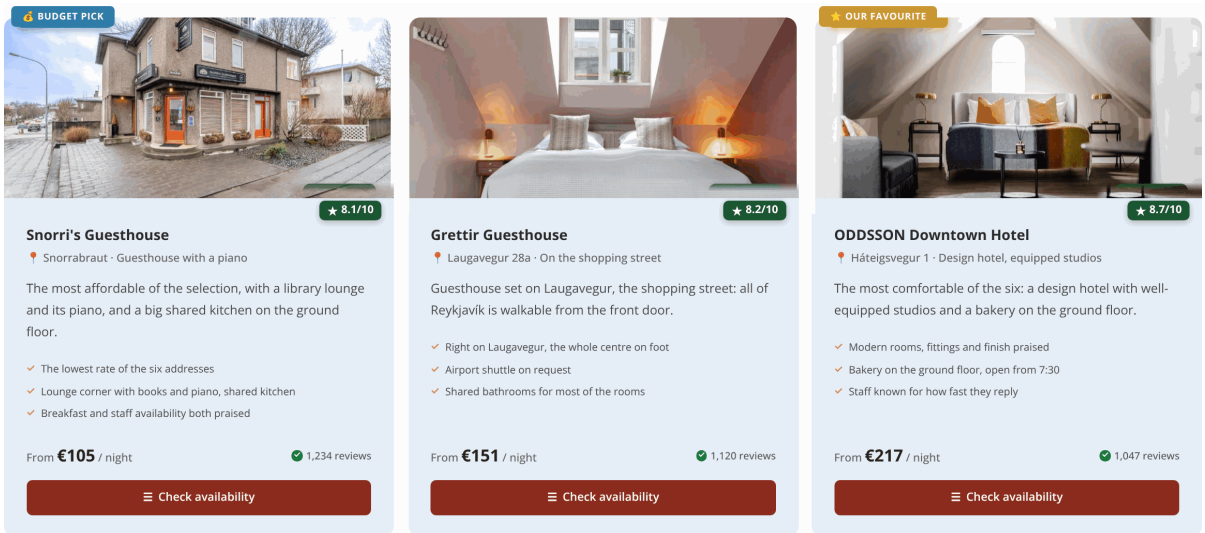
Careful, prices swing WILDLY between low and high season, they can triple. On top of that, you need to book ahead because:

- There's more demand than supply, so you'll end up with the most expensive places. And not necessarily any room at all.
- In high season it's really VERY touristy, you need to book months ahead.

## *6 GUESTHOUSES*

With accommodation being expensive in Reykjavik, guesthouses are a good alternative for a perfectly decent room without selling a kidney (low-season “from” prices)



# *6 VERY GOOD HOTELS*



★ 8.8/10

### Exeter Hotel

📍 Tryggvagata 12 · Old harbour, bakery in the lobby

Modern hotel by the old harbour, with a bakery in the lobby and rooms with very carefully worked decor.

- Bedding and toiletries regularly praised
- Bakery on the ground floor, restaurants all around
- Rated 8.8/10 across nearly 2,000 reviews

From **€191** / night — 1,955 reviews

≡ Check availability



★ 8.7/10

### Apótek Hotel Reykjavík

📍 Austurstræti 16 · Former pharmacy, right in the centre

Set in a former pharmacy on Austurstræti, with careful decor and a restaurant that the reviews call a highlight of the stay.

- Right in the centre, everything on foot
- Hotel restaurant highly recommended
- Breakfast and welcome cited in the reviews

From **€241** / night — 224 reviews

≡ Check availability

⭐ OUR FAVOURITE



★ 9.2/10

### Hotel Reykjavík Saga

📍 Lækjargata 12 · Between the pond and the old harbour (9.2/10)

The best rating of the selection: a four-star between the pond and the harbour, with a breakfast everyone mentions.

- Rated 9.2/10, the highest in the guide
- Breakfast described as incredible and very varied
- P3 zone parking two minutes away

From **€292** / night — 1,364 reviews

≡ Check availability




★ 8.7/10

### Storm Hotel by Keahotels

📍 Thórunnartún 4 · 105, 350 m from Laugavegur

Nordic hotel in the Túnin district, 350 m from Laugavegur, with a buffet breakfast that nearly every review mentions first.

- Generous buffet breakfast, waffles made to order
- Tour bus stop and Flybus shuttle right outside the hotel
- Free parking on site, but a limited number of spaces

From **€171** / night — 828 reviews

≡ Check availability



★ 8.6/10

### Fosshotel Reykjavík

📍 Þórunnartún 1 · 105, Harpa 1 km away

A sixteen-storey tower two hundred metres from Laugavegur, with two restaurants, an airport shuttle and high rooms with a view.

- Very wide buffet breakfast, gluten-free and vegan options
- Bus 12 stop outside the hotel for the tours
- Value for money rated 7.8, the weak point of the listing

From **€218** / night — 1,187 reviews

≡ Check availability

⭐ OUR FAVOURITE



★ 9.0/10

### Hotel Reykjavík Centrum

📍 Aðalstræti 16 · 101, historic heart

Set on one of the oldest streets in the city, with the remains of a Viking longhouse on show inside the hotel itself.

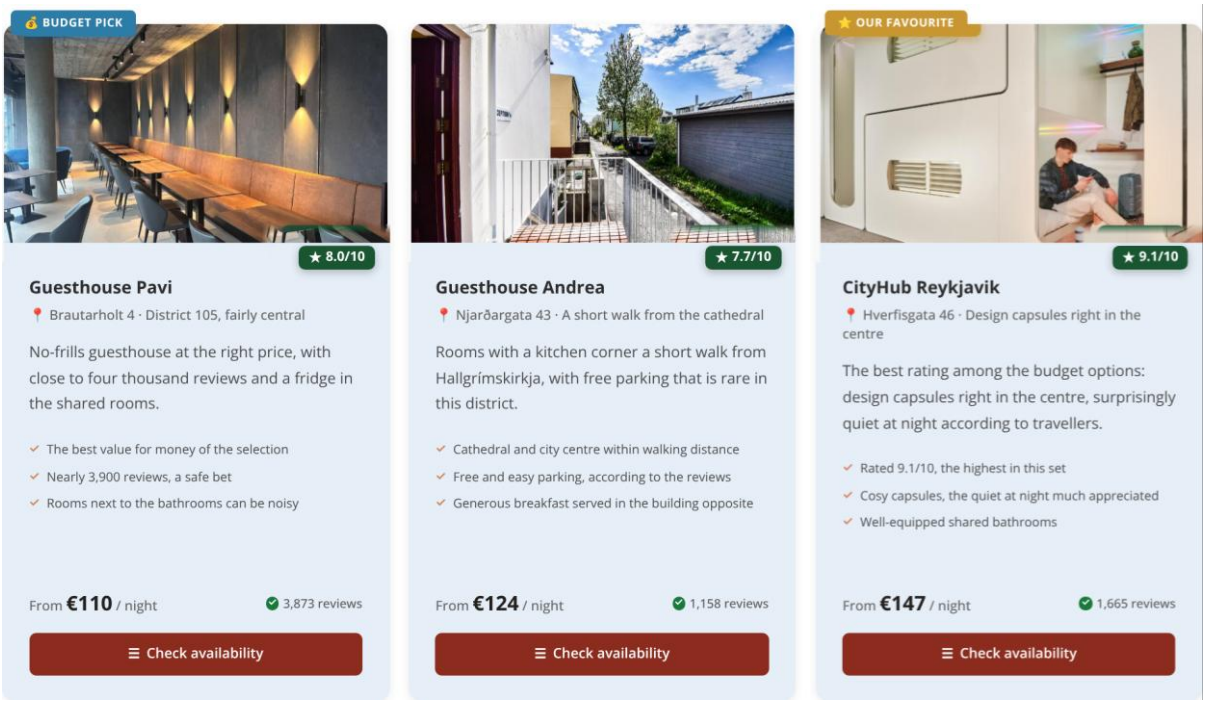
- Location rated 9.8/10, the highest in the guide
- Viking archaeological remains visible on site
- No parking: the 101 centre is a paid zone

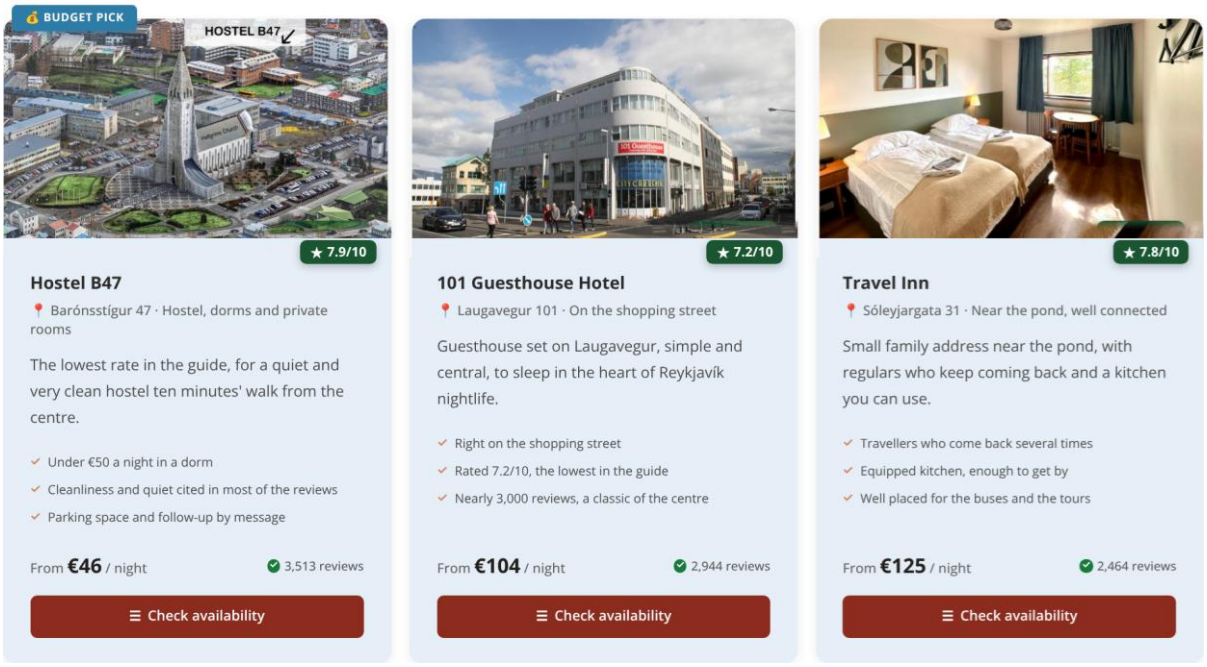
From **€232** / night — 1,200 reviews

≡ Check availability

**FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN REYKJAVIK!**

# *6 BUDGET PLACES TO STAY*

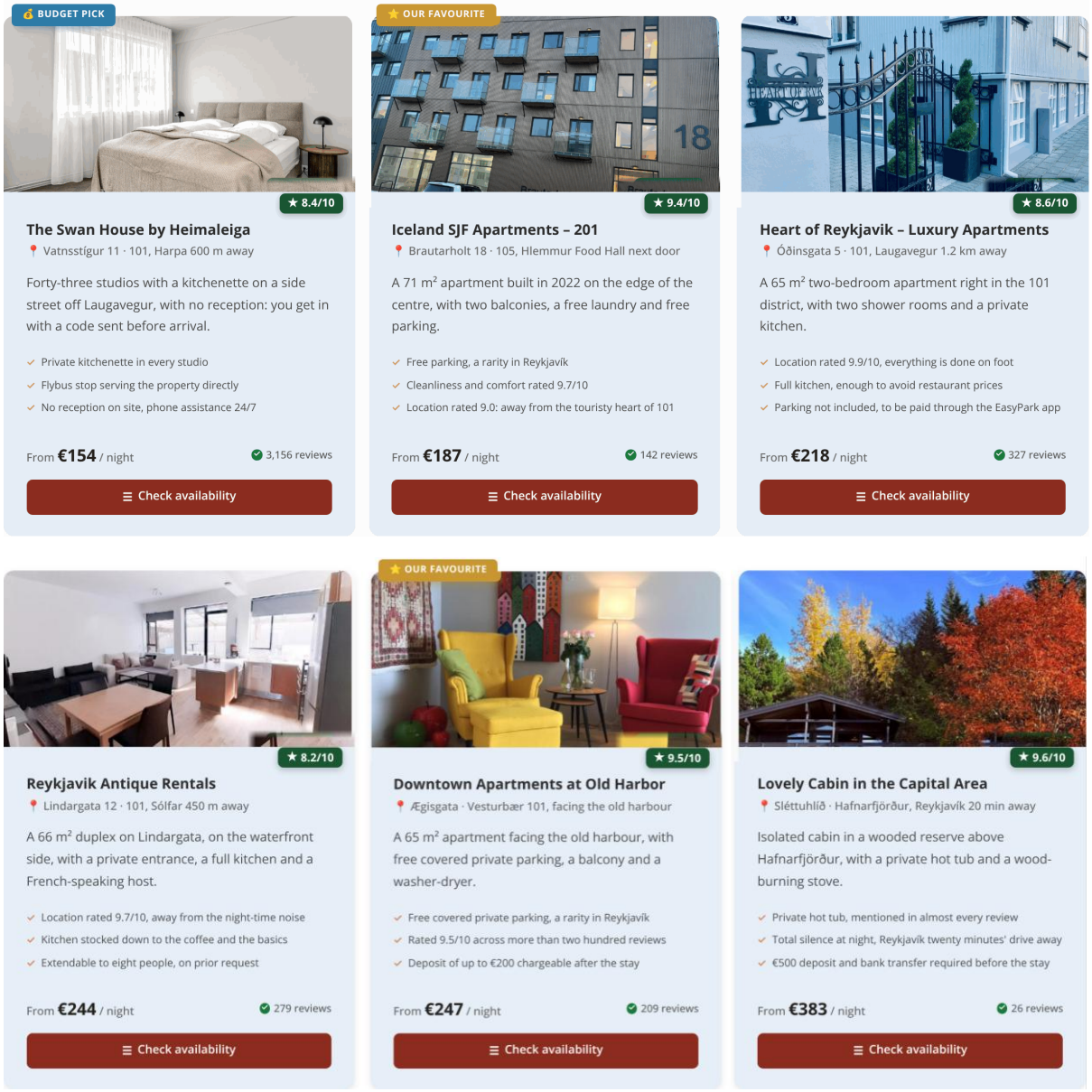





## *6 APARTMENTS TO RENT*

Careful, apartment prices are generally high for ONE night, but as soon as you book several, they drop a lot




**FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN REYKJAVIK!**

# THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

*What you'll find in this article*

# THE FINEST SPOTS ON THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

As I said earlier, the Golden Circle is a very good starter for discovering Iceland. Because in one day you get 3, 4 or even 5 pretty exceptional sites. And all of it right next to Reykjavik!

So for me it's ideal at the start of your trip, to show you everything Iceland has to offer.

## *Gullfoss waterfall*

Gullfoss, one of the most famous and impressive waterfalls in the country, is made up of two drops: the first of 11 metres and the second of 21 metres, plunging into a canyon 32 metres deep.

The waterfall is accessible all year round and has two car parks, a visitor centre with restaurants and souvenirs, plus viewing platforms. In winter, conditions can be slippery, and it's worth checking the road conditions.

Gullfoss has a rich history: in the early 20th century, hydroelectric dam projects threatened the waterfall, but thanks to the efforts of Sigríður Tómasdóttir, it was preserved. Legend has it that a farmer threw his treasure into the falls, hence the name “golden falls”.

- It's open 24/7
- Visiting is free
- It's 1 hr 45 from Reykjavik, 10 minutes from Geysir
- You can't get there by public transport





## *The geysers at Geysir*

The Geysir site is known for its spectacular geothermal activity, in particular the geysers that shoot boiling water several tens of metres into the air. The name “Geysir” gave us the word “geyser”, used worldwide for this kind of phenomenon. The most famous geyser on the site is Strokkur, which erupts every 5 to 10 minutes, sending water 15 to 20 metres high

If you're flexible, go **early in the morning** to catch Strokkur's highest jets. So you can go there before heading off to Gullfoss (but you also need to get to the waterfall early to avoid the crowds)

- The site is open 24/7
- Visiting is free
- It's 1 hr 30 from Reykjavik, 10 minutes from Gullfoss
- You can't get there by public transport
- Strokkur goes off roughly every 10 minutes

Don't stop at Strokkur alone, also walk up the little hill behind it, which gives a lovely overall view









## *The Thingvellir site*

Thingvellir is where the Alþing, the oldest parliament in the world still in operation, was established in 930. This parliament met every year to discuss important matters and dispense justice. The site was the centre of Icelandic political and social life for centuries. It was also at Thingvellir that Iceland's independence was proclaimed on 17 June 1944.

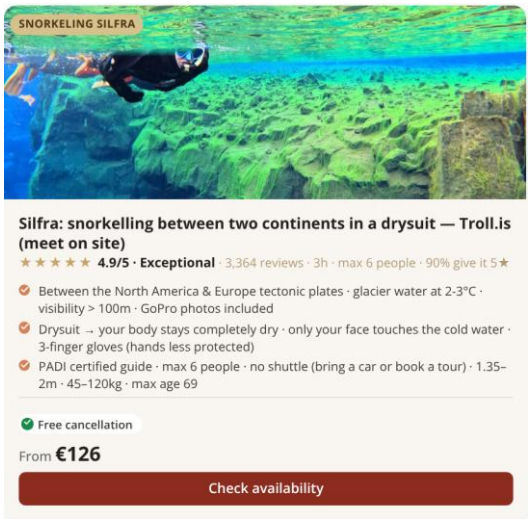
The park has several natural and historical attractions, and it's a really pleasant place for a walk:

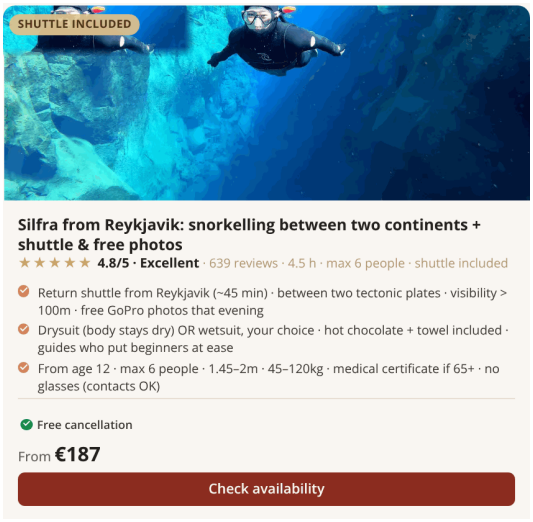
- **Almannagjá:** An impressive gorge formed by the movement of the tectonic plates.
- **Öxarárfoss:** A lovely waterfall formed by the Öxará river that crosses the plain.
- **Silfra:** A fissure filled with crystal-clear water, ideal for diving and snorkelling.
- **Lögberg:** The Law Rock, where the parliament's texts were once read out.
- **Thingvellir church:** A charming little historic church





As I just mentioned, you can **go diving at Silfra**. What makes it special is that the Silfra fissure is the boundary between the Eurasian and American tectonic plates. So you get to dive between two continents! And all of it in crystal-clear water! Either directly on site, or they come and pick you up in Reykjavik.



## *Bruarfoss waterfall*

Brúarfoss is a superb waterfall with brilliant blue water, a few kilometres from Geysir. To reach it, park in the dedicated car park near the river, just after the village. The village used to be more accessible, but it's now off-limits to tourists, with barriers to keep the crowds out. Today, count on a good half-hour walk from the car park to reach the waterfall.

And frankly, that walk is really worth it. Not only is it enjoyable, but the water is simply magnificent, maybe the most turquoise and the prettiest you'll see in Iceland. Along the way you'll pass several smaller waterfalls that are very pretty, but arriving in front of Brúarfoss is the real highlight. The waterfall isn't huge, it doesn't have the height of Skógafoss or Dynjandi, but it has a unique shape and stunning colours.





## *The Kerid volcano*

This is probably the prettiest crater that's easiest to reach from Reykjavik. Very pretty because it's full of colour, with its ochre earth, its vegetation and above all the little lake at the bottom. You can walk around the volcano along the crater rim or along the lake shore; both mini walks are enjoyable



# HOW TO VISIT THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

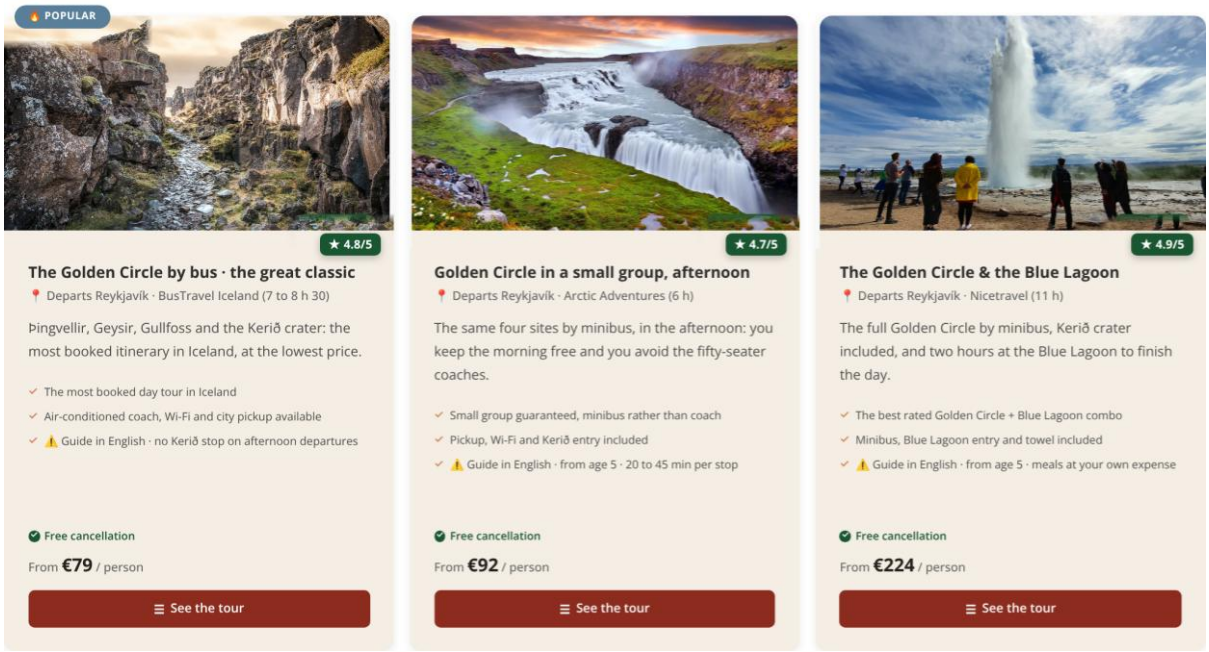
In practice, it isn't possible to visit the Golden Circle by public transport. Some sites used to look reachable, but not any more. No more line according to *Publictransport.is*, nothing according to the journey planners. So unfortunately, your two options for getting there are by car or with an operator. Then again, “unfortunately” is a bit strong: that's already plenty, really!

## *Visiting the Golden Circle with an operator/guide*

If you don't have a car, this is the simplest way. And there really are quite a few advantages, because:

- It isn't expensive, prices start around €70
- You can go in a small group, or by coach
- There are several possible variants, like with Kerid, with the Blue Lagoon, with the northern lights…

It's one day, and the route is well put together. You just need to pick the right operator and avoid the dodgy ones, but I'm here to steer you




DISCOVER ALL THE TOURS IN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE!

## *Visiting the Golden Circle by car*

Visiting the Golden Circle by car is really simple. It takes a good full day, especially depending on which sites you want to see. Of the 5 listed, maybe you won't do them all, especially if the days are short. In winter Bruarfoss isn't the easiest one to fit in, and would really need half a day. OK fine, in any season actually, because it's 45 min one way.

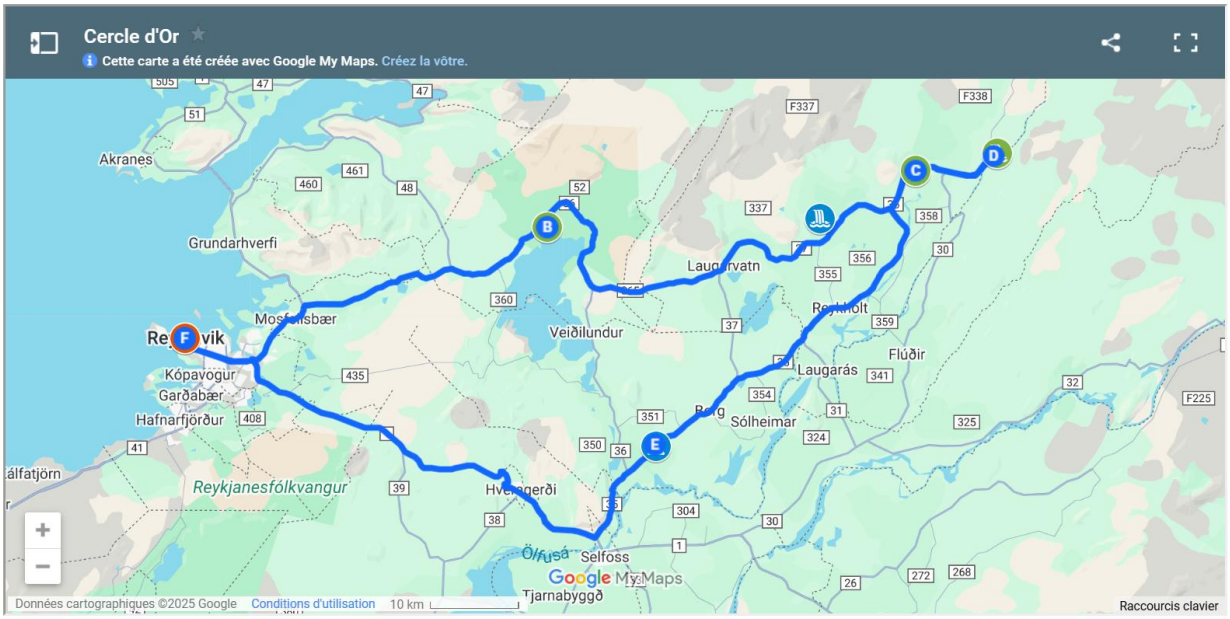
Ideally, you'd:

- Start with Geysir, to catch the highest jets, which come in the morning
- Then head off to Gullfoss
    - If you go to Gullfoss first, you'll have almost nobody there. So either Gullfoss to yourselves, or the highest geysers!
- Then you go to Thingvellir. It's a nice, interesting walk
- Finally, the Kerid crater, on the way back from Thingvellir with a little detour

If you want to do Bruarfoss, that's 2 hr 30 (2 hours round trip + 30 min on site), and you'll need to fit it in on the way back from Gullfoss and Geysir since it's right there. So if you're quick on your first stops, it's doable!

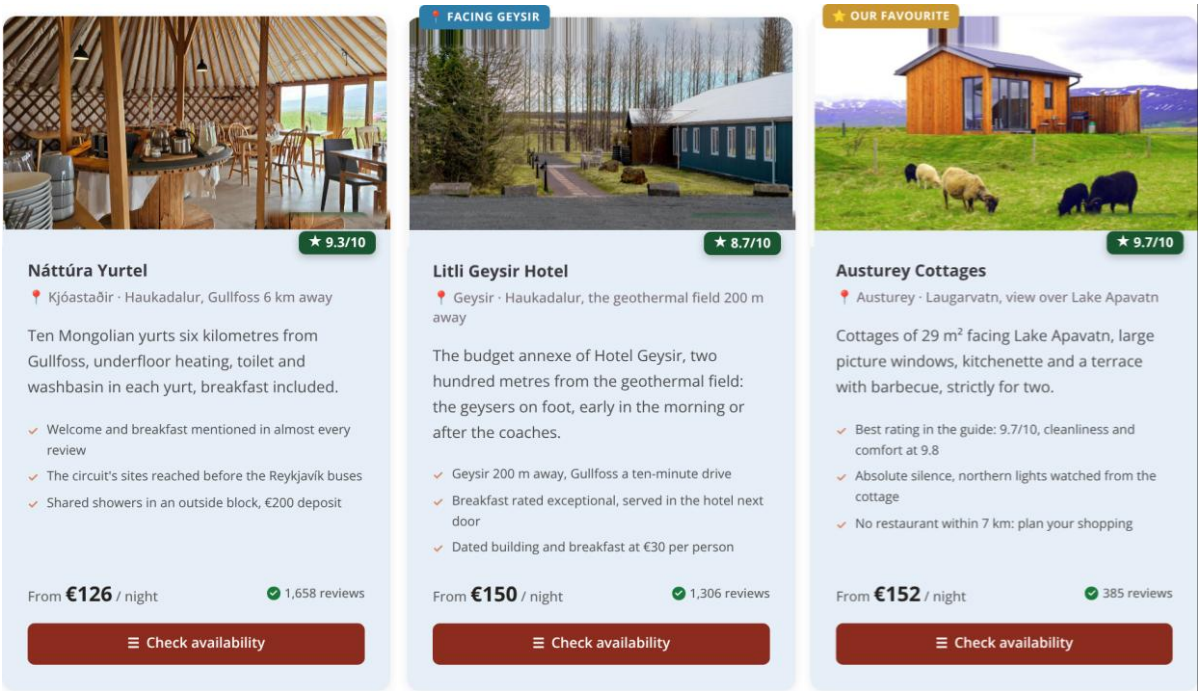
Above all, in summer there's no night, so you have all the extra time you need to head to Thingvellir after Bruarfoss.

Reykjavik – *40 min* – Thingvellir – *30 min* – Bruarfoss – *20 min* - Geysir – *10 min* – Gullfoss – *1 hr 40* – Reykjavik

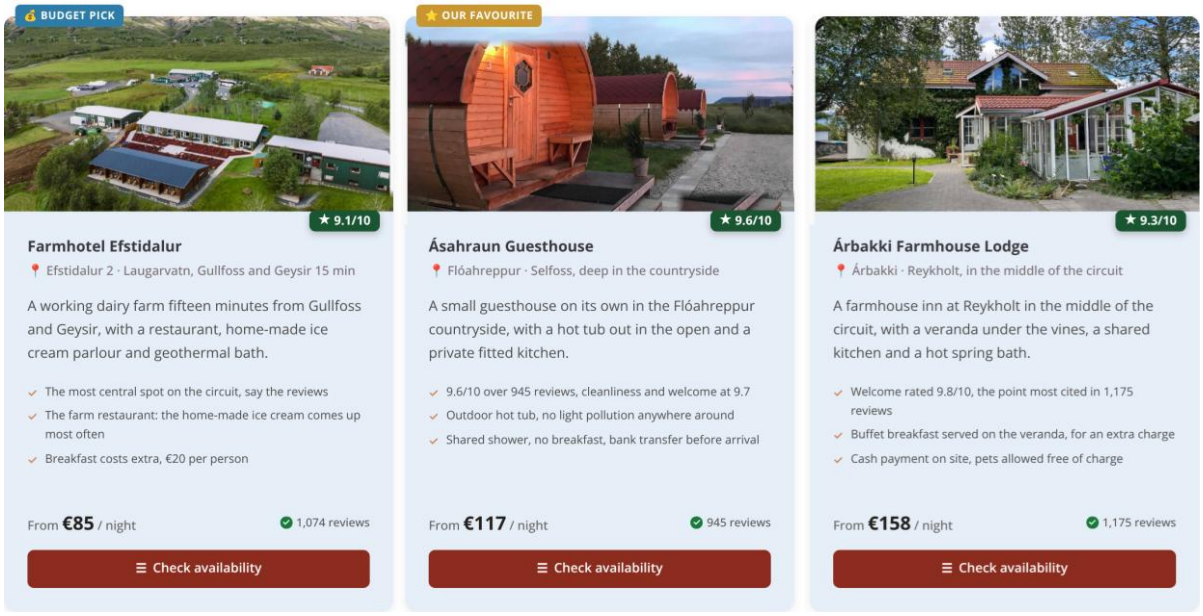


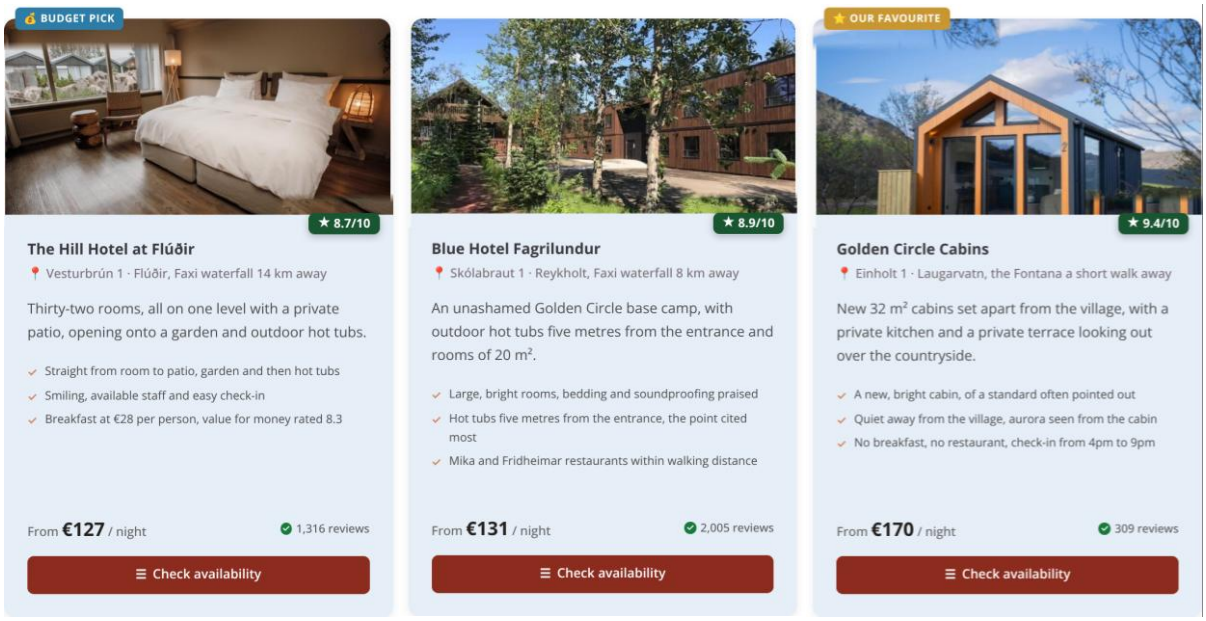
# WHERE TO STAY IN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Honestly, if you have a car and you want to take your time exploring the region, or if the Golden Circle is only the first stop on your road trip before heading off to Snaefellsnes or the South Coast, then sleeping in the area can be a good idea rather than driving back to Reykjavik.
Here are a few great options. And let me remind you that prices depend enormously on the season, that they double or even triple between low and high season. Yes, really.






**FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN THE GOLDEN CIRCLE!**

# SOUTH COAST OF ICELAND

*What you'll find in this article*

# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES ON THE SOUTH COAST

As I told you earlier, the Golden Circle is a very good appetiser for discovering Iceland. Because in a single day you get 3, 4, even 5 fairly exceptional sites. And all of that right next to Reykjavik!

So for me it's ideal for the start of your trip, to show you everything Iceland can offer you.

## *Skógafoss, Seljalandsfoss and other waterfalls*

Iceland's south coast is home to two of the country's most famous and emblematic waterfalls, known for their stunning beauty and how photogenic they are.

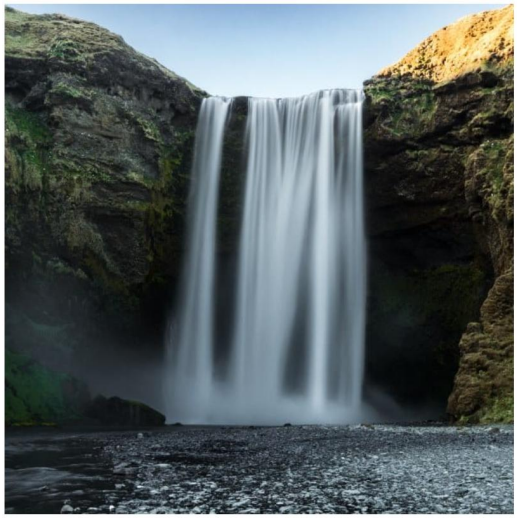
**Skógafoss** is impressive for its power and its constant flow. Very tall, it also has a staircase up the side that takes you to a stunning view from the top, where a lovely hike starts.

- Bus stop 51
- Camping: Skogar Campsite on site
- Places to stay right at the falls: *Skogar Hotel*, *Hotel Skogafoss by EJ Hotels*,

**Seljalandsfoss** stands out for its quirk: you can walk behind this magnificent waterfall. A wet but unforgettable stroll, which gives you a unique perspective.

- No bus stop nearby (there's one at Hvolsvollur, but that's 20 km away)
- Places to stay nearby: *Paradise Cave Hostel & Guesthouse*

Finally, nearby, you'll find **Gljúfrabúi**, a more intimate waterfall, tucked inside a cave. This hidden waterfall is quite simply sublime and very wet, which adds to its mysterious charm.





- The hidden Nauthúsagil waterfall, tucked away in its ravine
- The DC-3 plane wreck (yes, another one) at Eyvindarholt — careful, paid parking




**From Reykjavik: the south coast by bus, waterfalls, black beach and glacier**

★★★★★ 4.8/5 · Exceptional · 12,779 reviews · 10 h · optional pickup · guide rated 4.8/5

The cheapest way to do the south coast from Reykjavik: by bus, Seljalandsfoss, which you can walk behind, Skógafoss and its 60 metres, the snout of the Sólheimajökull glacier, the black beach of Reynisfjara and a lunch break in Vík. Hotel pickup optional.

*The guide was fantastic. The south coast tour was my favourite of the three I did. — Marie-Christine, Canada*

- The best price for the five south coast sites · 30 to 50 min at each stop
- Glacier snout seen up close, with no hike · lunch at your own cost in Vík
- ⚠ Guide in English · large coach · meals not included · fairly short stops

Free cancellation

From ~~€115~~ **€104**

Check availability




**From Reykjavik: the south coast by minibus in a small group**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 401 reviews · 10 h · pickup included · wheelchair accessible

The same unmissable spots on the south coast, but by minibus: Seljalandsfoss, Skógafoss, the black sand beach of Reynisfjara, the church at Vík and a walk all the way to the snout of the Sólheimajökull glacier, with a driver-guide who tells you about Icelandic folklore along the way. 91% of travellers give it the highest possible rating.

*A wonderful tour to get close to 2 waterfalls, a glacier and the black sand beach. The scenery kept changing, which held us captive during the drives. — Brian, United States*

- Small-group minibus, pickup included · 18 departure points in Reykjavik
- Walk to the foot of the Sólheimajökull · 15 to 20 min from the car park
- ⚠ Guide in English · meals not included, bring a picnic · from age 6

Free cancellation

From **€130**

Check availability




**From Reykjavik: Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon and Diamond Beach in a day**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 4,027 reviews · 14 h · optional pickup · from age 6

Jökulsárlón in a single day from Reykjavik: 1 hr 30 at the glacier lagoon among the icebergs and on Diamond Beach, where blocks of ice wash up on the black sand, then Vík and Seljalandsfoss on the way back. Optional cruise among the icebergs, from April to October.

*Arriving at the glacier lagoon was fantastic, with the icebergs there waiting for us. Doing the boat trip, which costs extra, is absolutely essential. — Caroline, France*

- 1 hr 30 at the glacier lagoon and Diamond Beach · lunch and dinner at your own cost on the way
- Optional cruise on the lagoon · from April to October, conditions permitting
- ⚠ Guide in English · meals not included · around 11 h of the 14 h on the bus

Free cancellation

From ~~€202~~ **€182**

Check availability

## *Vik i Myrdal and the black sand beaches*

Iceland is famous for its vast black sand beaches, a phenomenon directly linked to the island's volcanic activity. These beaches are found mainly around the volcanoes, especially on the south coast and on the Snæfellsnes peninsula.

Around Vík you'll find three of these spectacular beaches, the most famous being Reynisfjara. Why this beach in particular? Its exceptional setting sets it apart. It's lined with impressive basalt columns and caves, while out at sea you can admire the Reynisdrangar, majestic rock formations.

Careful, because of a storm the beach was damaged and access to the sea and to the basalt columns can be restricted (on top of being dangerous).

Vík's black sand beach also offers a stunning view of these rock formations. Very close by you'll find another magnificent beach: Dyrhólaey, immense and just as impressive.

Other black sand beaches are scattered around the Snæfellsnes peninsula, but we'll come back to that later.

It's worth noting that the Vík area is packed with sites to explore, so don't hesitate to spend more time there (for more detail, see the article on Vík).

- ***Activity** I loved: visiting the ice cave at Katla*
- ***Accommodation** I recommend: the Katla Hotel in Vik*
- *Everything is in the next one (**article** below), where you'll find all the info on Vik i Myrdal — go read it!*

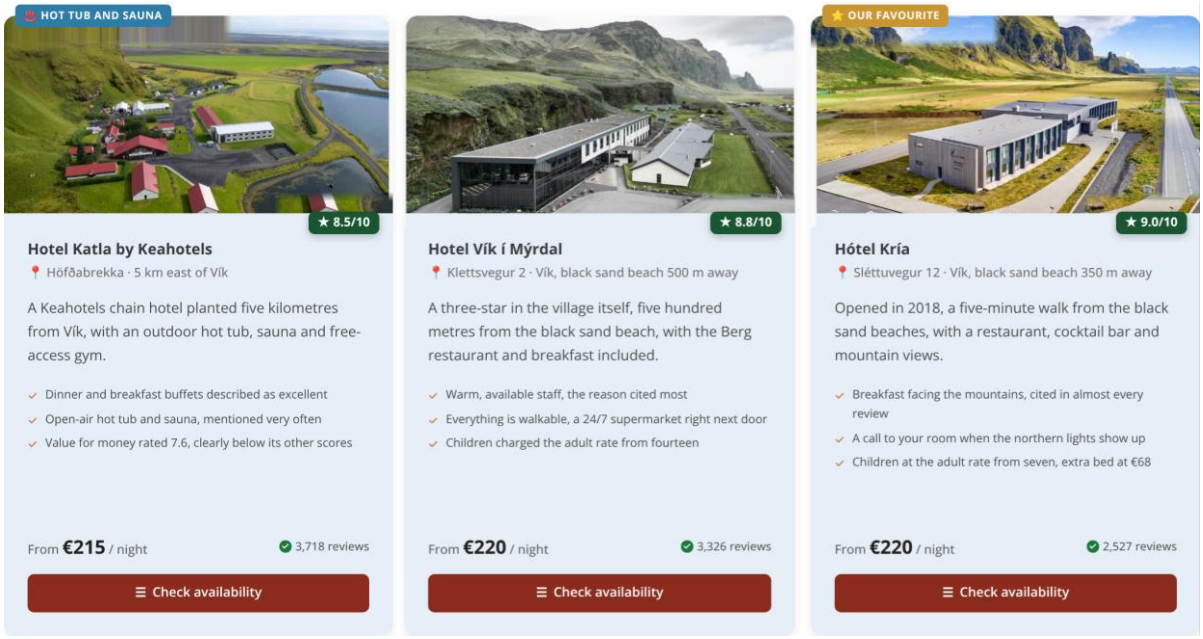


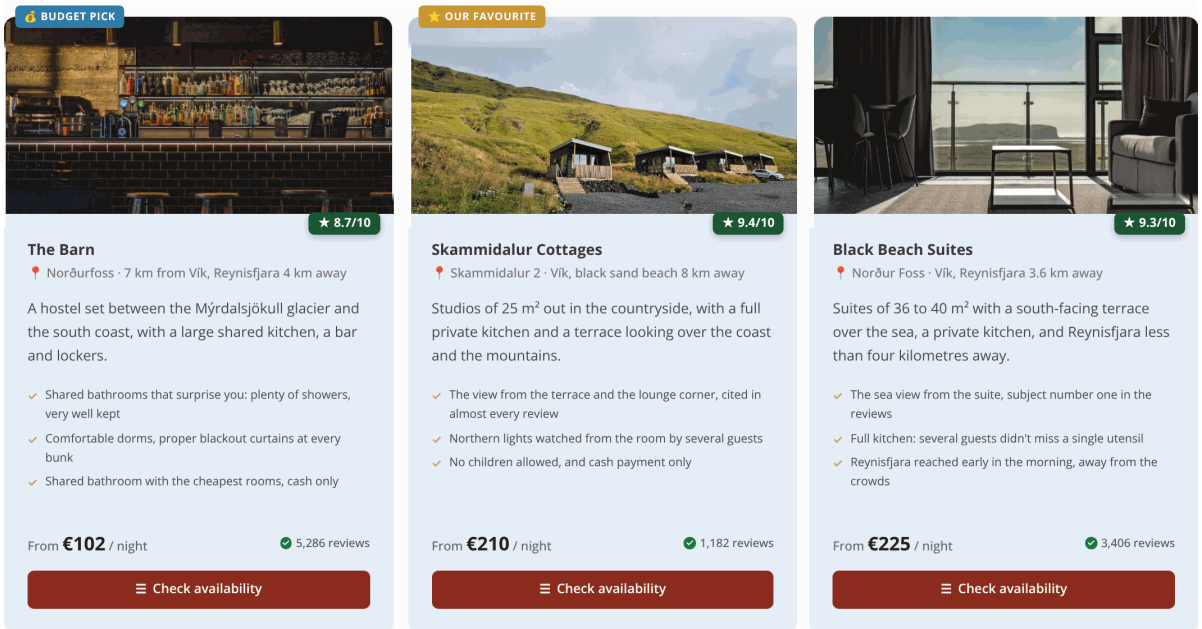


## 6 recommended places to stay in Vik i Myrdal

Vik is the perfect place to break the journey halfway along the south coast, but also to use as a base for the area. You can stay one or two nights, even more, to make the most of the region.

It's relatively expensive (especially in high season) but there's plenty of choice, and you can find good deals if you don't come at the same time as everyone else.




**FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN VIK I MYRDAL!**

## Getting to Vik and visiting the area without a car

It's super easy to get to Vik without a car because there's a bus that comes daily from Reykjavik (via Selfoss): the 51. You need to do Reykjavik (central bus station) – Selfoss, 1 hour. Then wait for the Selfoss – Höfn, which only leaves in the early afternoon and goes via Vik (about 2 hours).

Tickets and the planner with the exact timetables are on *Straeto*.

We'll see how to visit the area from Reykjavik later, but know that it's entirely possible to come to Vik without a car, stay a few days and enjoy the surroundings. The car mainly helps for places like Dyrholaey because there's no big tour leaving from Vik, but you have loads of activities, and that's great.

On the other hand, no thermal spring here or in the immediate area.

Let's get into the activities to do in and around Vik, with and without a car.

## Activities in Vik, or ones that don't need a car

In Vik there really is quite a lot to do. Even if you don't have a car.

We've already talked about the black sand beaches, the rock formations, the basalt columns that you can reach from the village.

But there are other nice things like the Lava Show, which is as big a hit in Reykjavik as in Vik, visiting an ice cave (with a short walk on the glacier), and you can also go horse riding on the beach. Not bad!






### Vík: the Katla ice cave by super jeep

★★★★½ **4.6/5 · Very highly rated** · 2,620 reviews · 3 h from Vík · 14 people max · from age 6

Leaving from Vík, a super jeep crosses the black sand plains of Mýrdalssandur to the glacier, then a short walk in crampons and helmet leads into the Katla ice cave, where blue ice is shot through with layers of volcanic ash. There is an option leaving from Reykjavik with Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss.

*The super Jeep drive is an experience in itself. The landscapes are spectacular.* — Gilles, France

- Passionate guides full of humour, who photograph everyone · plenty of stories about the Katla volcano
- Photo stops at Star Wars and Interstellar filming locations
- ⚠️ Guide in English · small cave, short time inside · value for money rated average

Free cancellation

From **€168**

Check availability




### Vík: ziplines above the Grafargil canyon and over the Hundafoss waterfall

★★★★½ **4.7/5 · Very highly rated** · only 27 reviews · 1 hr 30 · guides rated 5/5

From the Katlatrack base in Vík, 5 minutes of super jeep then a short hike into the Grafargil canyon, broken up by several ziplines of up to 240 metres, the last one flying over the Hundafoss waterfall. Safety gear and walking boots provided.

*A short walk through really pretty spots, along the sheep trails. The ziplines are great without being too scary.* — Gaillet, France

- Funny, reassuring guides, perfect for a first zipline · families with teenagers love it too
- Tricks to try mid-flight, right up to the upside-down "Spiderman" · tips handed out by the guides
- ⚠️ Guide in English · judged a bit short · 30 to 110 kg, from age 8

Free cancellation

From **€103**

Check availability




### Vík: Lava Show, real molten lava a few metres away

★★★★½ **4.7/5 · Very highly rated** · 1,262 reviews · 50 min · wheelchair accessible

In a room in Vík, real lava heated to 1,100 °C is poured out a few metres from the audience: you feel its heat, you hear it crackle as it meets the ice, and then you watch it flow and set. The show goes ahead whatever the weather, in summer as in winter.

*A really interesting and unique experience: how many times does one get the chance to come this close to real lava, molten and flowing?* — Jim, United States

- Funny, gripping presenters, happy to take questions · plenty of detail on Icelandic volcanoes
- Arrive early for a front-row seat · soup restaurant on site
- ⚠️ Show in English, printed translation provided · the lava part is judged short

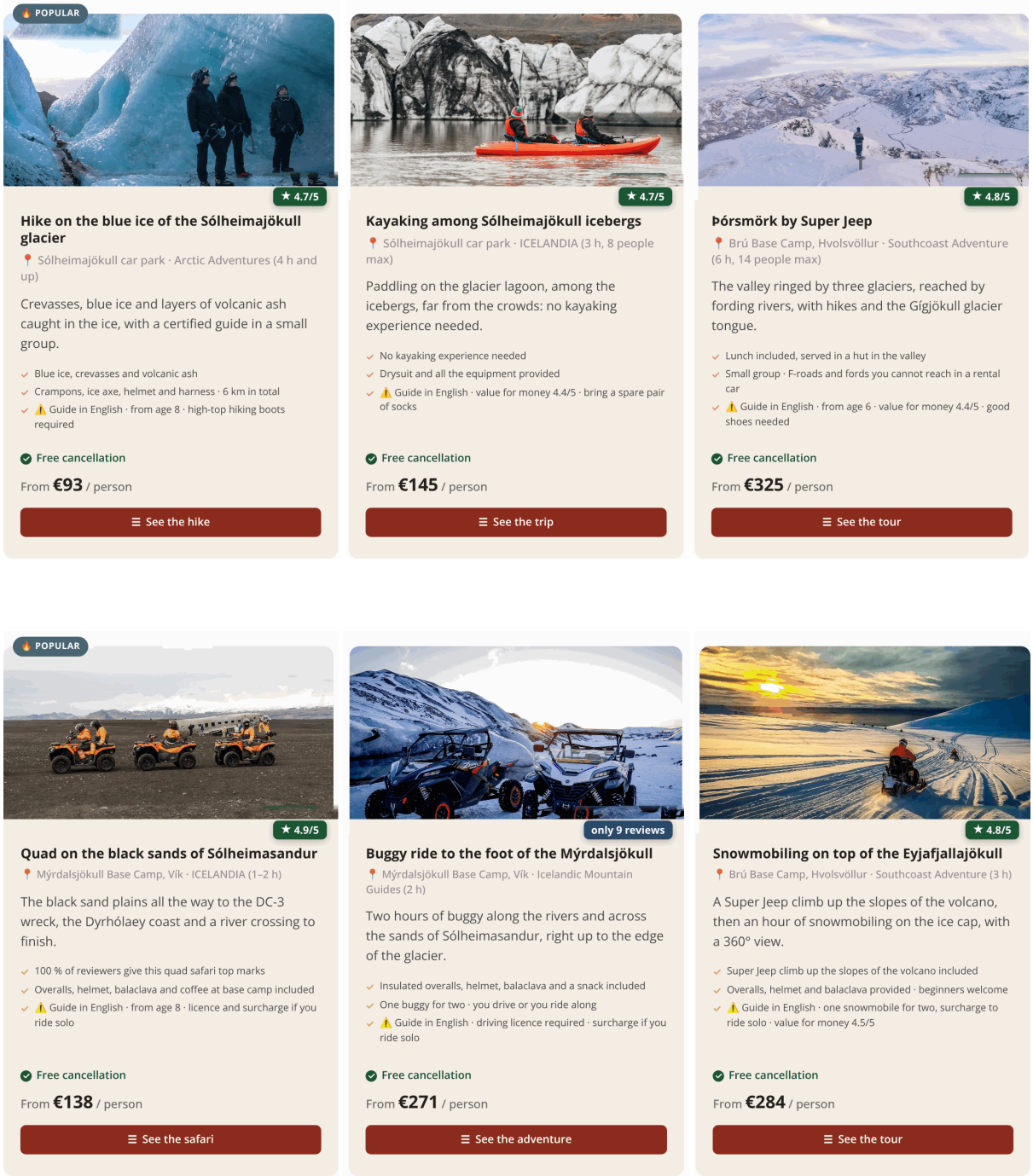
Free cancellation

From **€49**

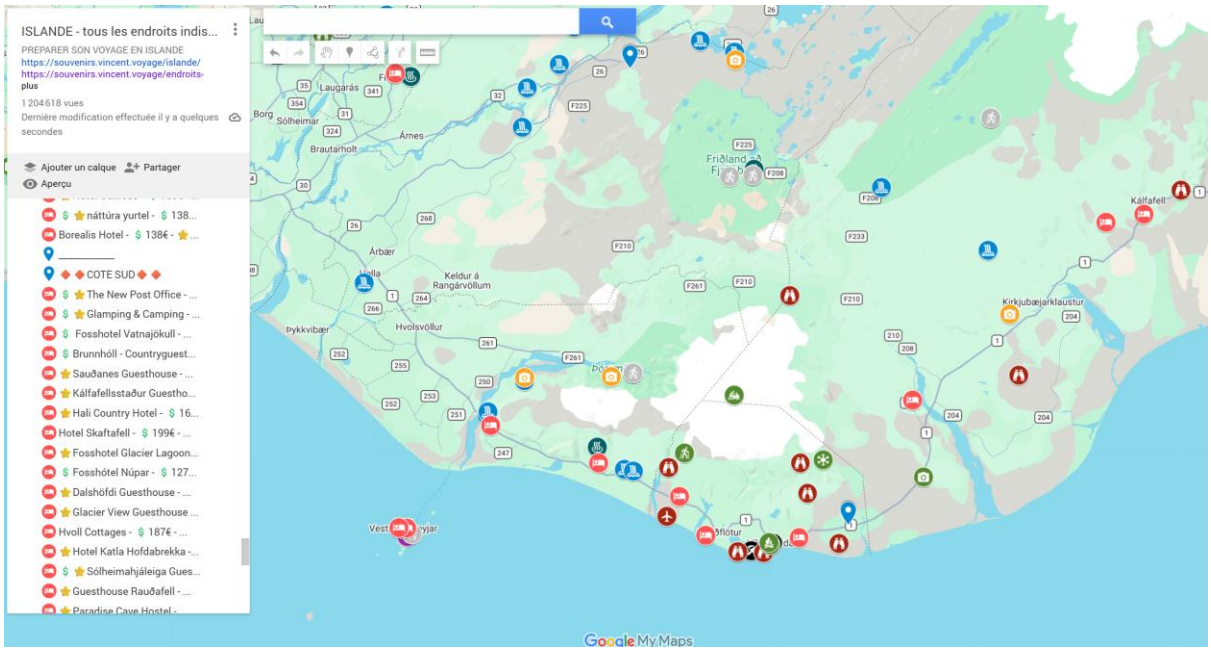
Check availability

## Activities from Vik that need a car

With a car it's much easier and you get some really fun extra activities like snowmobiling, walking on a glacier. And obviously you have all the landscapes around (like Dyrholaey, the canyons…) that we'll look at right after.



And in *the map of Iceland*, you have a really complete section on Vik i Myrdal.



## *Dyrholaey*

I'm particularly fond of this place for several reasons. On my first visit I went to watch puffins. In the right season it's one of the easiest places to spot them! Marked paths make them easy to observe.

But what fascinates me most at Dyrhólaey is the stunning view this cliff gives you. The Reynisdrangar rock formations at Vík are just as impressive and right nearby, but the view from the top of the cliff is quite simply exceptional. You look out over a black sand beach that seems to stretch to infinity, as mentioned earlier. And, oddly, it's under a threatening sky that the atmosphere is at its most captivating!

There's nothing specific to do, apart from walking around, soaking up the atmosphere, seeing the puffins when it's the season — that's what's great here, just you and nature.

Unfortunately if you're without a car, no tour offers a stop at the cliffs. You'll get to the beach, yes, but not right up to the top, and that's a real shame.





## *The Solheimajokull glacier*

Sólheimajökull is an outlet of the immense Mýrdalsjökull ice cap, under which several still-active volcanoes hide, including the famous Eyjafjallajökull and Katla, whose eruption is expected in the coming years.

Sólheimajökull is the most accessible glacier from Reykjavik, and it will probably be the first one you meet while exploring the south coast. For a first glacier experience it's really impressive and extremely photogenic. Its long tongue of ice and its lagoon dotted with black icebergs, the result of black volcanic sand mixed with ice, create a surprising and unique landscape.

Even though you can get very close to it, a guide is strongly recommended for any hike on the glacier because of the potential dangers.

Personally, I love this glacier!

- *Favourite activity: go on a **hike on the glacier***








**Sólheimajökull: guided blue ice hike near Vík**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 1,491 reviews · 4 h on site · small group guaranteed · from age 8

Meet at the Sólheimajökull car park, between Skógafoss and Vík, for a guided hike of about 6 km: approach through a mossy valley, then the ice in crampons, ice axe and helmet, between crevasses, ridges and layers of volcanic ash. Option with transport from Reykjavik and south coast stops.

*Incredible experience, a real trek on the glacier and not just a stroll. — Lorenzo, Italy*

- Guides attentive to safety and gripping on geology · some are even volcanologists
- Crevasses and sometimes a small ice cave on the way · about 1 h of approach then 1 hr 30 on the ice
- ⚠️ Guide in English · rocky, tiring approach · high-top boots required

Free cancellation

From **€93**

Check availability

## *The Fjadrargljufur canyon*

Iceland has plenty of canyons, but few are as easy to reach as this one. Right by the main road, you discover it on a pleasant 2 km hike with spectacular views the whole way.

It's not the biggest, but this canyon stands out for its beauty and how photogenic it is. If conditions allow, you can even explore the inside (well, I think it's been banned since, there's a barrier).





## *The Vestmann Islands and the puffins*

The Vestmann Islands, a few kilometres off the Icelandic coast, are a real natural and birdwatching paradise. Only Heimaey is inhabited and open to visitors, but that's plenty, because it's magnificent. About 50 years ago the island grew after a volcano suddenly erupted in the middle of the night. Although that eruption destroyed part of the village and forced the island to be evacuated, the volcano is now a very popular hiking spot. And it still smokes in places!

But what makes the Vestmann Islands really exceptional is that they're home to **the largest puffin colony**, those adorable birds. From May to August you can watch them, along with plenty of other species like gannets, in a stunning natural setting. Well, I hope you'll have more luck than me, I went and they were all out at sea. In that case my advice would be, if you have the time, to sleep there a night so you can see them leaving and coming back.

- ***Accommodation*** *I recommend: the perfectly located cabins at Camping & Glamping . But it isn't open all year, so the pods below are an excellent alternative!*



**How to get to the Vestmann Islands**

You can only get to the **Vestmann Islands by boat**.

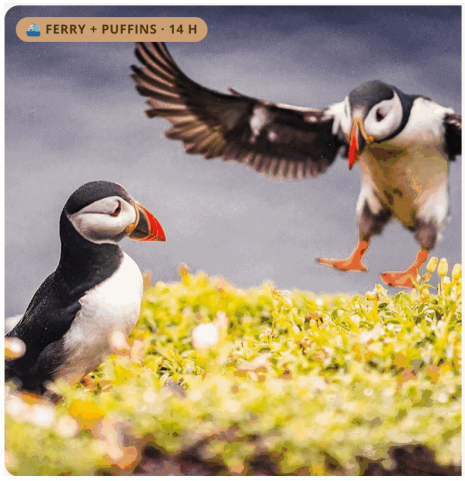
- The **boat** leaves from Landeyjahöfn, 1 hour from Vik or 2 hours from Reykjavik
  - It's the company Herjolfur that operates it
  - There are between 7 and 8 crossings a day, depending on the season
  - The price is €17 per person, €25 for the car

- But you can also **go through an agency** from Reykjavik. You'll see the puffins and discover the island's still-smoking volcanoes!
  - *Info and booking*

On site you also have the Puffling Patrol, a "rehabilitation" centre for puffins that get lost (especially the young ones) because of light pollution. I believe you can visit it.








**From Reykjavik: the Westman Islands, puffins and the Eldfell volcano in a day**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very well rated · 216 reviews · 14 h · pickup included · small group guaranteed

From Reykjavik to Landeyjahöfn, then a 30-minute ferry across to the Westman Islands: Elephant Rock, the puffin cliffs of Stórhöfði, the Eldheimar museum on the 1973 eruption and the climb up the Eldfell volcano, ferry and museum entry included. Free time in town before the ferry back.

*It was a long day, but the sites were really worth it. A perfect mix of activities, with enough time at each of the stops.* — Jayne, United States

- Enthusiastic, funny guides who know the island by heart · good lunch spots
- Puffins seen close up, sometimes whales offshore · beluga sanctuary possible as an extra
- ⚠ Guide in English · meals not included · passenger ID to be sent 4 days ahead

Free cancellation

From **€209**

Check availability

## *The abandoned village of Nuppstadur*

A plunge into the Icelandic past! These villages used to be very common in past centuries. And even up to the middle of the 20th century, some were still inhabited. But with the harshness of Icelandic life, the inhabitants preferred to move to town, into more modern housing. And Nuppstadur, which probably dates from the 16th century, became a ghost village in 2010, when its last inhabitant died.

This village is a testament to the past. You see the turf-covered houses, ideal for keeping the cold out, the pretty little church, and the superb setting with the mountains as a backdrop.

Getting there is super simple. Car only (no bus stop, no agency), it's about 15 minutes before Skaftafell coming from the west.

*Careful: the village entrance is now closed off by a gate, you can no longer walk around inside, just look at it from outside.*





## *The abandoned DC3 plane*

So no, this isn't natural or cultural heritage. But it is surprising!

In the middle of nowhere, well, in the middle of an immense black sand beach, you find the carcass of a plane that crashed here 50 years ago now. We can agree that it isn't really what you expect to find on Icelandic beaches 😄

Back then, and until not long ago, the United States handled Iceland's defence, notably with a military base in Reykjanes. Which explains the many American flights over the island.

*Careful: because the main wreck was very badly damaged by visitors, the owner added a new wreck, so there have been two of them for a little while now.*

To **get to the wreck**, there's no bus stop, so it's necessarily either by car or with an agency. There's a big car park you can't miss (look at *the map of Iceland*)

**On site** — here are your options:

- Either ***you walk***, it's not next door, 1 hour in the sand (2 hours there and back). I've done it several times, it works if the weather is good, it's nice to feel lost in this place (there is a path though, don't worry)
- Or *you* ***take the shuttle*** which has only existed for a short while and is very handy. In 15 minutes, done! you're there. Especially handy if you don't have time, if you don't want to or can't walk, or if the weather isn't great
    - *Info and booking*

The site is open 24/7 and is also popular for the northern lights (well, if the weather allows, as you can see in the photos!)

- If you want to go with **an agency from Reykjavik** because you don't have a car, there's one that offers the south coast tour including the visit to the DC3
    - *Info and booking*

Another fun option, if you're already in the area, is that you can **go there by quad bike**. On those beaches it must be a thrill and a half (and a lot of black sand in your hair!)

    - *Info and booking*





## *Skaftafell park*

Skaftafell is part of the vast Vatnajökull national park, which covers a sixth of Iceland. This magnificent ice cap is home to some of the most jaw-dropping landscapes in the country (we'll come back to it a bit later).

Within this park, the hike to the **Svartifoss** waterfall is a must. This waterfall stands out for its impressive basalt columns. The trail, which anyone can manage, also takes you past an abandoned village and breathtaking panoramas. You'll find turf-covered houses at the end of the hike too. And the landscapes are pretty insane, really.

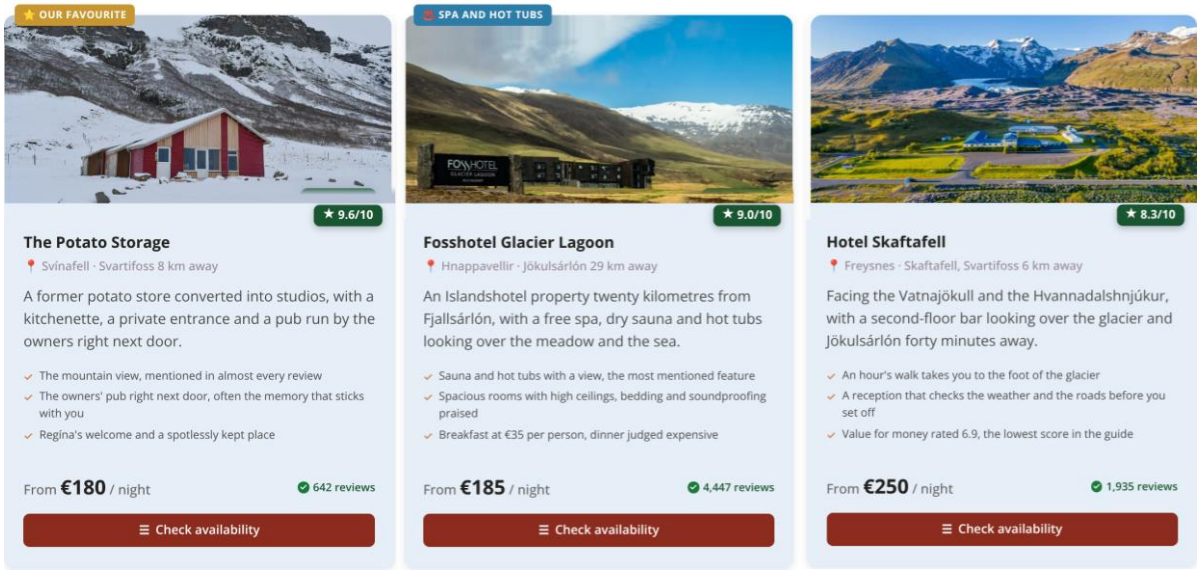
- *There's a **bus** stop, the 51*





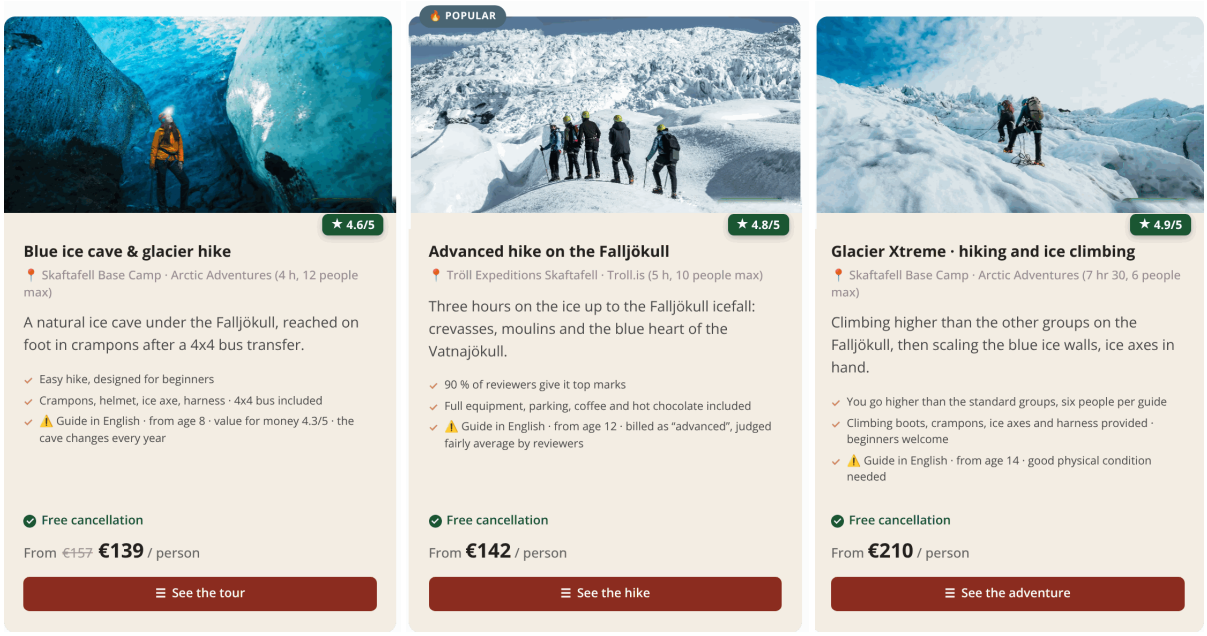
Staying right next to Skaftafell park isn't easy. There's no accommodation immediately beside it, you have to go along the Hof road a few kilometres south, where there are **some lovely places to stay** like:

- *Skaftafell* Hotel
- *The Potato Storage* (yes really, a former potato shed 😄)
- *Fosshotel Glacier* Lagoon, between the glaciers and the lagoons




It's also the starting point for **plenty of activities** such as:

- *Hiking on a glacier*
- *Visiting an ice cave*
- *Ice climbing*



## *The Svinafellsjokull and Skaftafellsjokull glaciers*

In the Skaftafell area, two majestic, impressive glaciers stand side by side and put on quite a show. There are other glaciers around, but these two are the most accessible.

Skaftafellsjökull can be reached directly from the main Skaftafell car park, while Svínfellsjökull is a little further on.

One of the big advantages of these glaciers is how easy they are to reach. You can walk close by and admire the icebergs floating in the lagoons next to them.

Choosing between the two is impossible, they're both so magnificent. Which is why I recommend visiting both!

Finally, Svínafellsjökull is often the starting point for glacier hikes, a really rewarding experience

- ***Activities** I loved: a hike on the glacier, or visiting an ice cave!*
- ***Accommodation** I recommend: the superb Fosshotel Glacier Lagoon*








**Skaftafell: the Falljökull glacier and a blue ice cave, leaving from Hof**

★★★★½ 4.5/5 · Very highly rated · 1,986 reviews · 4 h · 12 people max · from age 8

From the Tröll base at Hof, near Skaftafell, a short transfer then 20 minutes of walking lead onto the Falljökull glacier: about 1 hr 30 in crampons between crevasses and moulins, with a visit inside a natural blue ice cave. Hot drinks offered before you leave and when you get back.

*The hike was tiring, but all the same it was perfectly doable, even with our average physical condition and our age of more than 55 years. — Robert, Netherlands*

- Energetic, clear guides, very attentive to safety · glacier water to taste along the way
- Take the first 9am slot to avoid the crowds · the first group often has the glacier to itself
- ⚠ Guide in English · cave often small, nothing like the photos · price judged high

Free cancellation

From **€140**

Check availability

## *The Jokulsarlon lagoon and Diamond Beach*

After the Blue Lagoon, Jökulsárlón is probably one of the most famous sites in Iceland. This vast glacier lagoon is dotted with hundreds of icebergs that drift slowly towards the sea and finally wash up on Diamond Beach, the black sand beach just behind. In the background, the majestic Vatnajökull glacier dominates the landscape.

It's an unmissable place, particularly magnificent at sunset. You can also watch seals lounging on the ice or playing in the water.

To round off the experience, a boat trip on the lagoon can be fun!

- *There's a **bus** stop, the 51. Trouble is, it only comes once a day, so if you get off there you can't leave again, and there's no campsite or hotel within walking distance.*
- ***Activity** I loved: watching the sunset, but also a kayak tour*
- ***Accommodation** I recommend: the farm rooms at Skyrhusid, right next to the lagoon*










**Jökulsárlón: kayaking between the icebergs of the glacier lagoon**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 530 reviews · 1 hr 30 · double kayaks · guide rated 4.8/5

From the Jökulsárlón car park, 1 hr 30 in a double kayak on the glacier lagoon, between the icebergs calved off the Breiðamerkurjökull, with a two-piece drysuit and all the gear provided. Arrive 20 minutes early to get kitted out.

*The natural silence of the icebergs, the mischief of the seals playing hide-and-seek with us. — Guillaume, Belgium*

- Patient, reassuring guides, even for a first kayak · energy bars handed out on the way back
- Calmer and closer to the ice than the lagoon boats · trip rescheduled if the wind makes it necessary
- ⚠ Guide in English · from age 14, must be able to swim · brisk pace, few photo stops

Free cancellation

From **€138**

Check availability

But you have other activities to do around Jokulsarlon. Obviously, if you're there in the right season and the weather plays along, you can watch the northern lights. I'll admit I've never had good enough weather for that 😄

Otherwise, still in the water activities, you can take **an amphibious boat tour**, it's fun and not too expensive!




Jokulsarlon is also the **starting point** for activities we talked about just above, like:

- Going to see an ice cave
- Doing a hike on the glacier





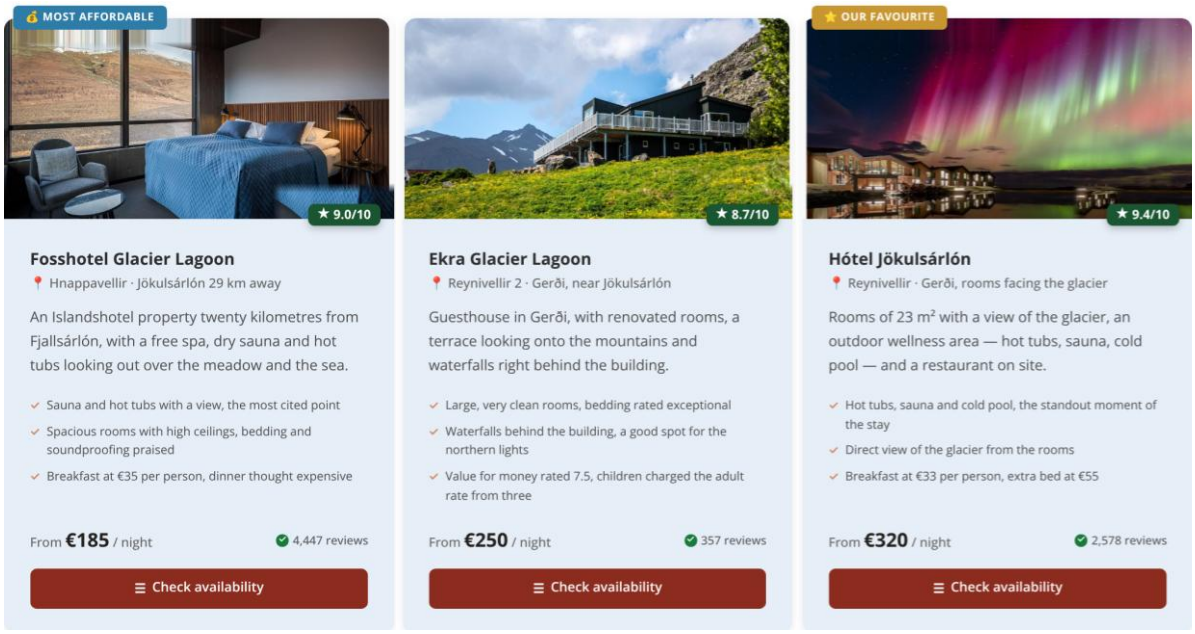

### Visiting Jokulsarlon from Reykjavik

Not all the tours leaving Reykjavik that visit the south coast go to Jokulsarlon, because it's far. It's a very long day. But some do! And honestly, I'd say that if you don't have a car, and if you don't mind a (mini)bus, then yes, do it, because this part of Iceland is really nice.




### Sleeping near Jokulsarlon

You can go to Höfn (which is what I usually do because I carry on east), but that's a bit of a trek. Luckily there are some good little hotels right next to the lagoon.



## *The Fjallsarlon lagoon*

Fjallsarlon is another glacier lagoon right next to Jokulsarlon. There are no big icebergs like at its neighbour, but there are also far fewer people. It's an easy and very enjoyable visit! I really recommend dropping by 🙂

*If you're without a car, there's no bus stop nearby. And the tours don't stop there.*

I really like this place. I find you have a lot of flexibility to wander around next to it, more than at Jokulsarlon where the site is protected.

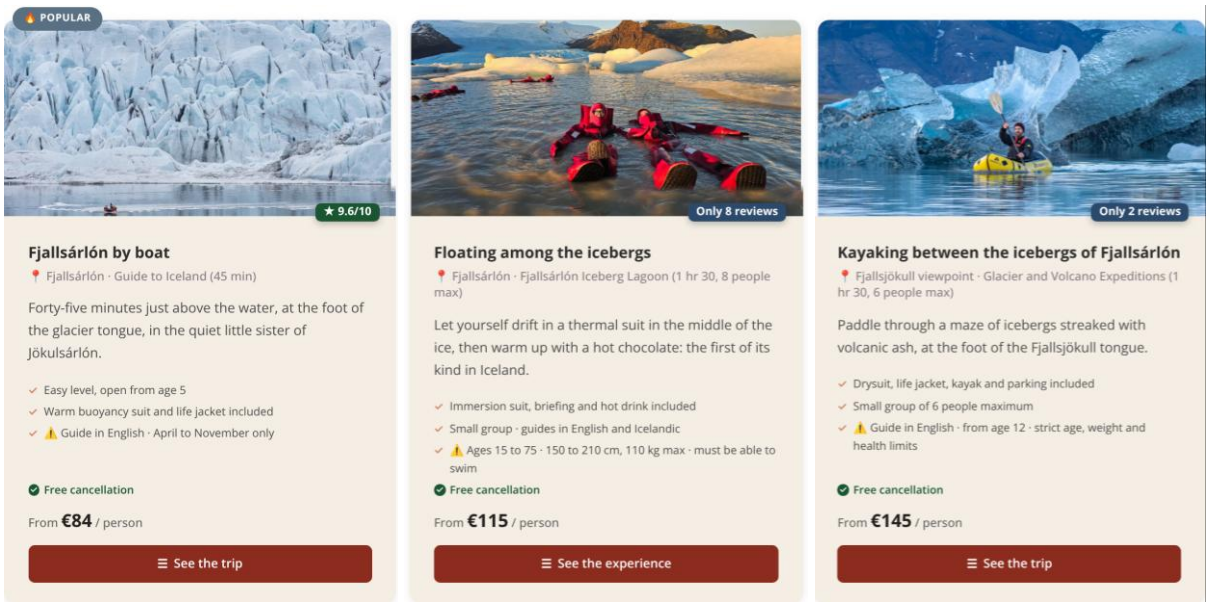
As at Jokulsarlon, you can take a little boat trip on the lagoon, among the icebergs. And even better! Now you can also go **walking on the glacier**. And **you get there by boat** so you combine the two activities, it's really great. And far fewer people, I'll say it again.







They've also started developing more activities, including some fairly original ones like floating in the lagoon in a buoyancy suit.

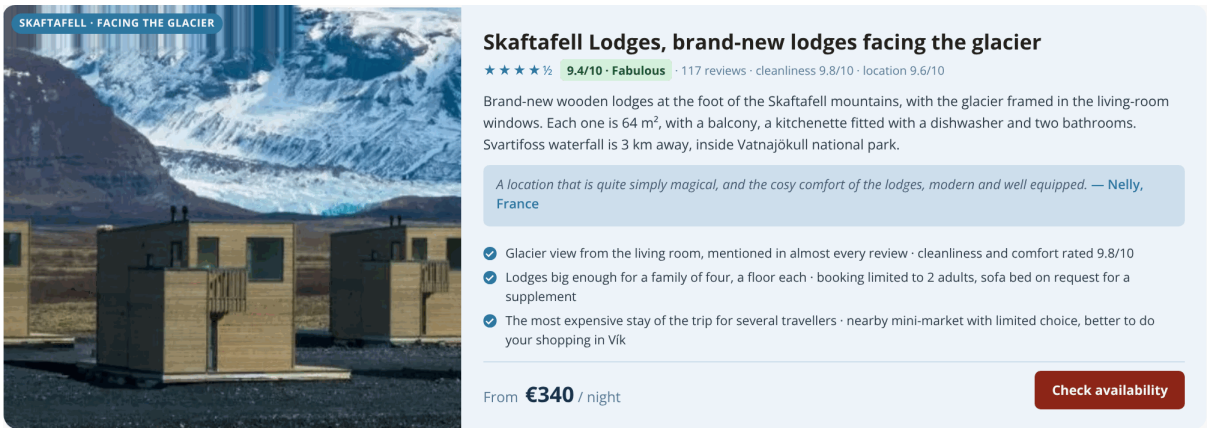


## *The Mulagljufur canyon*

Múlagljúfur is one of those well-kept secrets Iceland has in abundance. Long overlooked, this canyon has grown in popularity in recent years and is now easier to reach. The hike to explore it is relatively easy and gives you stunning views, including a spectacular waterfall at the far end. Be careful, though, if it rained before your visit, which happens a lot in Iceland.

One thing is certain: this hike will be one of the most memorable of your stay in Iceland!

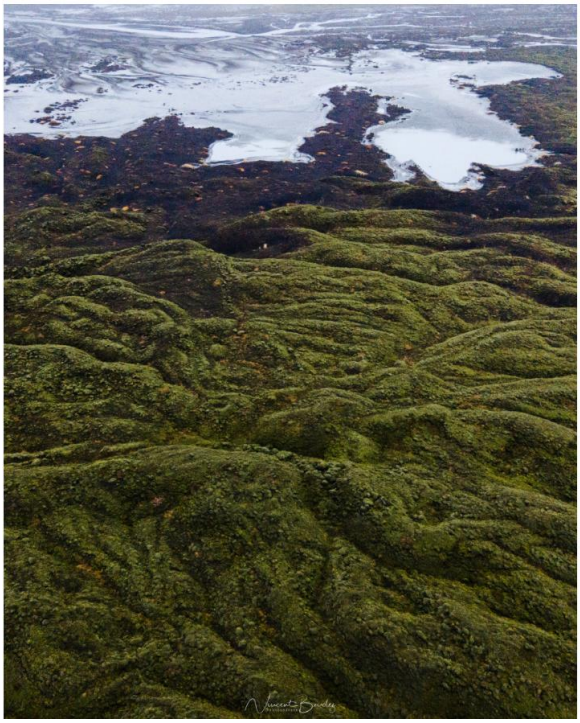


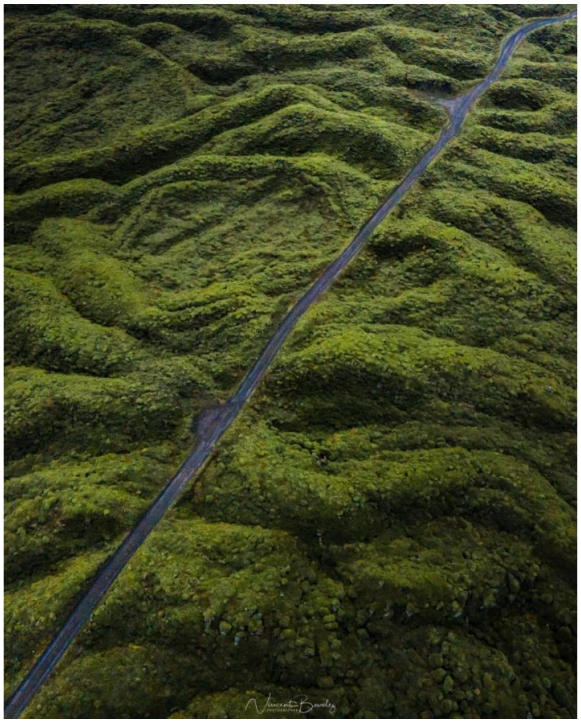


## *The Eldhraun lava fields*

Here you'd think you were on another planet. The landscape is dominated by lava fields as far as the eye can see, but not just any lava fields: they're covered in a unique green moss, endemic to Iceland. The name of this place, which means "fire lava desert", refers to the second largest lava flow since 1300. Impressive, isn't it? More precisely, this lava field is the result of the Laki eruption in 1783, which lasted several years and disrupted harvests to the point of causing famines in Europe, indirectly contributing to the French Revolution. So part of the country's history was written here.

In the Geopark, several hiking trails let you see how nature takes back control in this apocalyptic setting





## *The Vestrahorn*

Vestrahorn is one of the most emblematic sites in Iceland, an iconic mountain much loved by photographers and tourists for its unique character and how easy it is to reach.

What makes Vestrahorn so fascinating is that it gives you a different atmosphere on every visit, depending on the weather and the time of day. The weather there is often fickle and windy, but that makes it an ideal spot for watching the northern lights. And the little black sand dunes in front of the mountain add an extra touch of beauty.

It's a must, and I guarantee you'll want to come back again and again!

Vestrahorn can be visited all year round. It's next to a Viking village, a set built for a film. I find it pretty interesting, it's worth a visit.

- ***Activity** I loved: a perfect place for the northern lights… if the weather allows!*
- ***Accommodation** I recommend: the rooms on the horse farm Dynjandi Guesthouse*
    - *Otherwise right next door you have the Viking Café which has opened some very decent rooms. On the other hand if it's for your campervan, that leaves something to be desired, based on the feedback I've had.*
- ***Entry** by car costs: 1,000 ISK, paid either at the café or at the terminal by the gate. If you ever want to come several times, especially several nights, you can ask at the café whether there are discounts for multiple entries. Normally yes.*
    - *If you go in **on foot**, it's free, but you have to walk a bit.*
- *No bus goes to Vestrahorn. There's a stop at Höfn, the village next door, but after that it's still 15 km on foot. Or hitchhiking.*





# WHERE TO STAY ON THE SOUTH COAST

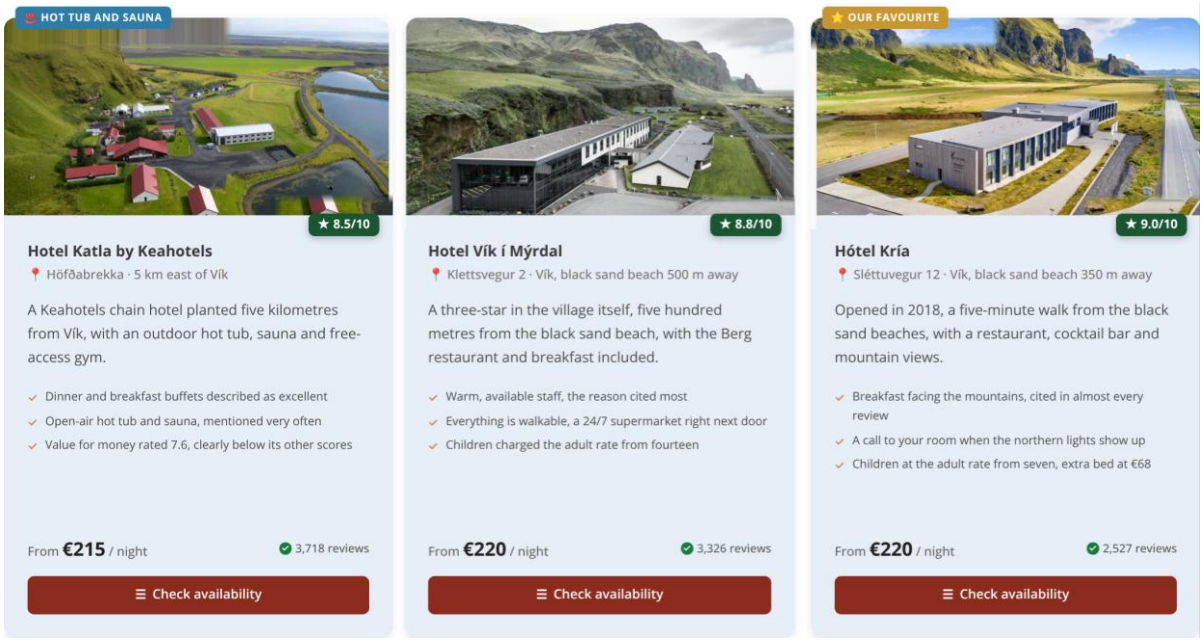
The south coast is big, very big. Depending on how long you take, the ideal thing is to stop somewhere and explore around it for two days. And for that, Vík í Mýrdal is the perfect base. Well placed almost halfway along the south coast, it's very handy for visiting the waterfalls, the canyons, some of the glaciers…

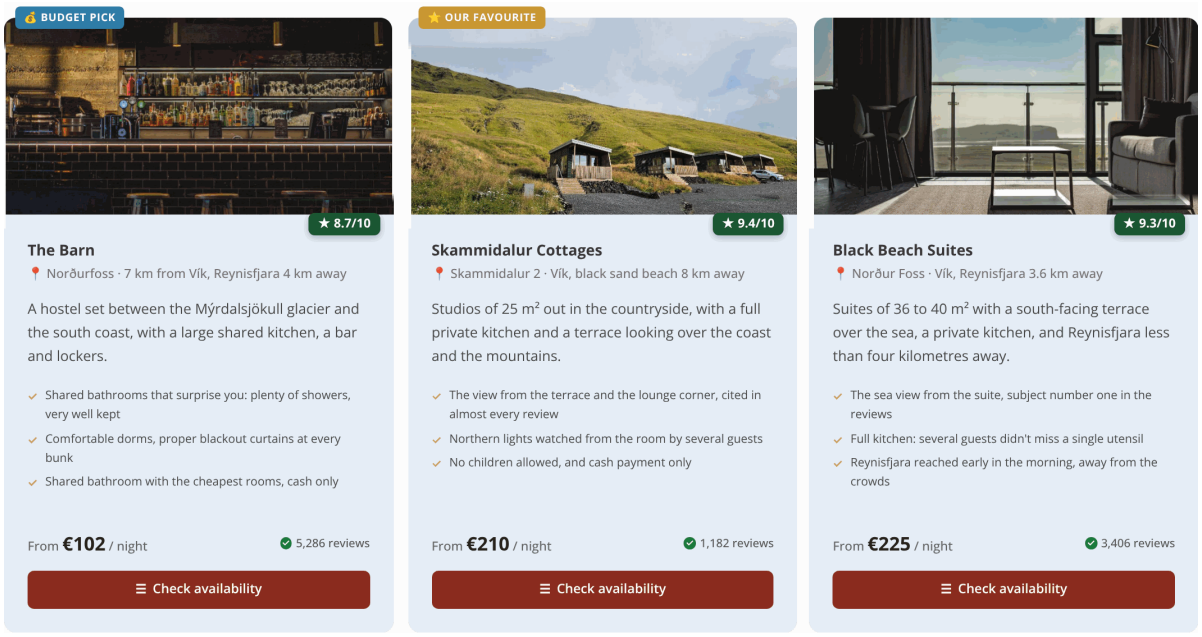
Then, because it really is huge, you'll have to stop further on to enjoy the sites that are far from Vík, like Skaftafell, Jökulsárlón or Vestrahorn. And that's not bad at all, there are several interesting options there too.

So 3 nights on the south coast, honestly that's about right! On the other hand, since it's the most touristy region in the country and there aren't a huge number of options, you have to book ahead. Otherwise prices go through the roof (well, they go through the roof anyway in high season!)

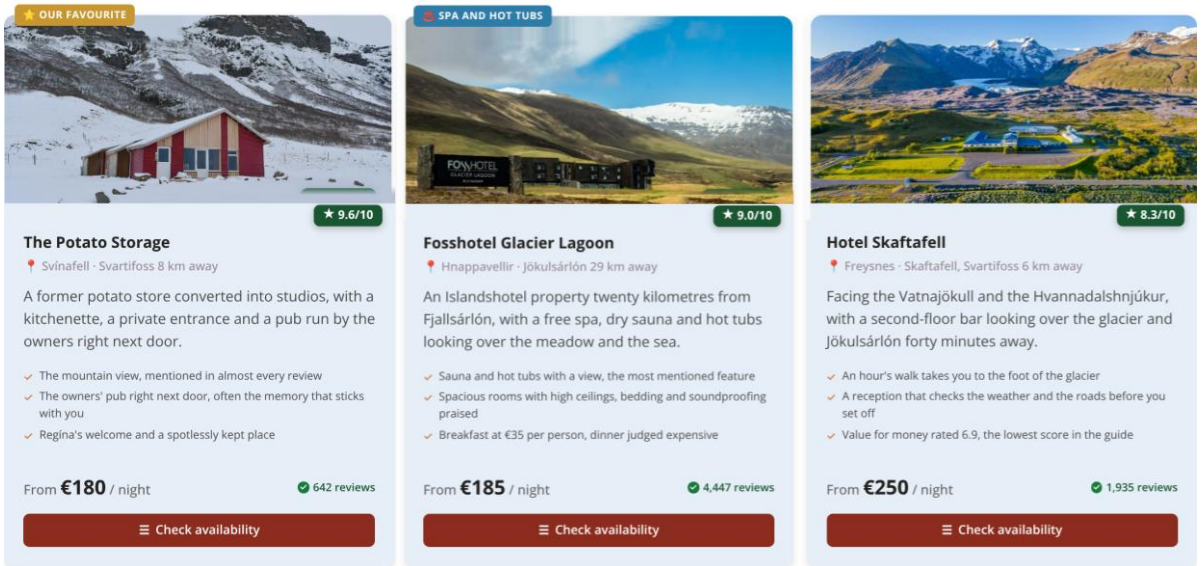
*Here's a recap of the different places to stay we talked about earlier in this (very long) section on Iceland's south coast.*

## *6 recommended places to stay around Vík í Mýrdal*

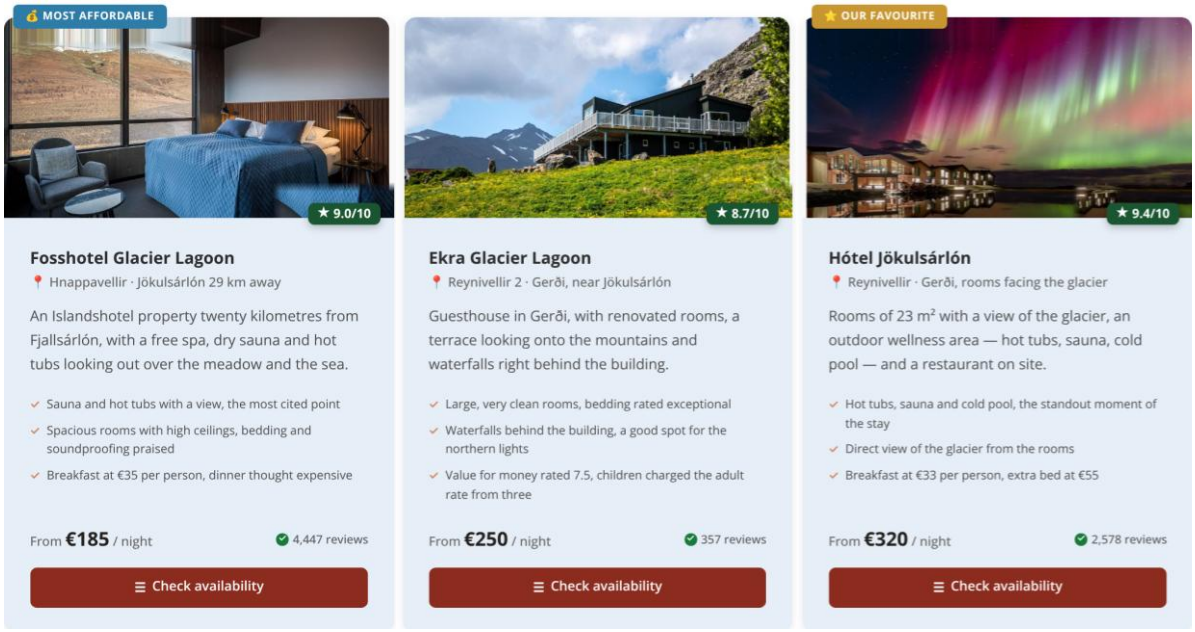





## *3 recommended places to stay around Skaftafell*



## *3 recommended places to stay near Jökulsárlón*




## *3 recommended places to stay near Höfn and Vestrahorn*



# ALL THE ACTIVITIES ON ICELAND'S SOUTH COAST

Ice cave visits, glacier hikes, a boat trip on the Jökulsárlón lagoon — here are a few examples of activities you can do all along Iceland's south coast

## *Hiking on a glacier and ice climbing*



★ 4.8/5

**Tröll · Falljökull, advanced level**

📍 Skaftafell · Tröll Expeditions (5 h)

A hike rated advanced: three hours on the Falljökull icefall, in a group of ten maximum with a certified guide.

- ⚠️ Advanced level: 3 h on the ice, good fitness required
- Small group of 10 max + helmet, harness, crampons and ice axes
- ⚠️ Guide in English · from age 12, no pickup

Free cancellation

From **€142** / person

See the hike



★ 4.6/5

**Arctic Adventures · blue ice cave**

📍 Skaftafell · Arctic Adventures (4 h)

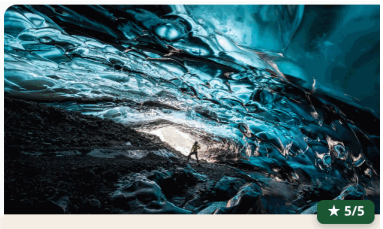
A hike on Falljökull with entry into a blue ice cave, setting off from the Skaftafell base camp.

- 4x4 bus to the foot of the glacier + group of 12 max
- The most accessible of the three: from age 8, only 4 h
- ⚠️ Several reviews find the cave small and dark

Free cancellation

From **€157** / person

See the tour



★ 5/5

**Ice Walkers · a crowd-free ice cave**

📍 Jökulsárlón · Ice Walkers Tours (6 h)

The only one rated five out of five: 4x4 up to a remote part of the glacier, for caves the other groups never reach.

- Every single reviewer gives it the top score, without exception
- 3 h to 3 h 30 on the glacier + equipment and winter clothing
- ⚠️ 8 km of walking with climbs · good physical condition

Free cancellation

From **€275** / person

See the tour



GLACIER · NEAR VÍK

**Sólheimajökull: guided blue ice hike near Vík**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 1,491 reviews · 4 h on site · small group guaranteed · from age 8

Meet at the Sólheimajökull car park, between Skógafoss and Vík, for a guided hike of about 6 km: approach through a mossy valley, then the ice in crampons, ice axe and helmet, between crevasses, ridges and layers of volcanic ash. Option with transport from Reykjavik and south coast stops.

*Incredible experience, a real trek on the glacier and not just a stroll. — Lorenzo, Italy*

- Guides attentive to safety and gripping on geology · some are even volcanologists
- Crevasses and sometimes a small ice cave on the way · about 1 h of approach then 1 hr 30 on the ice
- ⚠️ Guide in English · rocky, tiring approach · high-top boots required

Free cancellation

From **€93**

Check availability

# *Visiting an ice cave*




**Vík: the Katla ice cave by super-jeep**

★★★★½ **4.6/5 · Very highly rated** · 2,605 reviews · 3 h from Vík · 14 people max · guide rated 4.8/5

Setting off from Vík, a super-jeep crosses the black sand plains of Mýrdalssandur up to the glacier, then a short walk in crampons leads to the Katla ice cave, where blue ice mixes with layers of volcanic ash. There is an option leaving from Reykjavik with Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss.

*The super jeep ride, the route to reach the ice cave and the cave itself make this activity something special.* — Stéphanie, France

- Super-jeep from Vík · 14 participants maximum · around 40 min of track on the way out
- Crampons and helmet provided · from age 6 · cheaper slots at 12:00 and 15:00
- ⚠️ Guide in English · the cave varies with the melt · meals not included

Free cancellation

From **€168**

Check availability




**Skaftafell: a hike on Vatnajökull and a blue ice cave**

★★★★½ **4.6/5 · Very highly rated** · 860 reviews · 4 h · 12 people max per guide · from age 8 · guide rated 4.9/5

From the Skaftafell base camp, a 4x4 bus takes you to the foot of Falljökull, a tongue of the Vatnajökull, for around 2 hr 30 of hiking in crampons among ridges, crevasses and moulins, with a stop inside a natural ice cave. Open to beginners, with no great physical fitness needed.

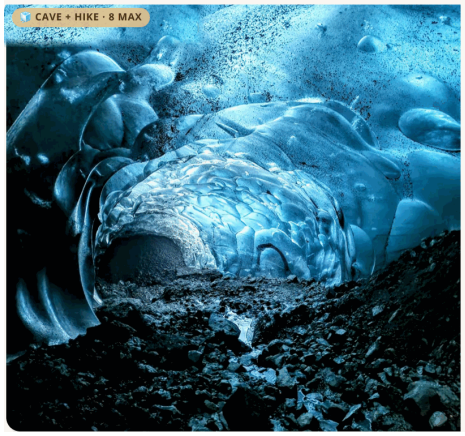
*The gear is provided and well explained, we felt completely safe. Walking on the glacier is incredible. The view sublime.* — Lucile, France

- Small group of 12 maximum per guide · 4x4 bus to the foot of the glacier
- Crampons, ice axe, helmet and harness provided · hiking boots to rent on site
- ⚠️ Guide in English · the cave is often small, the hike is still the high point

Free cancellation

From ~~€157~~ **€139**

Check availability




**Jökulsárlón: a blue ice cave and a hike on the Vatnajökull glacier in a small group**

★★★★★ **4.9/5 · Exceptional** · 73 reviews · 5 to 6 h · departs Jökulsárlón · from age 14 · guide rated 4.9/5

Setting off from Jökulsárlón, 30 min of jeep then a real hike of 1 h to 1 hr 30 on Vatnajökull up to a blue ice cave, explored in a small group of 8 with a local guide who leaves time for photos. A written information sheet is provided.

*The ice cave was impressive, the shades of blue were magnificent. We even visited a superb crevasse at the end.* — Simon, France

- Small group of 8 maximum · a local Vatnajökull guide · crampons, helmet, harness and ice axe provided
- A real glacier hike of 1 h to 1 hr 30 each way · moderate to difficult level
- ⚠️ Guide in English · from age 14 · good physical fitness required

Free cancellation

From **€216**

Check availability

## *Seeing puffins on Iceland's south coast*

You're going to fall for them! They're the cutest birds, and handily enough, the world's largest colonies are in Iceland!

These little clowns take over the whole island for several months a year, **from late April to late August**.

You'll find them on the south coast in the following spots:

- On the **south coast**, on the cliffs of **Dyrhólaey**
  Free entry, you just have to follow the marked path and watch your step

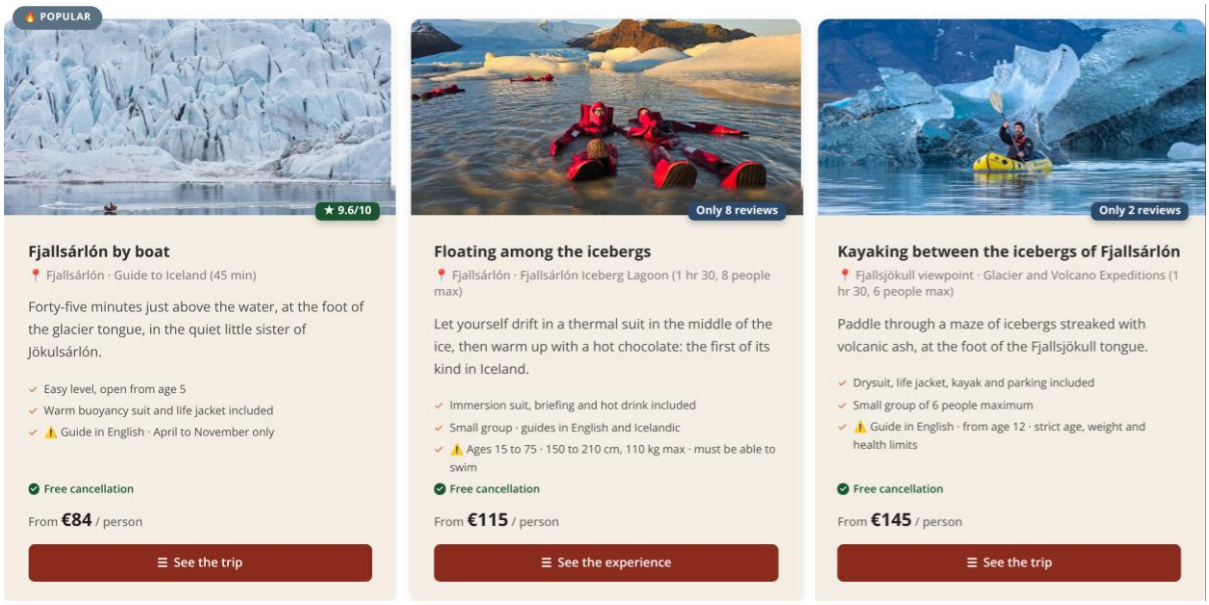
- At **Ingólfshöfði Cape**, you cross a black sand beach by tractor, and it's a strange experience! That's where I saw the most of them, because the weather was bad and puffins head out to sea less when it's grim. And honestly, the black sand beach by tractor is really something 😀 It's impossible to go on your own, you have to book through the operator (who owns the cape)
  - *Info and booking*

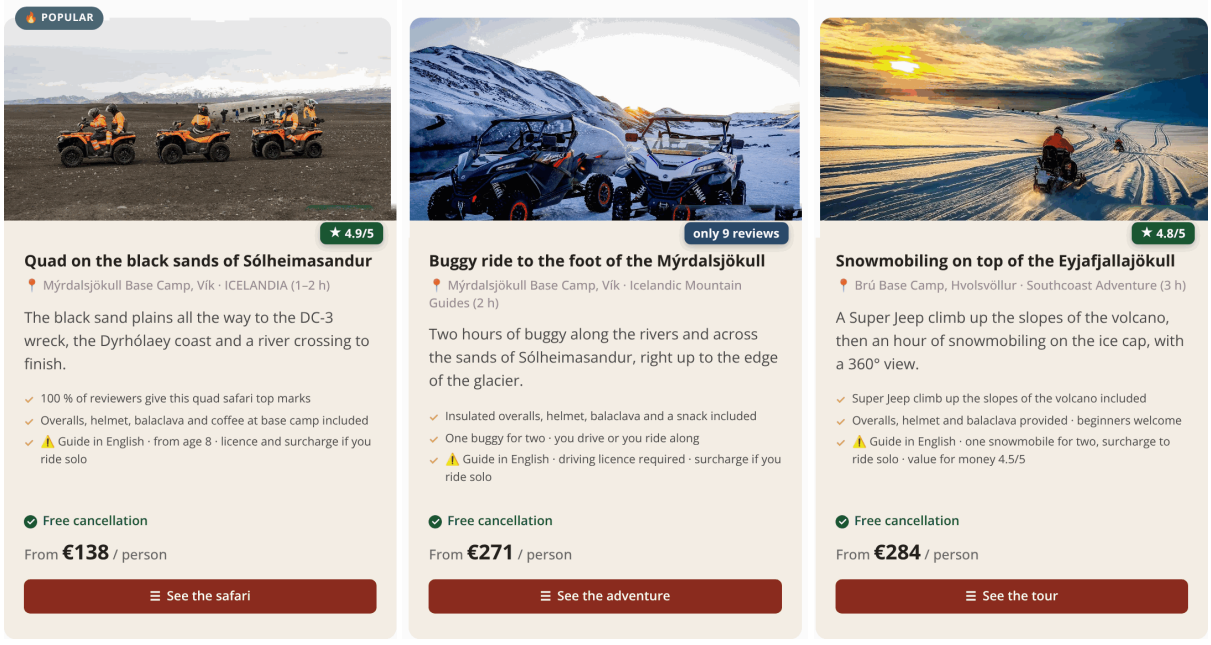
- The world's biggest colony is on the **Westman Islands**. There are several places, notably Stórhöfði. Otherwise a boat trip from Vestmannaeyjar is also a very good idea!
  - **If you don't have a car**, then you can visit the Westman Islands and the puffin colonies from Reykjavík with an agency:
    - *Info and booking*





# *The other fun activities*






### Vík: Lava Show, real molten lava a few metres away

★★★★½ **4.7/5 · Very highly rated** · 1,262 reviews · 50 min · wheelchair accessible

In a room in Vík, real lava heated to 1,100 °C is poured out a few metres from the audience: you feel its heat, you hear it crackle as it meets the ice, and then you watch it flow and set. The show goes ahead whatever the weather, in summer as in winter.

*A really interesting and unique experience: how many times does one get the chance to come this close to real lava, molten and flowing? — Jim, United States*

- Funny, gripping presenters, happy to take questions · plenty of detail on Icelandic volcanoes
- Arrive early for a front-row seat · soup restaurant on site
- ⚠️ Show in English, printed translation provided · the lava part is judged short

Free cancellation

From **€49**

Check availability




### Vík: Icelandic horse ride on the black sand beach

★★★★★ **4.8/5 · Exceptional** · 573 reviews · 1 h · 10 people max · from age 10 · 94% recommend

An hour on Icelandic horses from the Vík stables down to the black sand beach of Víkurfjara, facing the Reynisdrangar sea stacks, at a calm pace built for beginners, helmet provided. Meet at the stables 15 minutes before departure.

*It was one of my very first times on a horse and I was a bit nervous. The staff were incredible and put me completely at ease. — Shaina, Viator traveller*

- Gentle, well-cared-for horses, matched to each rider's level · every horse has its own personality card on the stall
- Icelandic tölt to try on the way back, no obligation · photos taken by the guides on the beach
- ⚠️ Guide in English · too gentle for experienced riders · 100 kg max

Free cancellation

From **€110**

Check availability

This guide is free and carries no advertising. If it has been useful to you in preparing your holiday, you can support free content on Buy Me a Coffee.

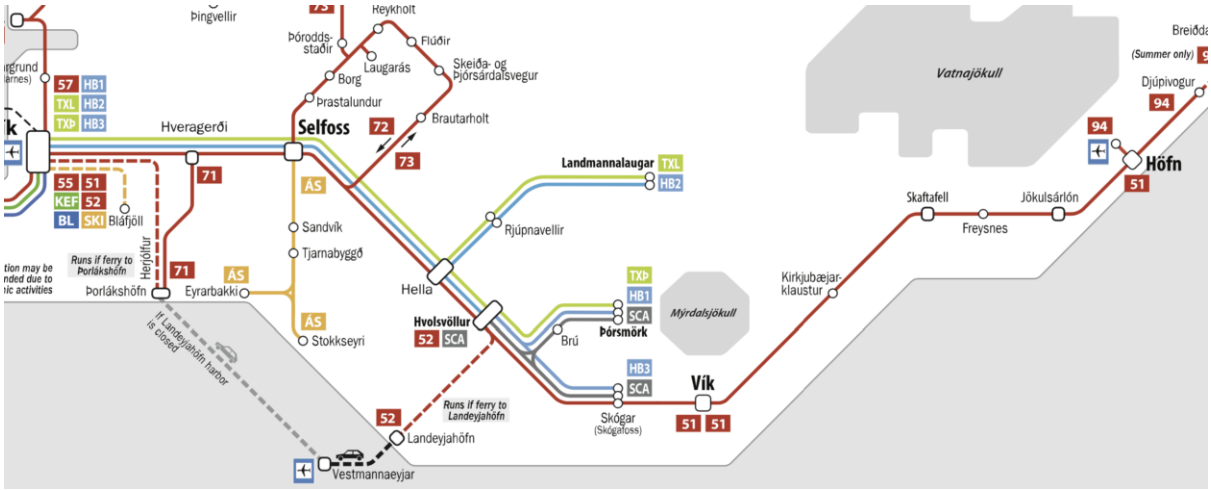
Buy a coffee

# PRACTICAL INFO ON ICELAND'S SOUTH COAST

## *How to get around this region*

The car, obviously. It's really simple: one main road, and almost all the sites are along it. No need for a 4x4, the road is well maintained. Plus a few small alternative roads here and there.

By bus, there's line 51 but it only runs once a day. And even then, you have to change at Selfoss. So you can go to Vík and do excursions from there. But if you stop at Skaftafell or Jökulsárlón, don't forget that you won't be able to sleep on the spot and won't be able to leave by bus before the next day. So it's a real pain, especially since wild camping isn't allowed (a handy little reminder).




## *How long to spend there*

There are so many sites to see and hikes to do that you can very easily take a good week! The south coast really is where most of the iconic sights are, as we've seen.

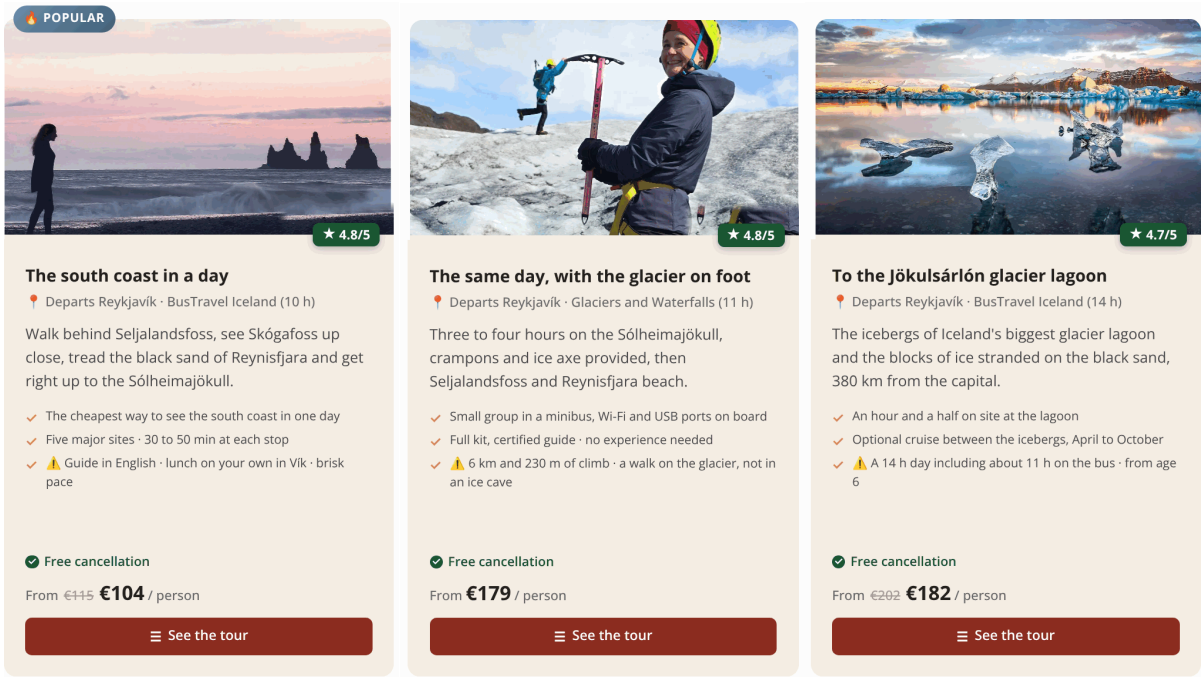
That said, if you don't have much time, **in 2 days you see the bare minimum** of the minimum. **I'd recommend 3 days**, between Seljalandsfoss and Vestrahorn, if you want to walk a bit and take your time. You can take the time to see the puffins in spring or summer in particular.

If you want to do a few activities, then one extra day easily lets you *walk on a glacier* or *visit an ice cave*

## *Visiting the south coast in a day from Reykjavík*

You're in Reykjavík, you want to see the south coast but you don't have a car? It's really easy! Plenty of agencies run one- or two-day trips to the main sites. By coach in a big group, or by minibus in a small group, you've got the choice, and quite honestly it isn't especially expensive for everything you're going to see. Here are a few examples.

Look carefully at what's on the programme, because some go all the way to Jökulsárlón and others don't, and some will throw in an activity like a glacier walk




**But there are plenty of other options** — most of them very well rated. Here's where to find them

- *All the south coast discovery tours from Reykjavík*

# EAST ICELAND

East Iceland is a wild region, less visited by tourists. Less famous for iconic sights, it still hides some little-known treasures.

You'll find majestic fjords, imposing mountains, green valleys, impressive canyons and spectacular waterfalls.

During my trip I unfortunately ran into somewhat capricious weather (not to say rotten) and a storm, which forced me to change my itinerary. So I wasn't able to explore the region the way I'd have liked. I'm only going to tell you about the places I did manage to see.

Be aware that the eastern fjords are home to plenty of **puffins**, especially around Borgarfjörður Eystri.

Here are two typical landscapes I saw in the eastern fjords, when the clouds lifted a little, where hidden waterfalls and canyons are everywhere, creating an almost apocalyptic atmosphere

- ***Accommodation*** *recommendation: the setting and the magnificent view at the Guesthouse Elinar Helgu*







## *Stuðlagil canyon*

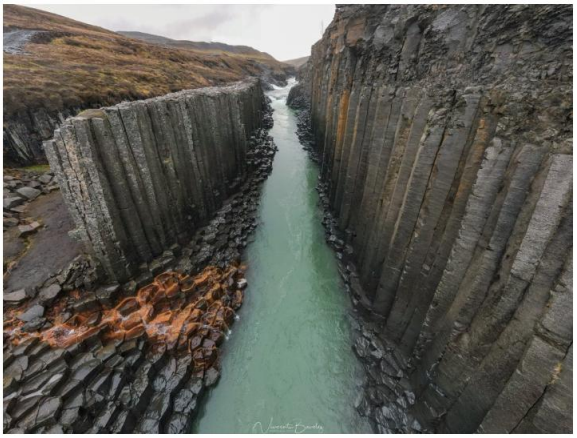
Riiiight, now this one! It's a superb spot! Yes, OK, another canyon, another river, I know. You'll end up jaded. But no! This one really is unique!

This canyon is incredible, with its basalt columns stretching over several hundred metres. That alone is impressive. But wait until you see the turquoise water running through it! The whole thing is simply one of the most beautiful places in the country, and the best part is that it isn't overrun with tourists yet, because it's a bit out of the way.

It really is a must-see for you, believe me.

There are two roads to get there, one on each side. Each offers a different view, and if you take the one that crosses the bridge and needs a bit of walking, you can go right down to the river, straight onto the basalt columns. It's brilliant! (Right, I was being lazy and stayed on the platform on the other side.)





## *Hengifoss waterfall*

So, I was telling you about the weather. This waterfall is unique thanks to its different geological layers, some of them red. You reach it on a really nice hike that climbs a bit, but nothing too nasty.

Anyway, at this waterfall I had such a thick layer of cloud that I couldn't see a thing. It must be magnificent in real life, I'd love to be able to show you my photos but... 😜 It'll have to be next time!

Seriously though, this waterfall is worth the detour if you're in the western part of the island. Provided the weather plays along, of course

# ICELAND'S NORTH COAST

*To discover in this article*

# MÝVATN AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

Iceland's north coast is often underrated. OK, you won't find big glaciers, spectacular volcanic eruptions, vast black sand beaches or ice caps. But what you will find are some of the most impressive and beautiful waterfalls in the country. Not to mention craters as far as the eye can see, majestic fjords, puffin colonies and plenty of geothermal activity. So it would be a real shame to skip it!

## *Lake Mývatn*

Lake Mývatn is the region's star attraction. Fun little detail: Mývatn means "lake of the midges". That sets the tone! But don't let it put you off, because the lake is beautiful in every season. I saw it in autumn, as it was starting to freeze, and it was simply sublime. And I didn't even get eaten alive by the midges (because they bite, those little pests).

Around the lake you'll find loads of things to do, which I'll go into just below. But in the lake itself, you can walk among lots of small craters. It's both beautiful and surprising! There's also the Hverfjall volcano, which you can climb!

And a little further on, don't miss the Mývatn geothermal baths. It's a bit like the Blue Lagoon, but cheaper!







- ***Activity** I loved: soaking in the Mývatn thermal baths and seeing the fabulous waterfalls*
- ***Accommodation** recommendation: the excellent value for money of the Vogafjós Farm Resort on the shore of Lake Mývatn*
- ***In the next article**, find out more about the Mývatn region now!*




**Mývatn: natural geothermal baths (Earth Lagoon)**

★★★★½ 4.5/5 · Very highly rated · 2,304 reviews · day ticket · wheelchair accessible

The geothermal baths of northern Iceland, renamed Earth Lagoon: mineral water drawn up from 2,500 metres down, pools and steam rooms in the middle of the fumaroles, a bar in the water and the Kvika café for a light bite to eat. Open until 10pm, with the last entry at 9pm.

*They have everything you need to spend a few hours completely relaxed, in the middle of a spectacular landscape and incredible lava fields. — Elisa, Italy*

- Brand-new, very clean facilities since the reopening · reopened in July 2026
- Less busy than the other lagoons in Iceland · ideal at the end of the day
- ⚠️ Water sometimes lukewarm depending on the area · towel costs extra on site

Free cancellation

From **€58**

Check availability

If you want to visit the Mývatn region without a car, then it's Akureyri you set off from, which is super handy. You have several tours that take you to see the main spots (the lake, Hverir, the volcanoes…)




**From Akureyri: Goðafoss and Lake Mývatn in a small group**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 359 reviews · 6 h · pickup included · small groups

A six-hour loop from Akureyri: the Goðafoss waterfall, the pseudo-craters of Skútustaðir, the lava labyrinths of Dimmuborgir, the Grjótagjá fissure and the fumaroles of Hverir, by minibus with a local guide. You can round off the day at the Forest Lagoon, entry not included.

*The sites you see are spectacular and far surpass the ones you see on the Golden Circle tour leaving from Reykjavik. — Graham, United Kingdom*

- Small family-run company, funny guides full of stories · groups sometimes almost private
- Pickup at the port, handy for cruise passengers · or at 19 hotels in Akureyri
- ⚠️ Guide in English · short stops · midges in late summer, bring a head net

Free cancellation

From **€182**

Check availability




**Mývatn - Berjaya Iceland Hotels, heart of the volcanic sites**

★★★★½ **8.9/10 · Superb** · 1,919 reviews · cleanliness 9.4/10 · location 9.3/10

A modern hotel on the shore of Lake Mývatn, in Reynihlíð, in the heart of the volcanic sites of North Iceland. The Mývatn baths are 3 km away, the Grjótagjá cave 4 km and Dimmuborgir 6.5 km. The Mylla restaurant serves dinner à la carte, and a bistro is right next door.

*An incredible view from our room. The wake-up call service when the northern lights come out is a real bonus. — Aurélie, France*

- Two outdoor hot tubs with a view, bathrobes provided · the hotel calls guests when the northern lights come out
- Spacious and well soundproofed rooms, coffee machine in the room · superior rooms look out over the lake
- Value for money is the worst rated item (8.2/10) · breakfast costs €31 per person when it is not included

From **€140** / night

Check availability

## *Dimmuborgir*

I used to know Dimmuborgir as a metal band that shreds your eardrums. Now I know where the name comes from. Dimmuborgir is a very rugged lava field, with genuinely unique, almost sculptural rock formations. Some of them are even huge. The name means "dark castles", and you quickly see why.

Several trails criss-cross this protected area, letting you discover lava caves, a church, rock formations nicknamed "castles" and even "trolls". Honestly, I recommend it, because places like this one are rare in the world







## *Hverir*

Hverir is one of the most impressive geothermal areas in Iceland. Steam escapes from everywhere, bubbles burst, and the smell of sulphur (or rotten egg, take your pick) fills the air. The colours are beautiful, and your shoes will be covered in mud. Tempted? Perfect! Because this is an essential stop.

No big geysers like in the Golden Circle, but the colours are brighter. The setting is superb, surrounded by volcanoes and mountains, in a region that's both beautiful and hostile.

Several hiking trails criss-cross Hverir, including one that leads to the top of Námafjall mountain, with a panoramic view. Careful, that trail can be closed in bad weather.





## *The Waterfalls of the North*

Up there, the waterfalls are simply beautiful, powerful, deafening and extremely photogenic.

**Goðafoss**, for example, is splendid and brings Niagara Falls to mind, in miniature. With its rounded horseshoe shape, you can walk along either side. Careful in winter, it can be a little slippery! 😜

**Dettifoss**, meanwhile, is the most powerful waterfall in Europe. You can watch it from both sides, each one offering a different view, but choose carefully because it's a 60 km drive to get from one to the other, with no bridge! This waterfall throws up an impressive mist visible for kilometres. The road isn't paved and can be difficult from autumn onwards, but it's a must.

And then there's **Selfoss**, another beauty right next to Dettifoss. Reachable from the same car park, it isn't very tall, around ten metres, but it's very wide, stretching out in a J shape. No usable photo, because when I went it was the end of the day, very little light and it was starting to snow with wind, so I left pretty sharpish.





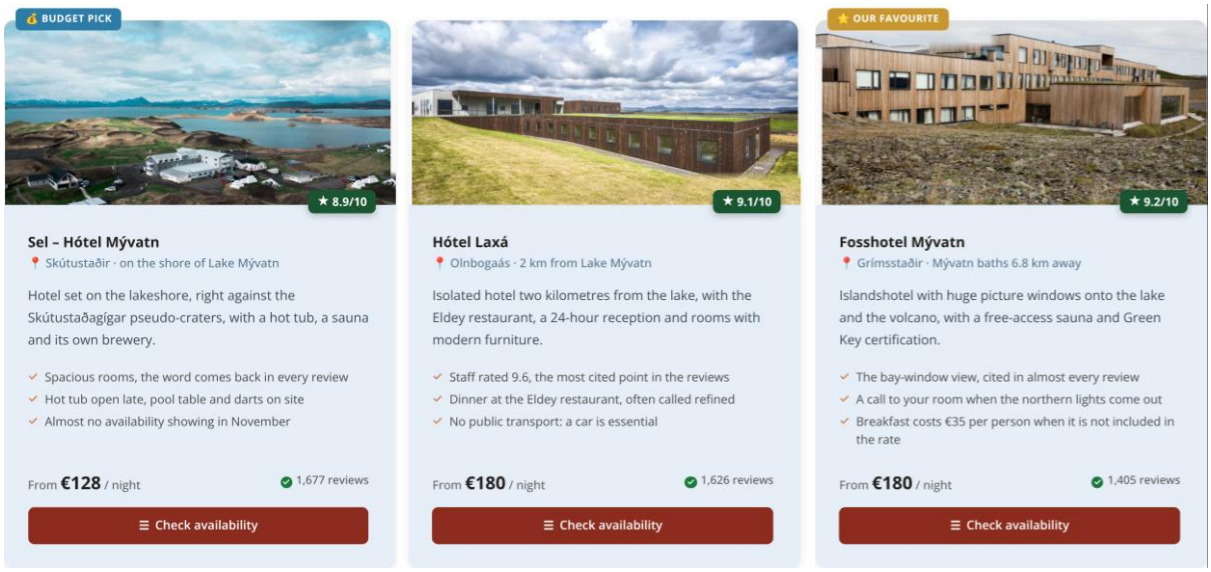
## *The Arctic Henge*

Despite what it looks like, it's a recent project that aims to be the Stonehenge of the Arctic. It's still being built and draws on Norse mythology, in particular the Poetic Edda and the Viking solar calendar. It's linked to the dwarves of the Norse world: 72 dwarves symbolising the weeks of the year. Each aligned stone represents one of these figures. The site is also designed to catch the sunlight at specific moments, like the solstice.



## *Sleeping in Mývatn*

That's the option I went for on my first trip to north Iceland, and honestly I don't regret it, because it's very central. It isn't a town like Akureyri or Húsavík, mind — it really is about the landscapes and the location.




FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN MYVATN!

# HÚSAVÍK

A charming little fishing port in northern Iceland. Very typical, pleasant, and the starting point for lots of activities. If you've seen the film Eurovision Song Contest (hey, I couldn't not mention it!), you've definitely seen shots of the town





## *What to do in Húsavík*

**Whale watching** is the big draw here. And above all, Húsavík is the best place in the country to see them. You'll often spot humpback whales, dolphins, sometimes fin whales. Several companies run boat trips (*Gentle Giants*, *North Sailing*, *Friends of Moby Dick*), *we'll go into the detail just below*.

**Seeing puffins** — there are several reserves in the area, notably the island of Lundey, and at Tjörnes. Boat tours are organised: *more information here*

**Whale museum** — a very thorough museum, with impressive skeletons and information about marine species. It's right next to the harbour.

**Húsavík church** (Húsavíkurkirkja) — built in 1907, this little white and green wooden church is very photogenic. It overlooks the harbour.

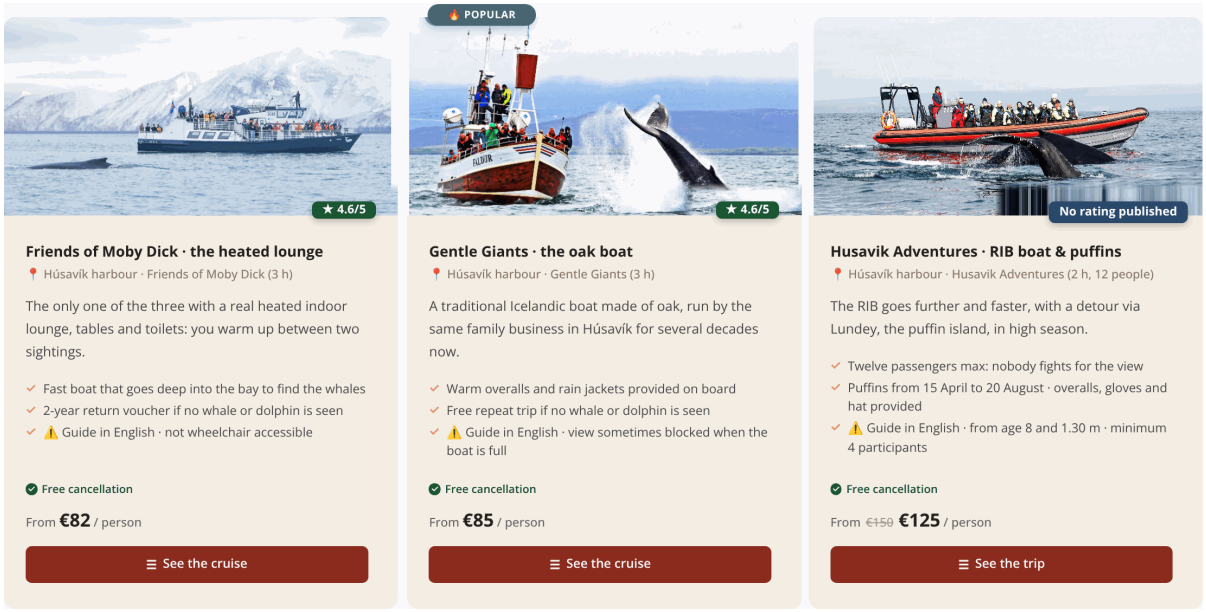
**Eurovision museum** — oh yes it is! And there's even the Jaja Ding Dong café! (that's why my wife absolutely wants to go to Iceland and to Húsavík).

**Húsavík GeoSea** — geothermal baths with a sea view. The water is salty and naturally warm. It's a perfect place to relax after a boat trip. *Info and booking*
There are several good ones in the area. We've already talked about the *Mývatn Baths*, but there's also the *Forest Lagoon* in Akureyri. Which one to choose? Honestly, I have no idea! They all look great.



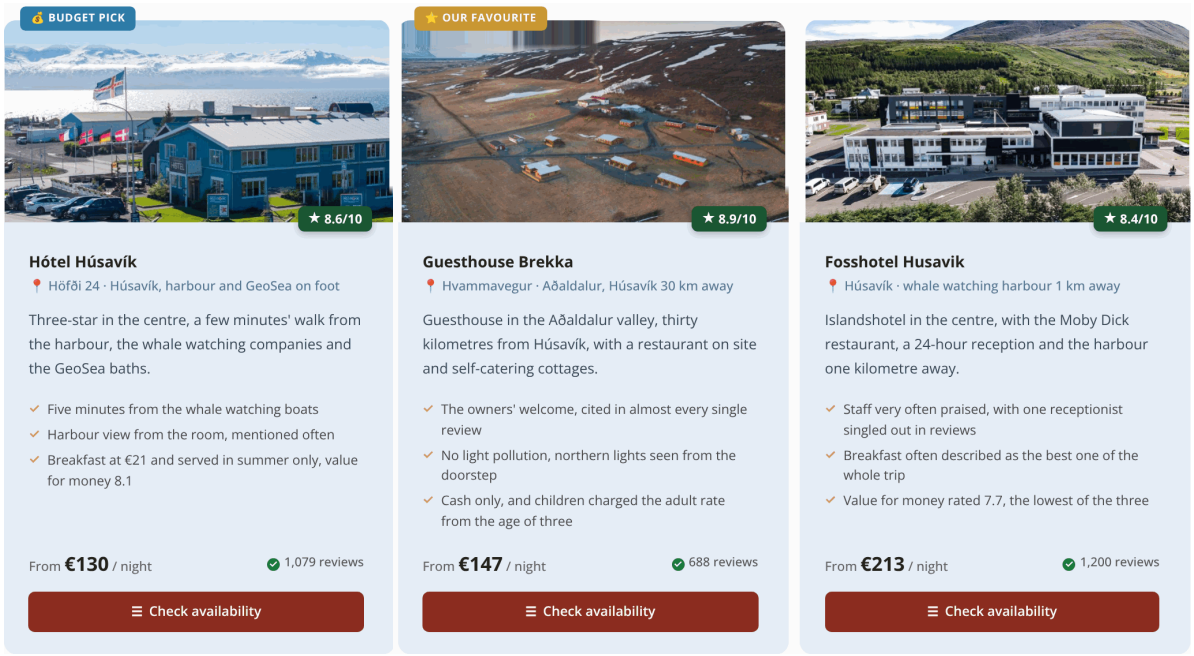

## *Seeing whales and puffins from Húsavík*

As I was saying, it's the best place in Iceland to see them. So I really do think that if you're in the area, it's an absolute must. And if you're torn between seeing them in Reykjavík and here, I think here will be better, because there are fewer people and more cetaceans. But it's still very good in Reykjavík, I did it and I loved it!



## *Sleeping in Húsavík*

Húsavík is really nice, a slightly isolated village but a really pleasant place to stay (that's a lot of "really" in one go). So you can spend just a day there or stay one or two nights. It also has the advantage of not being as expensive as the rest of the country. Prices go up in high season but it isn't ridiculous like on the south coast.




FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN HUSAVIK!

# AKUREYRI

Akureyri is Iceland's "capital of the North". A charming little town at the head of a fjord, it has a peaceful, colourful feel. Its centre is full of cafés, shops and typical architecture.

It's a nice little town that will mainly let you explore the surroundings at your own pace and do quite a few activities.

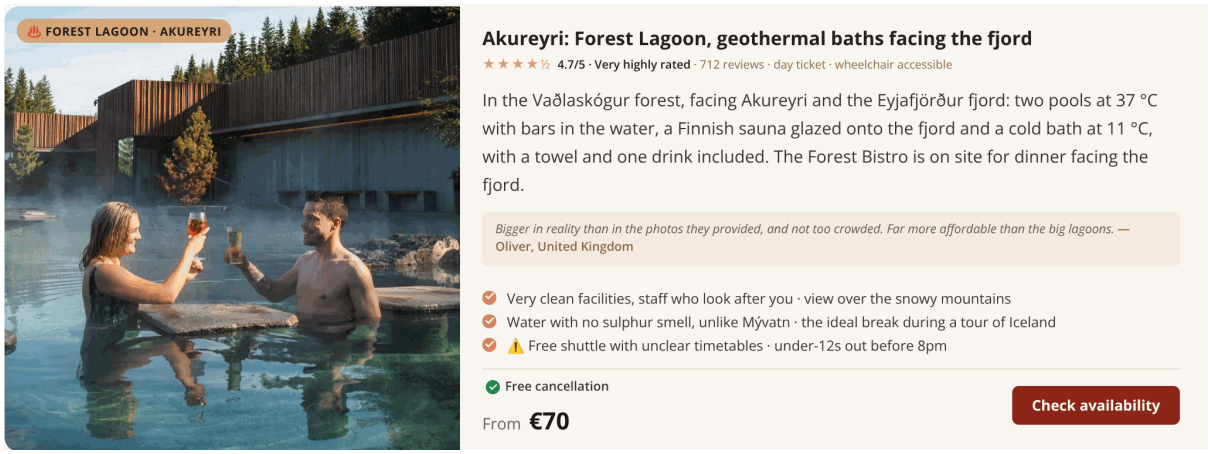
What you can visit in town:

- **Akureyri church**, perched on a hill, with a lovely view. Surprising architecture!
- The **botanical garden**, surprisingly rich for somewhere so close to the Arctic Circle.
- The **art museum**, for a cultural touch.
- And in winter, the **ski resort** of Hlíðarfjall, right nearby.





- The pool at **Forest Lagoon**, very pleasant out in nature. Not cheap, but the setting is magnificent
    - *Info and booking*

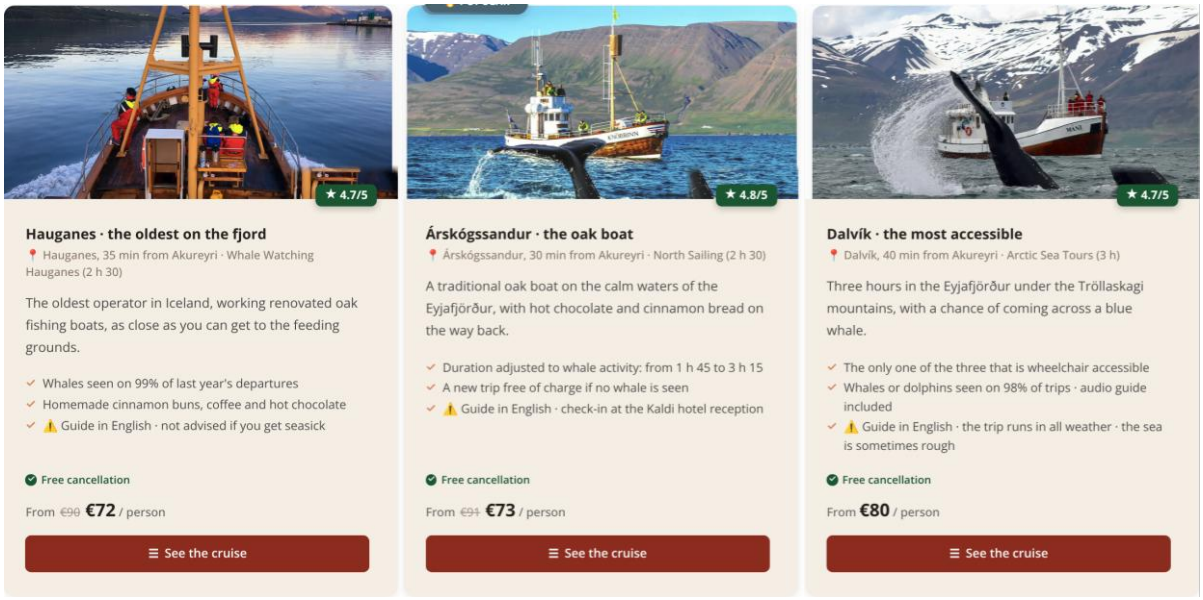


## *Seeing whales in and around Akureyri*

So as I was saying, north Iceland is the perfect place to see whales. There are departures from Akureyri, but also from small villages a little further north that are less touristy. So you really are spoilt for choice! No need to rush off to Húsavík.

- **Akureyri**, also an excellent spot since it isn't far from Húsavík, with *Whale Watching Akureyri*
- **Árskógssandur**, not far from Akureyri, on a very pretty traditional boat, with *North Sailing*
- Still in the north (the best region!) at **Hauganes**, with *Whale Watching Hauganes*
- In **Dalvík**, we stay in the same corner because it's the village just above! With *Arctic Sea Tours*

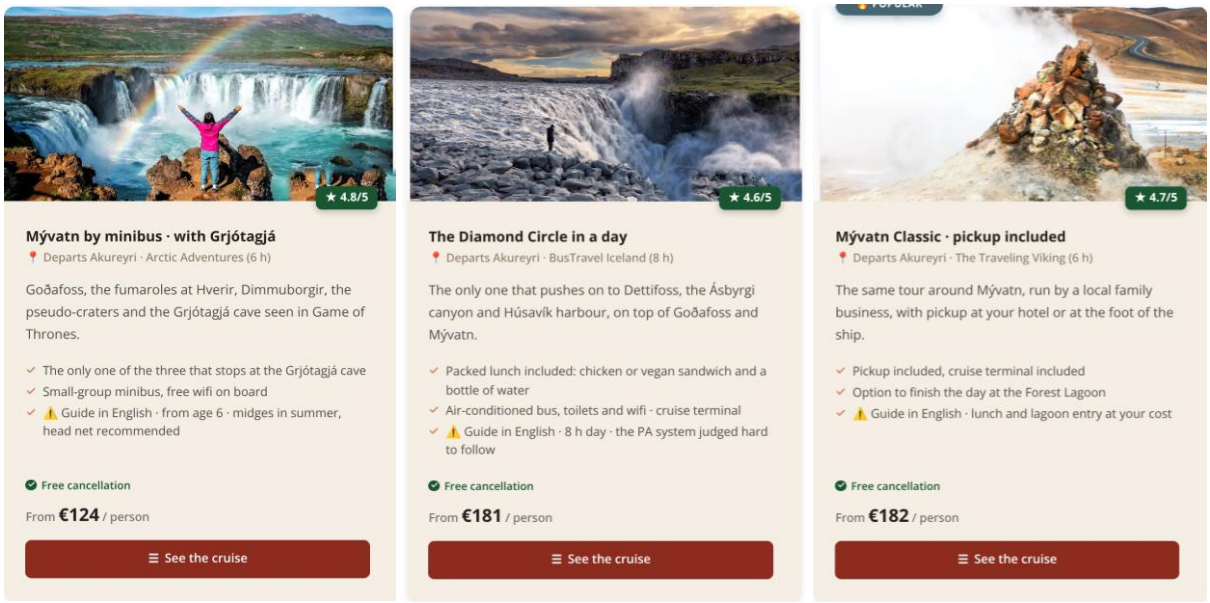


## *Visiting the north coast from Akureyri*

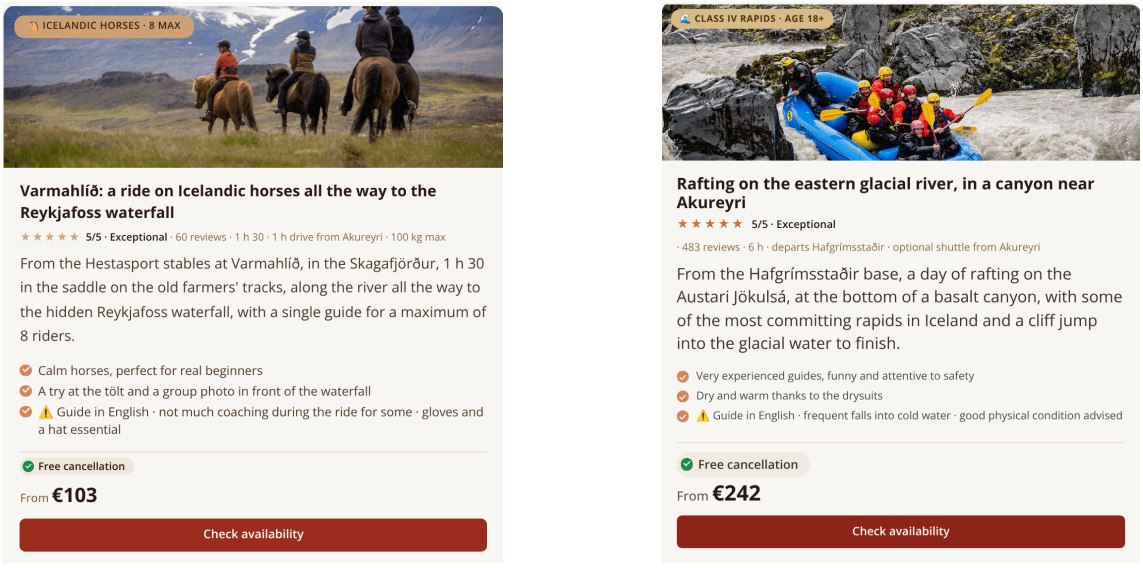
Akureyri is above all the ideal base for exploring the north: Lake Mývatn, the Goðafoss falls or even a whale watching trip. If you come without a car (we'll look at that in the practical info section), it's really great because you can genuinely see the whole region without any hassle (easier here than from Mývatn or Húsavík, for example).

The main tours focus on the northern waterfalls and the area around Mývatn. Some go further afield.



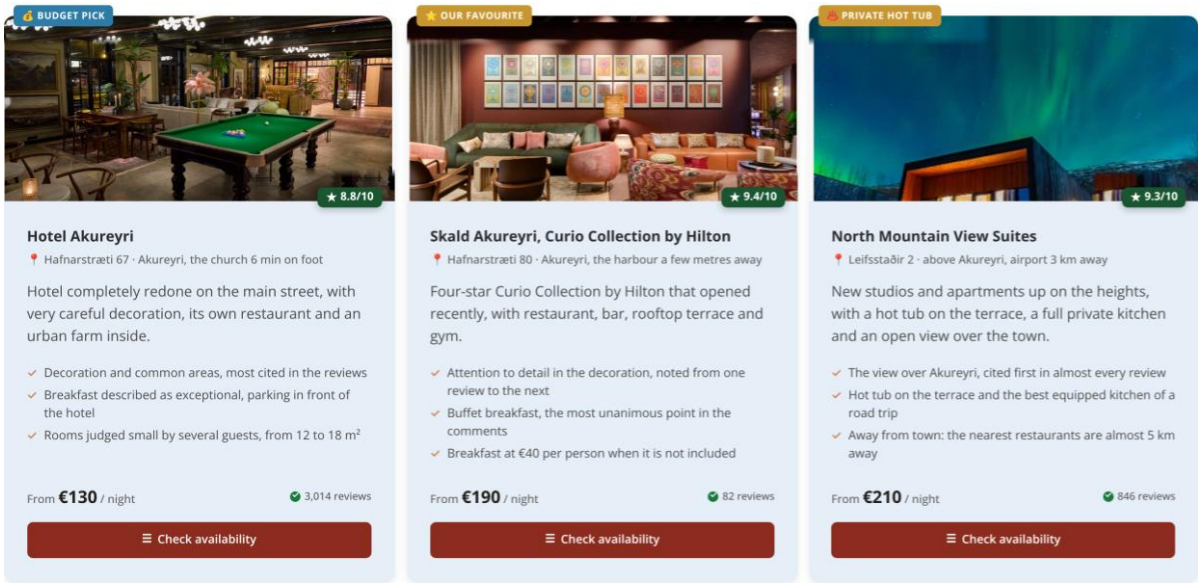

## *The other activities in Akureyri*

You'll also be able to do two really fun activities: horse riding and rafting (not both at once, thankfully).



## *Where to stay in Akureyri*

Akureyri is an excellent base if you want to explore north Iceland (which travellers often forget), whether you have a car or not. So staying several days is an interesting option: you can explore all around without much trouble, especially as it's a pleasant town as well as being ideally located.



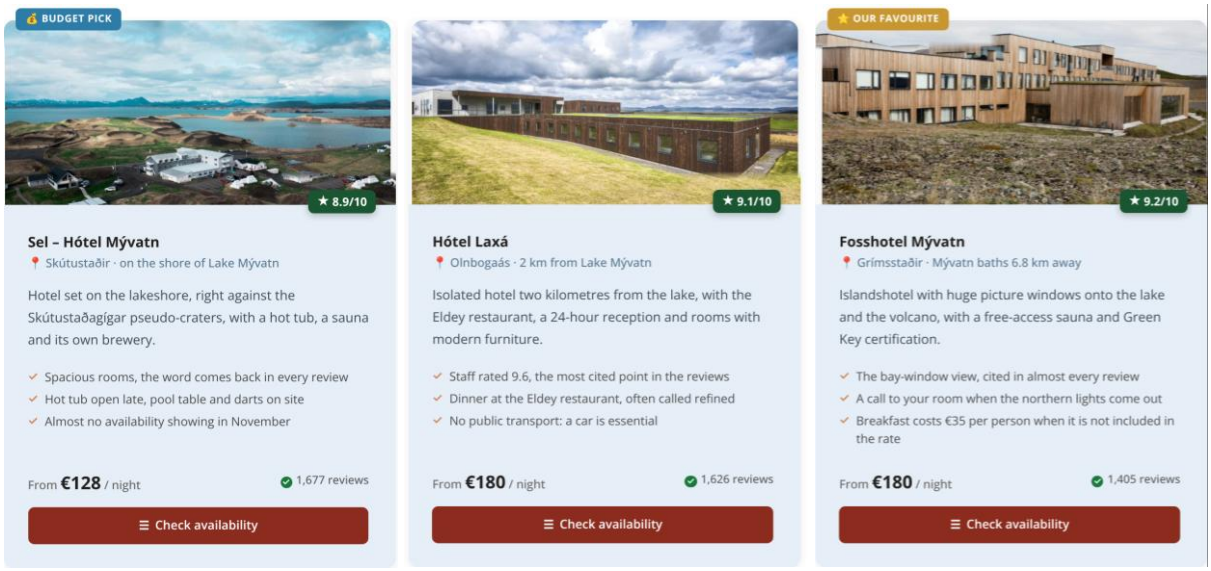

FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN AKUREYRI!

# WHERE TO STAY ON THE NORTH COAST

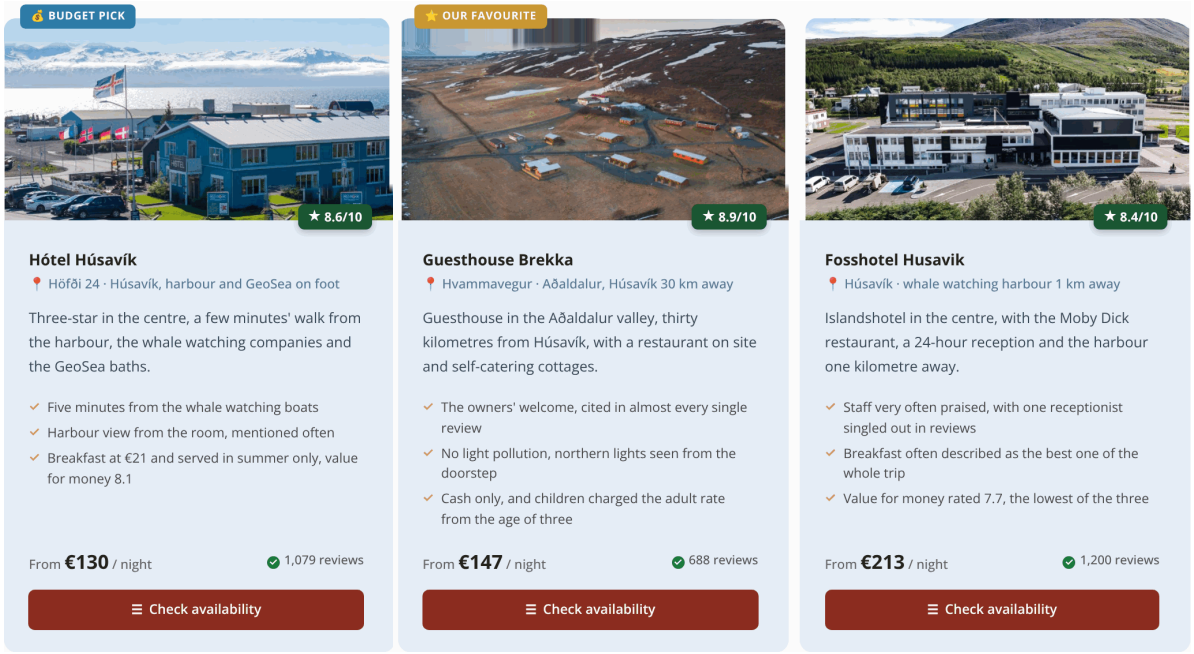
There aren't necessarily many options, as this is an area with a fairly tough climate and geography. So I'm suggesting 3 zones that are very handy for sleeping and exploring around, or for a break during your road trip: Mývatn, Akureyri and Húsavík.

Bear in mind that Akureyri is a fairly big town (well, by Icelandic standards) and that quite a few excursions leave from there, so it can be a good place to park yourself and explore around if you don't have a vehicle.

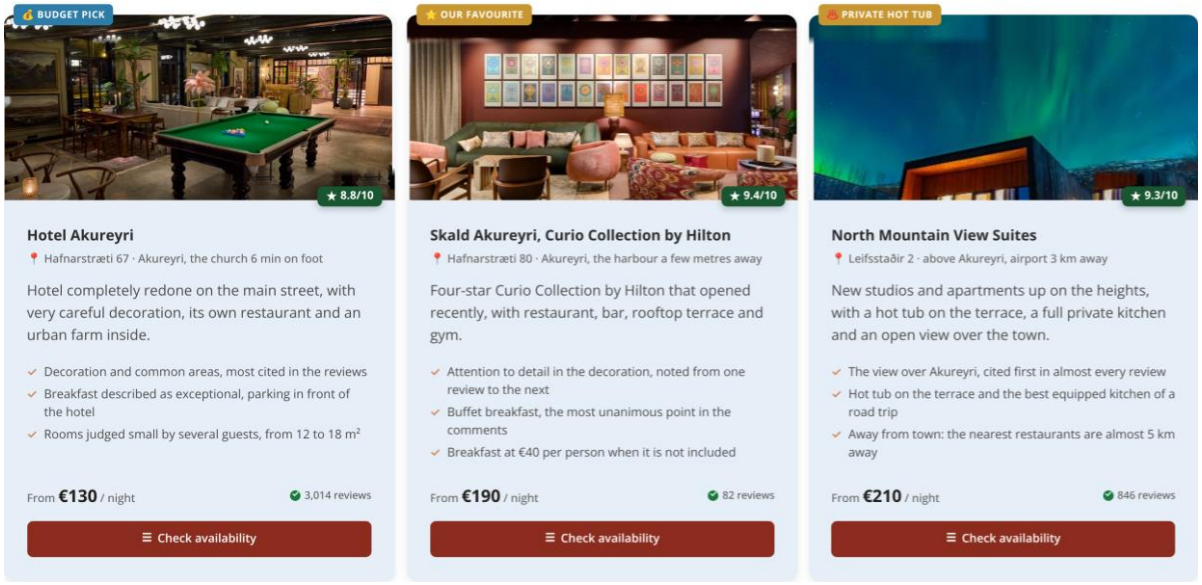
## *3 places to stay in Mývatn*




## *3 places to stay in Húsavík*



## *3 places to stay in Akureyri*



# PRACTICAL INFO ABOUT ICELAND'S NORTH COAST

## *How to get around this region*

If you don't have a car, there are buses. Honestly, I'd say the main thing is to get to Akureyri by bus, and from there you can do plenty of excursions to see what's around. The waterfalls, Mývatn… all of that can be visited from town without any trouble.

That said, the other sites really aren't easy to reach by bus. They stop at Mývatn, they go to Húsavík, but it's one a day. And if you want to go to Hverir, for example, there's no bus. So only the towns are accessible, not the sights.

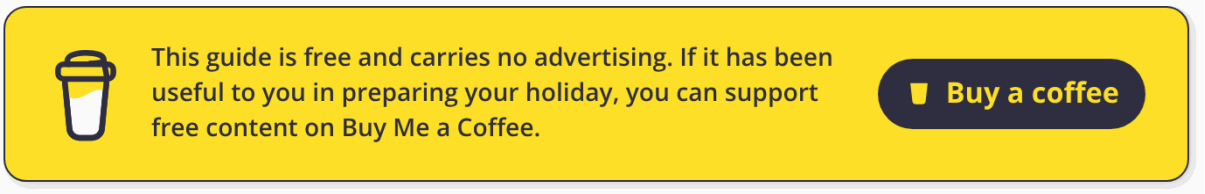
Otherwise, there's an airport in Akureyri, so why not fly in from Reykjavík to save time.

## *How long to spend there*

It's an area you can see in a rush, and very often that's what people do. They come up here less often and generally do 1 day at Mývatn, the waterfalls along the road, and done. But that's a shame! **The minimum would be 2 days** on the spot at Mývatn. Make the most of it and relax at the *Mývatn hot springs*.

If you have the time and really want to enjoy it, then it's at least 3 days. 2 for Mývatn, one for the waterfalls, and I'd even say 1 extra day to go whale watching from Húsavík (and take the chance to visit the little town).

But it would also be a shame to skip Akureyri, especially to go to the Forest Lagoon. At that point we're getting close to 4 or 5 days, so it really depends on your schedule. Staying that long in the north isn't common, but I think it's a really good idea, to get away from the floods of tourists who stay in the south!



# THE WESTFJORDS

# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN THE WESTFJORDS

It's very hard to pin down the most beautiful places in the Westfjords because it's "one whole", but a very big whole. A series of huuuuuge fjords that you cross either in zigzags (long zigzags, mind you, because they can be tens of km long), or by going over the top and ending up on vast plateaus with incredible views.

So you get an eyeful just wandering around, just driving. Absolutely take the small roads rather than the big ones that save time! They're the best.

Still, here are a few places not to miss:

- The cliffs of **Látrabjarg** — one of the largest puffin colonies in the world, with plenty of other birds too. Be careful not to go once the puffins have already left, otherwise you feel a bit lonely, haha. You can't get there without a car
- The **Dynjandi waterfall**, magnificent, one of the most beautiful in the country! And it's easy to reach
- Another waterfall that's really worth it, **Gufufoss** which is a clone of Skógafoss
- The village of **Flateyri**, in a pretty incredible setting, in its fjord surrounded by magnificent mountains
- **Ísafjörður**, the "capital" of 3,000 inhabitants (you have to be keen to live here!), for a bit of civilisation
- **Flateyri** is a cute little village whose location I love, surrounded by majestic mountains. It's really great, and a good base for exploring around
- The **hot springs**, especially Hellulaug in the south and Krossneslaug in the north-east of the region
- The **Hornstrandir reserve**, a paradise for animals, Arctic foxes in particular. But you can't go there all year round, and definitely not by car. It's nature and you!








## *Dynjandi waterfall*

One of the most beautiful waterfalls in Iceland, no question. Because of its shape, its flow, and the fact you can get really close to it and at several levels, which is cool. It's not just "turn up, take a photo, done".

It's 50 minutes (well, a lot more with photo stops) from Ísafjörður, right in the middle of the Westfjords, so easy to reach by car.

*If you don't have a car, you can easily go and see it thanks to the West Travel buses from Ísafjörður*






**From Ísafjörður: bus tour to the Dynjandi waterfall**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 2,335 reviews · 3 h 30 · departs from the cruise pier · guide rated 4.8/5

From the cruise pier in Ísafjörður, a return trip by bus through fjords and tunnels all the way to Dynjandi, the biggest waterfall in the Westfjords, with 1 hr 30 on site to walk back up the path that runs alongside its falls. It is 100 m high and followed by five smaller falls down below.

*1 hr of road to reach the Dynjandi waterfall, but we cross several magnificent fjords and the guide teaches us a bit more about the history of this part of Iceland. — Vanessa, France*

- Back at the boat at the promised time, ideal on a stopover · early departures once everyone is there
- Comfortable bus, driver who slows down on the pretty stretches
- ⚠ Guide in English only · top of the path is rocky · some would have liked 15 to 30 min more

Free cancellation

From **€70**

Check availability

## *How to visit the Hornstrandir reserve*

It's the wildest place in the wildest part of Iceland. There's no getting there by car, you have to take the boat from Ísafjörður or Bolungarvík, and then it's hiking!

You come to Hornstrandir for the landscapes but also, above all, to see the Arctic foxes. Except of course you have to earn it, so ideally you set off for two days. You can go on your own or with a guide.

On site, though, there's no hotel. One old house has been turned into a guesthouse, but otherwise it's camping, and only in the permitted areas.

Otherwise, GuidetoIceland offers various guided outings, here are the main ones:

- A *day of hiking* starting from Ísafjörður, boat to Hornstrandir included
- A *2-day trip* dedicated to wildlife
- *3 crazy days of hiking* in the Hornstrandir reserve, a 35 km crossing



# THINGS TO DO IN THE WESTFJORDS

It's wild, very wild. Even though infrastructure is starting to appear, it's still a region with very few organised activities. It's mostly about soaking up that end-of-the-world feeling and the unique landscapes.

But luckily you do still have some really nice activities to do!

- You can *go whale watching* from Ísafjörður
- From Patreksfjörður, you can *go kayaking*
- Great one, again from Ísafjörður, there's the option of going out to the island of Vigur to *watch the puffins* !




**Ísafjörður: whale watching in the Westfjords**

★★★★★ 4.8/5 · Exceptional · 406 reviews · 3 h · departs from the port of Ísafjörður · guide rated 4.9/5

From the port of Ísafjörður, 3 hours at sea in the waters of the Ísafjarðardjúp, ringed by mountains, looking for humpback whales, seen on every outing in 2023, with minke whales, orcas or dolphins now and then. Toilets on board.

*We were able to see several whales, and we stayed out there long enough for everyone to get a good look at them. — Anne, France*

- Guides who are marine biologists, passionate and good teachers · company involved in whale research
- Small boat that is not crowded, seats inside for everyone · on foot from the cruise pier
- ⚠ Guide in English · meeting point poorly signposted from the port · very cold at sea, wrap up well

Free cancellation

From **€98**

Check availability




**From the port of Seyðisfjörður: the puffins of Borgarfjörður Eystri and the Gufufoss waterfall**

★★★★½ 4.6/5 · Very highly rated · 372 reviews · 5 h · pickup at the cruise terminal

From the cruise terminal in Seyðisfjörður, a scenic road to Borgarfjörður Eystri for 1 hr with the puffins of the Hafnarhólmi islet, then the turf house at Lindarbakki and the Gufufoss waterfall on the way back. You pass Álfaborg, the rock where the queen of the elves is said to live.

*Unlike the plains of the Golden Circle, we saw a landscape in constant evolution: mountains and small canyons, hills and ravines, streams and waterfalls. — Virginia, United States*

- Puffins seen up close, with time to photograph them
- Guide who comments on the whole trip, full of anecdotes · homemade doughnuts offered on the way
- ⚠ Guide in English · bus hard to find at the quay · few puffins from late August · lunch on site uncertain

Free cancellation

From **€199**

Check availability




**From Ísafjörður: a visit to Vigur island and its puffins**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 104 reviews · 3 h · the only tour run by the island's owners · guide rated 4.9/5

30 minutes by boat across the Ísafjarðardjúp to Vigur, where one of the island's residents shows you its windmill, the eider down harvest and the puffin path, before coffee and homemade cake at the smallest post office in Europe. Around 100,000 puffins nest there from mid-April to early August.

*A moment suspended in time on a tiny island where a great many birds live. A guide full of passion who knows her subject perfectly: she is one of the 3 residents. — Valerie, France*

- Puffins, terns, eiders and seals lazing on the rocks
- Well-kept paths to get close to the birds · comfortable boat, seats inside
- ⚠ Guide in English · puffins rare from mid-August · crossing sometimes choppy · a mosquito net is useful

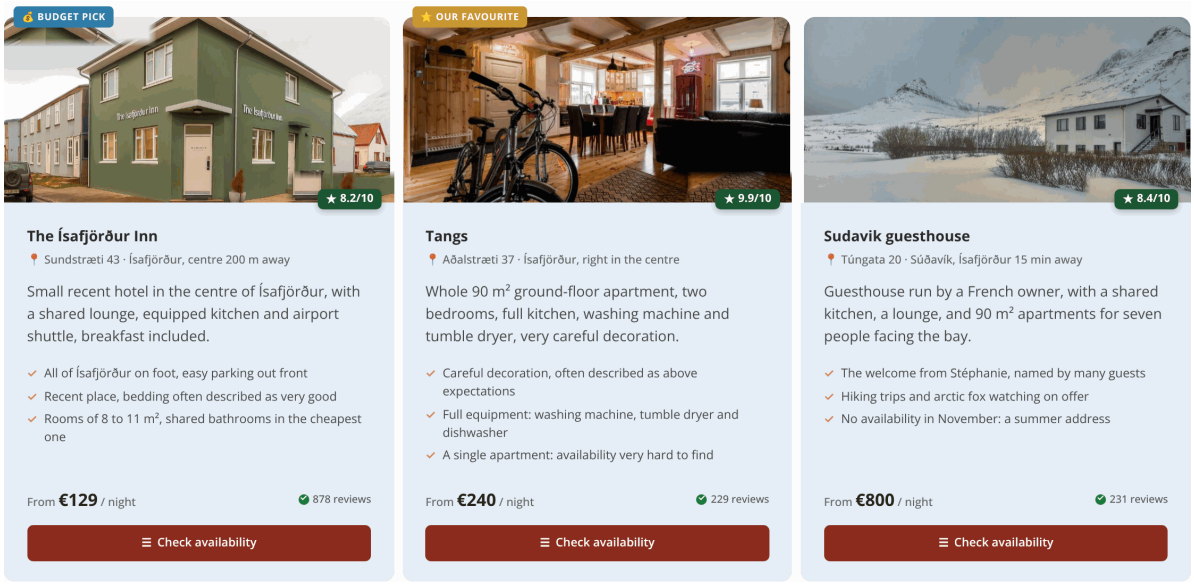
Free cancellation

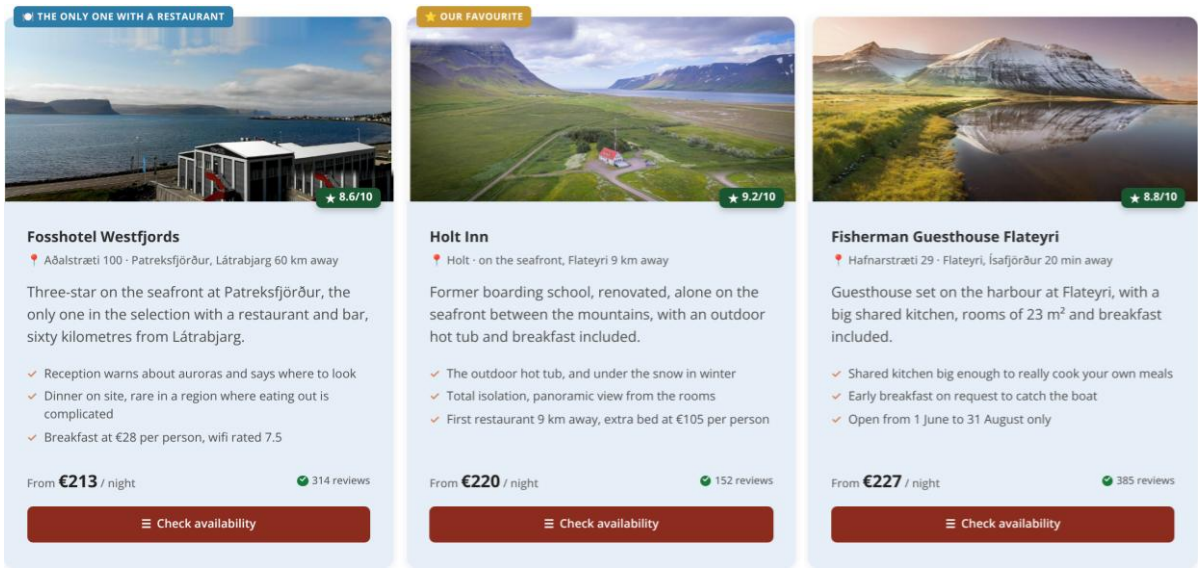
From **€198**

Check availability

# WHERE TO STAY IN THE WESTFJORDS

Even though the region really isn't built up, and it's probably the wildest region in the country, there are still quite a few options for sleeping. Watch out though, in low season many places are closed. But you have a few places to stay in the south (not many), and above all in Flateyri and Ísafjörður



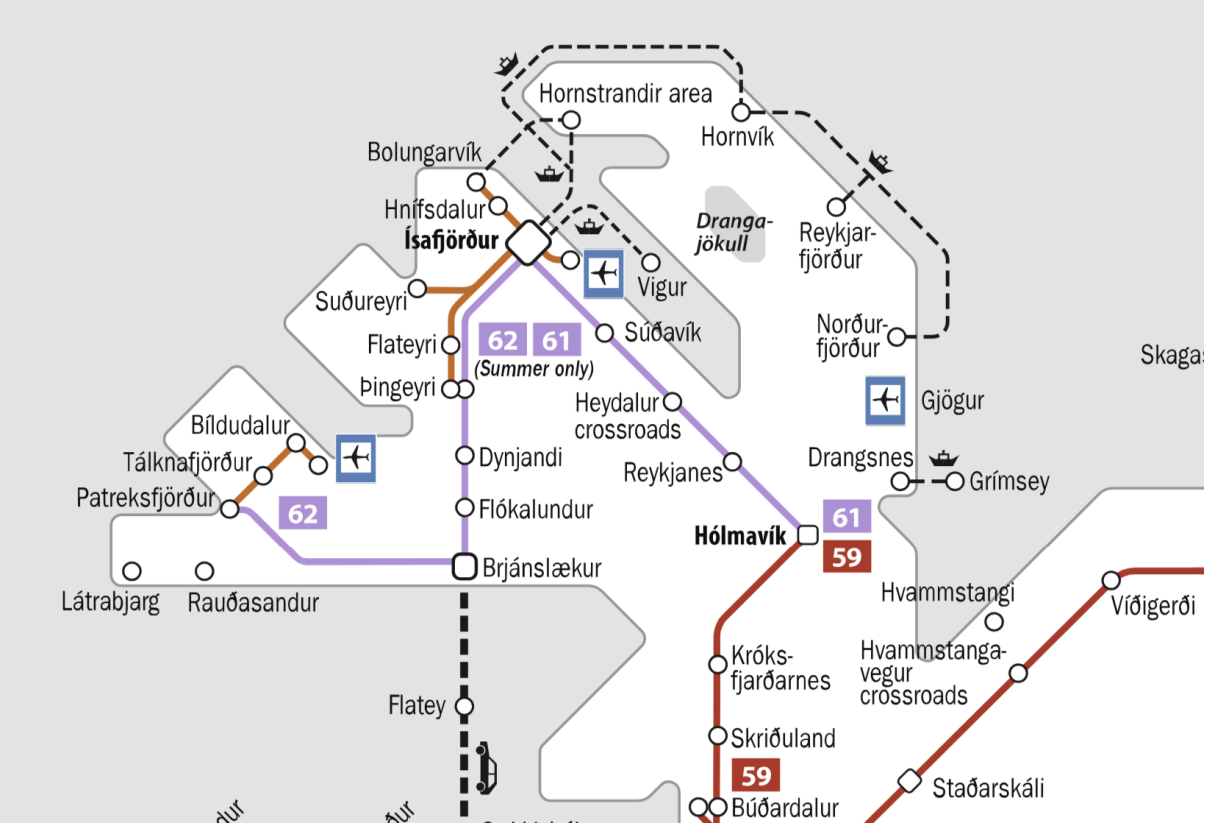

**FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN THE WESTFJORDS!**

# PRACTICAL INFO ABOUT THIS REGION

## *How to get around this region*

Easy! If you don't have a car, you're really going to struggle. The two main lines, 61 and 62, only run in summer. And on top of that there's only one trip a day. So if you stop at Dynjandi, you'll have to wait until the next day before moving on.

So the car, in my opinion! That said, if you arrive in Ísafjörður by bus or by boat, you have the option of going to Dynjandi with an agency for the day. You can *take a look here*.

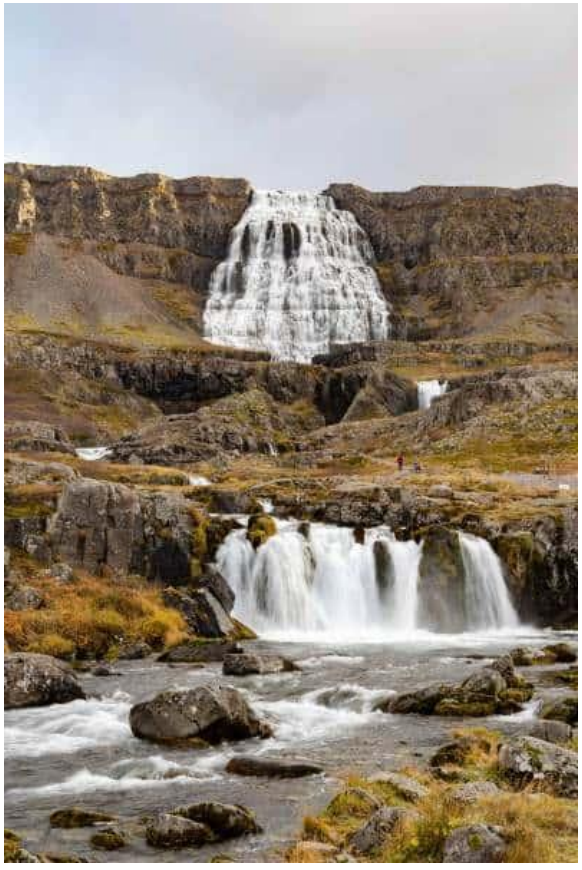


## *How long to spend there*

The Westfjords are big. Very big. Huge fjords one after another, fjords tens of kilometres long. I think it's simply impossible to do the loop in a day, and thankfully so! The minimum, if you're in a hurry, is 2 days. You go through the south and head back up on the small roads to sleep in Flateyri or Ísafjörður, then leave via the north.

That said, if you have 3 days, that's good. That's what I did, it lets you take your time, enjoy these unique landscapes, stop whenever you want without the pressure of covering ground fast. Thinking back on it now, to stop a bit more, especially in puffin season, a 4th day wouldn't have been a luxury, so as not to spend the whole time driving.

So yes, especially if you go to Látrabjarg to see the puffins, it's going to take time (the drive there and back, the time on site, then heading off to a campsite or a hotel, that's almost a full day)



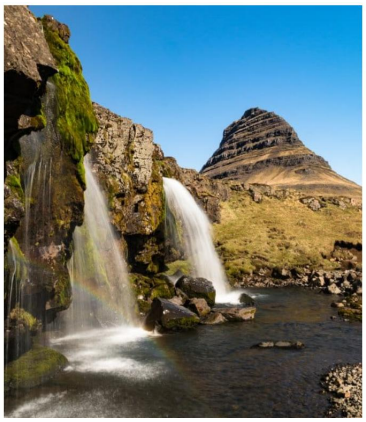
# THE SNÆFELLSNES PENINSULA

# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN SNÆFELLSNES

Quite simply my favourite place in Iceland. Why? Because you find absolutely everything there. Volcanoes, really pretty crater fields, black sand beaches, Snæfellsjökull, which Jules Verne picked as the entrance to the centre of the Earth.

But also lovely churches, waterfalls, a super iconic mountain and great hikes. Want more? Then here's what you mustn't miss:

- arriving from the south, just before you enter the peninsula, there are **red craters** on the right
- the mountain of **Kirkjufell**, very (too) popular but devilishly photogenic with its waterfall
- the hike from **Arnarstapi** to Hellnar (when you get there, grab a blueberry tart, it's so good!)
- driving right around **Snæfellsjökull** on the Útnesvegur road.
- the black sand **beaches** such as Djúpalónssandur
- And lots of viewpoints over the **volcanoes** especially on road 56
- The **Ingjaldshólskirkja** church, but mostly for its location and the magnificent surroundings









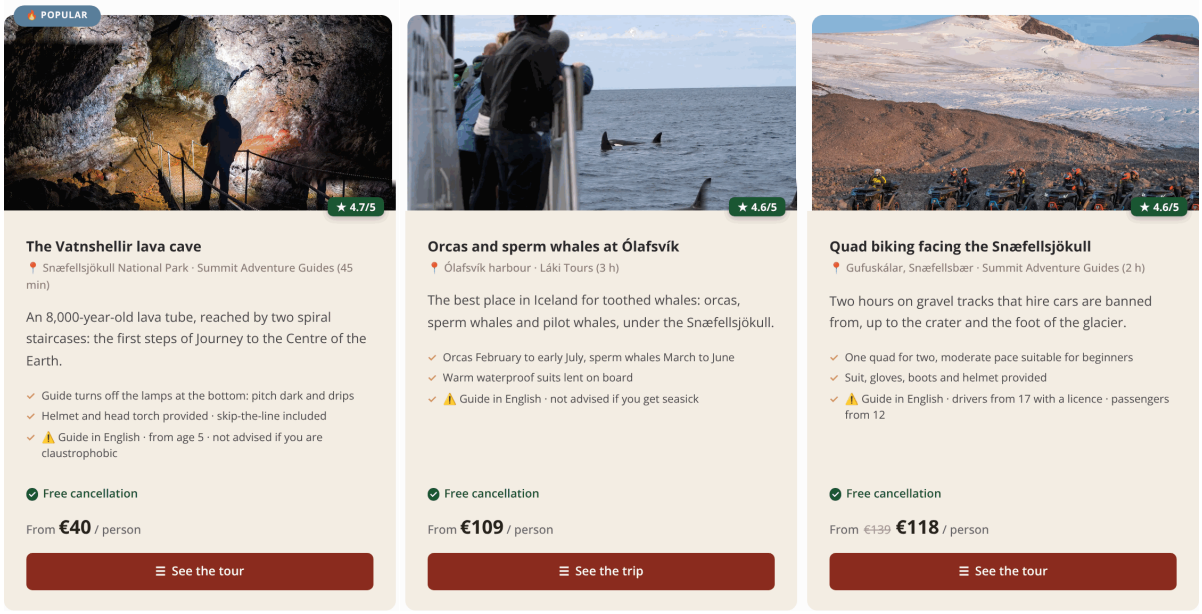
# WHAT ACTIVITIES TO DO IN SNÆFELLSNES

You can just drive all the little roads and enjoy these crazy landscapes. That's what I usually do. But when you look into it, there are plenty of other things to do on the peninsula and it's really nice, because it means you can stay longer, enjoy it even more, and admire it differently (did I mention this was my favourite region?)

As mentioned in the dedicated section earlier in the guide, you can *go whale watching* here too, from Ólafsvík. Laki tours runs outings and the success rate is high!

There's also a *lava cave* that can easily be visited. That one is original and really interesting.

Finally, you can *go quad biking* between the craters. To feel like you're on another planet!





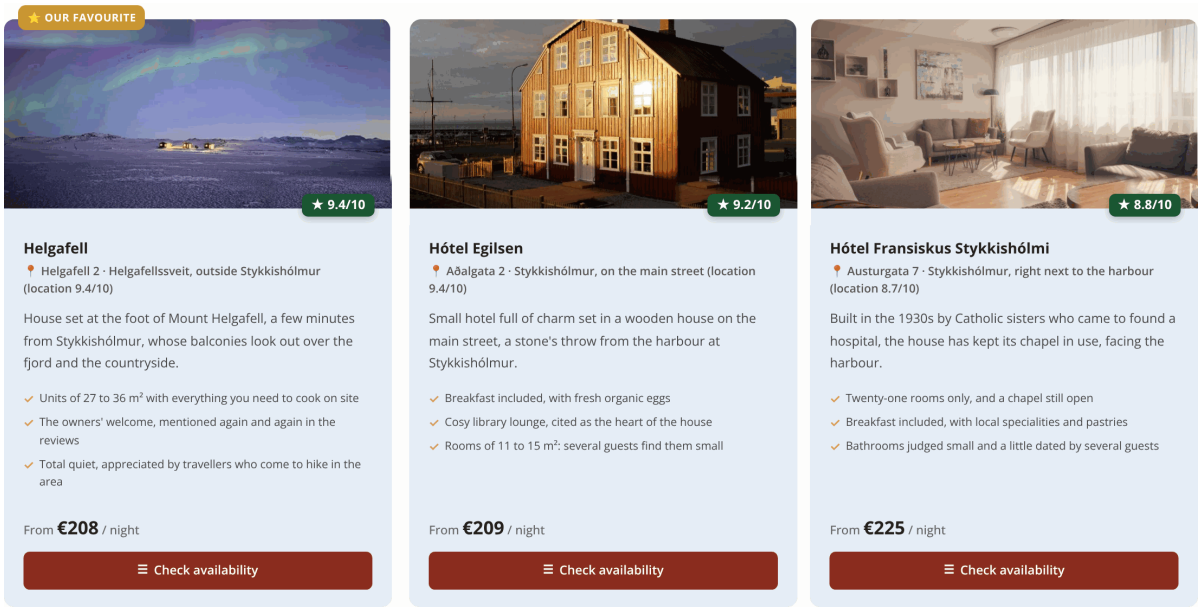

# WHERE TO STAY ON THE PENINSULA

There are two villages I'm particularly fond of for sleeping. They're really handy for visiting the peninsula if you take the road from west to east:

- Stykkishólmur, a pleasant little fishing village
- Grundarfjörður, because it's right next to Kirkjufell, so great for getting there before the hordes of tourists

But you'll also find other nice little places to stay scattered all over the peninsula. Honestly, there's no shortage of options, all year round. And you should get great views on top of that.

## *3 places to stay in Stykkishólmur*



## 3 places to stay in Grundarfjörður




**Kirkjufell Guesthouse and Apartments**
📍 Grund · Grundarfjörður, at the foot of Kirkjufell (location 9.5/10)

Large guesthouse at the water's edge, a stone's throw from the harbour, the classic base camp for the whole peninsula.

- Bedding and showers cited as the strong point of the rooms
- Staff rated 9.2/10, known for being available and good at advice
- One recurring complaint: harsh outdoor lighting at night

From **€126** / night

☰ Check availability



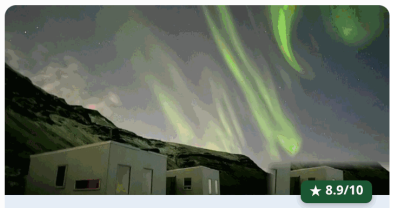

**Stöð Guesthouse and Apartments**
📍 Sólvellir 13 · Grundarfjörður, on the beachfront (location 9.5/10)

An address that travellers describe more readily as a small hotel than as a guesthouse, right in the heart of the peninsula.

- Large shared kitchen and lounge open to the sea and the mountain
- Private bathroom everywhere, from 11 m² rooms to apartments
- Cash payment only: bring krónur or pay in advance

From **€167** / night

☰ Check availability




**Kirkjufell View Cottages**
📍 Innri Látravík · Grundarfjörður, facing Kirkjufell (location 9.5/10)

Isolated cottages on the north coast of the peninsula, with picture windows that frame the sea and Mount Kirkjufell.

- One-bedroom apartment of 37 m² with a fully equipped kitchen
- Host rated 9.5/10, described as very responsive before arrival
- Recurring caveats: kitchen utensils and vague access directions

From **€227** / night

☰ Check availability

## 3 nice places to stay in Snæfellsnes




**Fosshotel Hellnar**
📍 Brekkubær · Hellnar, Snæfellsjökull 6 km away (location 9.4/10)

Green Key certified eco hotel six kilometres from the Snæfellsjökull, with a library lounge and the national park centre right next door.

- Buffet breakfast, the most mentioned feature for its choice
- Restaurant serving Icelandic dinners, organic wines and beers
- Value for money rated 7.6, the lowest in the selection

From **€130** / night

☰ Check availability




**Arnarstapi Cottages**
📍 Arnarstapi · between the beach and the mountain (location 9.3/10)

Nine small cottages set between the beach and the mountain, each with its own terrace and private entrance, on the edge of the village.

- Northern lights watched from the bed, a regular theme in the reviews
- Restaurant and bar on site, village shops 150 m away
- Go for a cottage on the mountain side, quieter than facing the restaurants

From **€170** / night

☰ Check availability




**Hotel Búðir**
📍 Búðir · on the beachfront, Arnarstapi 19 km away (location 9.7/10)

Isolated hotel on the beachfront, far from any other dwelling, where every room looks out over the sea, the lava or the glacier.

- The view from the room, cited in almost every comment
- Restaurant and breakfast much praised, sommelier on site
- Value for money rated 7.9 against 9.7 for the location

From **€290** / night

☰ Check availability

**DISCOVER ALL THE PLACES TO STAY IN SNAEFELLSNES!**

# PRACTICAL INFO ABOUT SNÆFELLSNES

## *How to get around this region*

The simplest is obviously the car. There's one road that goes all the way around the peninsula, and 2 small roads crossing it from north to south. It's very easy to get around.

By bus, you can come from Reykjavík on bus 27 to Borgarnes, then line 58, then line 82, which only serves the northern road of Snæfellsnes. So by bus, it's really complicated.

## *How long to spend there*

I recommend 2 full days so you can visit at a relaxed pace. The peninsula isn't big, but that lets you do the Arnarstapi walk, see all the viewpoints, try to get up the Snæfellsjökull road.
One full day on site is enough to see the essentials. It's doable, but rushed.

As it really is my favourite region, **I recommend sleeping there and taking 2 days**.

Beyond that, it's a place where you feel good, so if you want to see whales and orcas, if you want to walk on the craters, don't hesitate to stay longer, really.

## *Can you do it as a day trip from Reykjavík*

It's tough, but it can be done, by car or with an agency (we'll look at that below). If you don't have time, if you're just passing through, if you have a car, you're coming from Reykjavík and you don't want to devote too much time to it, then yes it's possible.

Leave early in the morning, it's about 3 hours' drive. Do the road that loops all the way around clockwise, I think you'll have time for the Arnarstapi walk. If the road allows it, go up Snæfellsjökull. The little black sand beaches, then Kirkjufell, and it'll be time to head back.

That's why it's packed, you won't be able to make many stops. Hence the two days.



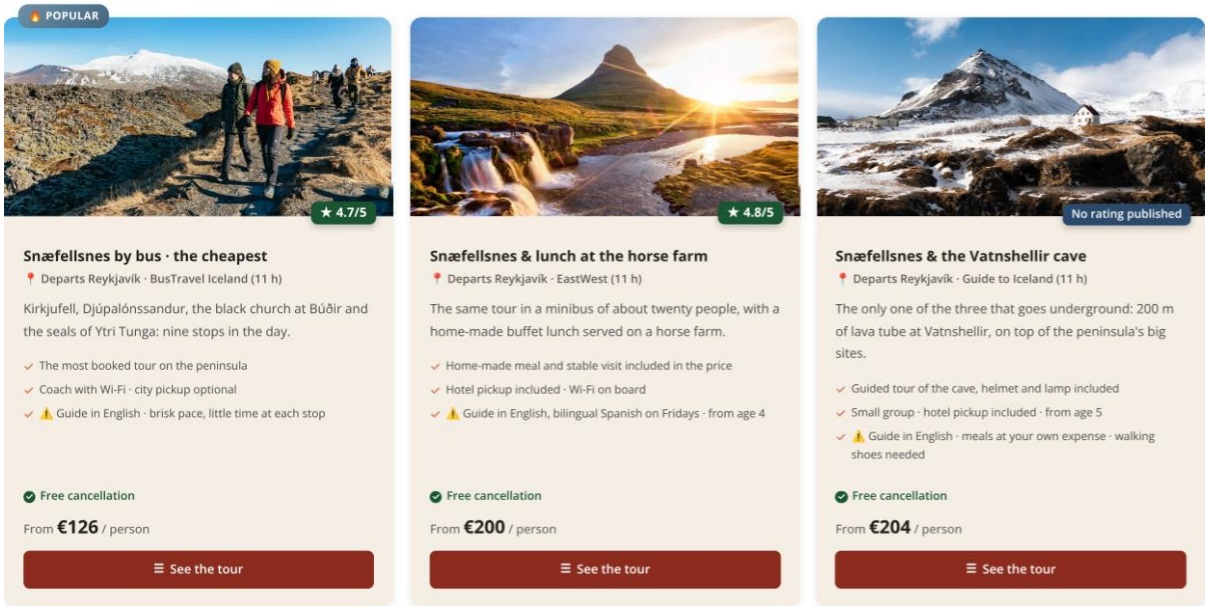
## *Visiting Snæfellsnes from Reykjavík with an agency*

It's very easy to visit the Snæfellsnes peninsula from Reykjavík by going with one of the agencies. These are day trips, 10 to 12 hours, and they all offer roughly the same programme:

- The Berserkjahraun lava field
- Kirkjufell mountain
- A few stops in Snæfellsjökull national park
- Djúpalónssandur beach
- The Arnarstapi walk

And some variations depending on the agency, like the lava caves, that kind of thing.

*The price generally ranges between €100 and €150, depending on group size, activities and duration.*



# THE REYKJANES PENINSULA

*What to see in this article*

# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN REYKJANES

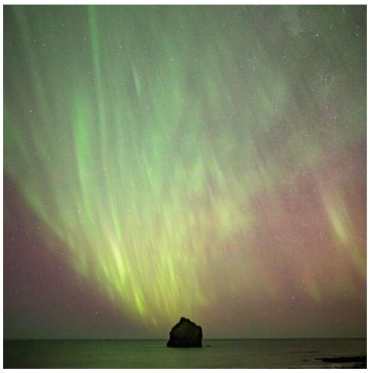
Located in south-west Iceland, the Reykjanes peninsula is a fascinating region that's worth a visit for quite a few reasons. It's a genuine open-air museum for geology fans.

You'll find lava fields, fumaroles, hot springs and bubbling mud pools. The landscapes are lunar and the volcanic formations simply stunning.

On top of that, it's quick from the capital (only 1 hour's drive). You'll just need to keep an eye on the eruptions, which have become frequent)







## Here are the most beautiful places on the Reykjanes peninsula

- the **Reykjanes cape** right at the tip of the peninsula, with lovely geological formations. A popular spot for the northern lights!
- the impressive cliffs of **Hafnarberg**
- the geothermal area of **Gunnuhver**
- And the **Blue Lagoon** of course!



- Another geothermal area at **Krýsuvík**, between the volcanoes
- Lake **Kleifarvatn**
- The **Raufarhólshellir lava tunnel**, for a really different experience
- the **bridge between two continents**, the rift that separates the American plate from the Eurasian plate
- and you'll drive through **landscapes of desolation** for tens of kilometres
- With all the eruptions of the last 3 or 4 years, you can now visit these sites, these **new volcanoes** that have risen out of the ground, and lava fields still steaming.
- Fancy going inside a volcano (a dormant one, don't worry)? Then take a look at the **Thrihnukagigur** tour!





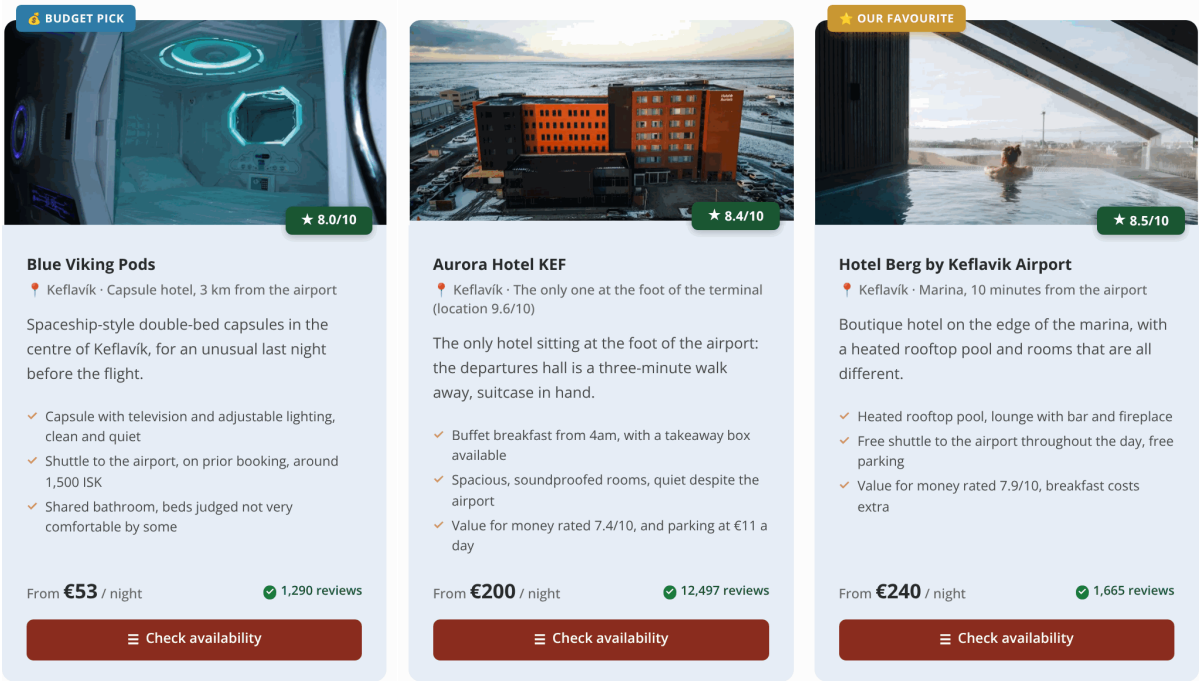

# WHERE TO STAY ON THE PENINSULA

Before, I'd automatically have suggested Grindavík, the little village ideally placed for visiting the region. Except that with all the eruptions and the earthquakes, the village is sometimes evacuated. Things are fairly calm there at the moment, even if it shakes from time to time (nothing nasty). Despite all that, Grindavík is still a very handy option.

Life is getting back to normal, though, and there are some lovely places to stay. Let's cross our fingers that it stays quiet and that the residents can get back to a more or less normal life.

Sleeping in Keflavík, not far from the airport, isn't necessarily a bad idea. There are quite a few options, and you're not very far from the main sites since Keflavík sits at the far north-west

## *Sleeping in Keflavík close to the airport*



## *3 recommended places to stay in Grindavík*




**Grindavik Guesthouse – self check in & out**

📍 Borgarhraun 2 · Grindavík, Blue Lagoon 20 km away (location 9.0/10)

Grindavík guesthouse built for short stops, with self check-in at any hour and a shared kitchen at your disposal.

- ✓ The owners' welcome and personal touch, praised again and again
- ✓ Shared kitchen, well equipped for cooking on site
- ✓ Shared bathrooms, and several guests mention being sensitive to noise

From **€91** / night

☰ Check availability




**Harbour View Cottages Grindavik**

📍 Austurvegur 26 · Grindavík, near the harbour (location 9.1/10)

Free-standing cottages of 29 m² near the harbour, with a private bathroom, a terrace and self check-in.

- ✓ Clean, well equipped cottages, with the view often mentioned
- ✓ A practical base for crossing the Reykjanes peninsula
- ✓ Incomplete kitchen kit: the microwave is missing, according to guests

From **€199** / night

☰ Check availability




**Northern Light Inn**

📍 Norðurljósavegur 1 · Blue Lagoon 1 km away (location 9.0/10)

Hotel tucked away in the lava fields a kilometre from the Blue Lagoon, with a restaurant, a spa and a reception open day and night.

- ✓ Free spa access with the Superior and Deluxe rooms
- ✓ Icelandic cooking and breakfast included, often mentioned
- ✓ Value for money rated 8.0: rates judged high for what you get

From **€370** / night

☰ Check availability

## *3 great places to stay on the Reykjanes peninsula*




**Lighthouse-Inn**

📍 Norðurljósavegur 2 · Garður, Keflavík 13 km away (location 9.2/10)

Seaside inn at Garður, near the two lighthouses, with a bar, a pool table and a full breakfast included.

- ✓ Rooms judged clean and spacious, from 22 to 60 m²
- ✓ An accommodating welcome, one of the most mentioned points
- ✓ Thin partitions: noise comes up in several comments

From **€171** / night

☰ Check availability




**Ocean Break Cabins**

📍 Nátthagi 1 · Sandgerði, Keflavík 10 km away (location 9.3/10)

Seafront cabins at Sandgerði, each with its own private hot tub and kitchenette, facing the Atlantic.

- ✓ Private hot tub and terrace, the most mentioned feature
- ✓ Fitted kitchenette, useful given how isolated this coast is
- ✓ No food served on site: the restaurants are in the villages

From **€201** / night

☰ Check availability




**By the Lighthouse**

📍 Narfakot · Vogar, Reykjavík 36 km away (location 9.9/10)

Family studios of 65 m² on the beachfront at Vogar, with a private garden and direct access to the shore.

- ✓ Sea view and beach access, at the heart of the comments
- ✓ Very spacious units, each with its own garden
- ✓ Only 28 reviews so far: still a thin sample

From **€287** / night

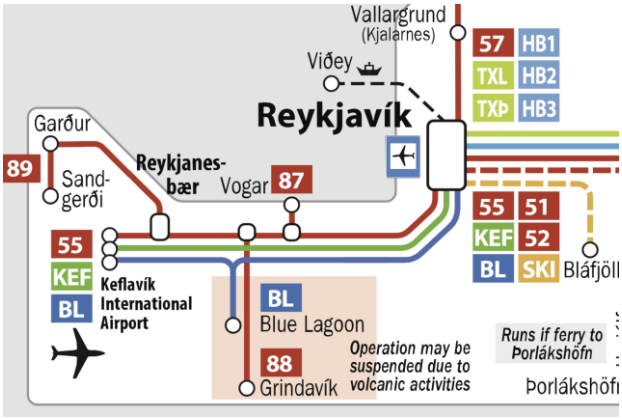
☰ Check availability

# PRACTICAL INFO ON REYKJANES

## *How to get around the region*

As you can see in the image below, getting around by bus really isn't easy for exploring the peninsula. Apart from the Blue Lagoon, not a single tourist site is served.

So I strongly advise you to use a car. And if you don't have one, there are agencies that take you to the main spots. I explain it all below.




## *The tours for visiting Reykjanes from Reykjavík*

I talked just before about the main things to do in the heart of the peninsula: the Blue Lagoon, the lava cave, going to see the new volcanoes.

Visiting the whole Reykjanes peninsula with an agency is possible, there are several options but they don't all include sites like Gunnuhver (which is a shame). So here's one I find nicely complete:




**Reykjavik: hike on the recent eruption sites and a tour of the Reykjanes peninsula**

★★★★½ 4.7/5 · Very highly rated · 1,202 reviews · 9 h · pickup in Reykjavik · from age 12

From Reykjavik, about 3 h 30 of hiking to the recent lava fields of Geldingadalir and Meradalir, then a tour of the Reykjanes peninsula: the Gunnuhver hot springs, the Reykjanes lighthouse and the bridge between the continents. Stops at lake Kleifarvatn and at Seltún on the way out.

*The day we visited, it rained a lot and there was (of course) a lot of wind. But that made the lava fields even more special. It felt like being on another planet!* — Isabell-Christin, Germany

- Funny, well-informed guides, attentive to the whole group · pickup and drop-off faultless
- Walking on the fresh lava, the high point of the day · lighthouse and Reykjanes coast much liked
- ⚠ Guide in English · demanding hike · no shelter in the rain, bring a picnic · times sometimes tied to the Blue Lagoon transfers

Free cancellation

From **€115**

Check availability

## *How long to visit it*

Honestly, this isn't the region that will need the most time. **You can do the loop in a good day** (not counting the Blue Lagoon). So if you leave Reykjavík early, you have time to see everything. On the other hand, if you want to *spend time at the Blue Lagoon* then you'll have to sacrifice one or two things, because I recommend setting aside a short half-day for the thermal baths. It's so good!



And yes, the famous song Volcano Man was filmed in Reykjanes! (if that song gets stuck in your head, no need to thank me)



# THE BLUE LAGOON

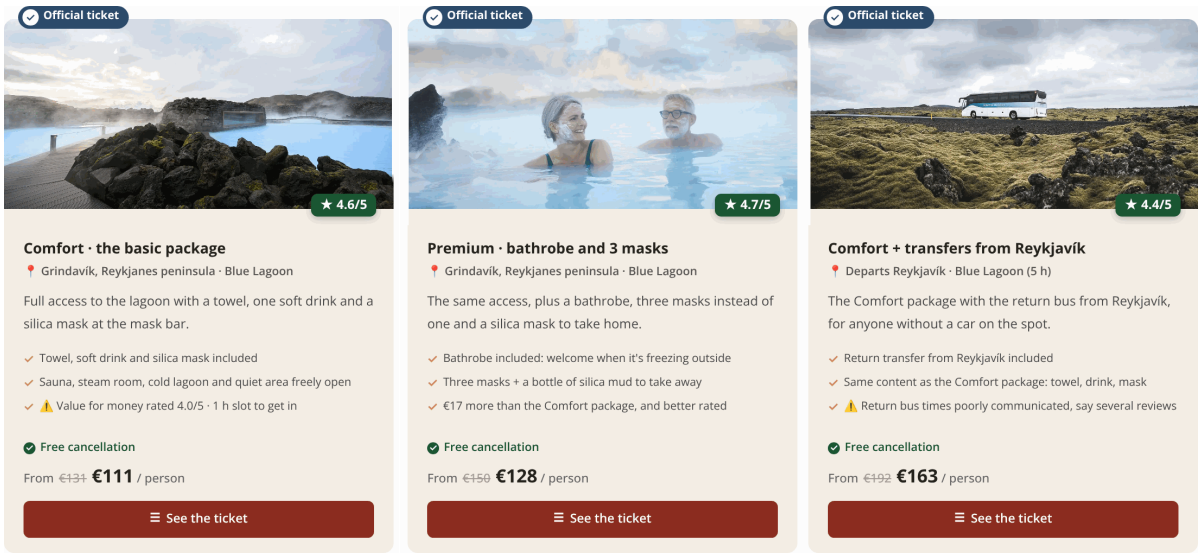
So yes it's touristy, yes it's expensive. But it is good! First of all the site itself is genuinely beautiful, well placed between the volcanoes and in the lava fields. The pools are really good, big, there's room for everyone.

And above all, it's relaxing. And that's what you're after, doing yourself some good, especially after touring the country. You don't notice time passing when you're in the water and that's what matters.

There are several price ranges, levels of comfort, and it varies by season. The base price is 14,490 ISK, so €98. If you want a bathrobe, a second drink included and a face mask, then it's 17,490 ISK, so €20 more.

*After that, honestly, I don't understand the pricing at all, because it also depends on the season, the time slot, with or without a shuttle from Reykjavík (or Keflavík), the package you choose…*

In high season the site is open from 7am to midnight, in low season from 8am to 10pm.



# LANDMANNALAUGAR

# A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO LANDMANNALAUGAR

Right, it's simple: Landmannalaugar is one of the most beautiful regions in Iceland. Actually, some say it's the most beautiful place of all. Having been twice (once in the snow, once in autumn), I admit I'm completely won over by this region.

Multicoloured mountains, red and black volcanoes, lava fields covered in green moss — it's a real treat for the eyes!

It's also a paradise for hiking, because the Landmannalaugar trek is said to be one of the most beautiful in the world. And honestly, when you see where you're putting your feet, you get it straight away!

That said, getting there isn't so simple. The Highlands are only accessible 3/4 months a year, and you absolutely need a 4x4 to go.

For sleeping there, there's a campsite open part of the year.









# HOW TO GET TO LANDMANNALAUGAR

## *Coming by car / campervan*

You absolutely must have a 4x4 vehicle, because these are F-roads, open only a few months a year.

There are several roads to get there:

- **The F208 to the west**, really spectacular, which leaves from Gjáin, Háifoss or Hjálparfoss. The road is wild, and even though you need a 4x4, you don't cross any river
- **The F225**, faster, which also comes from the west, from the 26. Careful, there's a (small) ford to cross
- **The F208 to the east**. This one, though, makes you cross a lot of fords, it isn't that easy! You need a suitable vehicle + permission to cross the rivers.

Careful, these are beautifully awful roads. Meaning holes everywhere. "Funny" thing on this kind of road: I lost my campervan's spare wheel, it came off and must be wandering somewhere in the Icelandic highlands.



## *Coming by bus*

Yes, you really can get to Landmannalaugar by bus! But only from mid-June to mid-September

There are 2 bus companies doing the trip, which makes 3 journeys a day

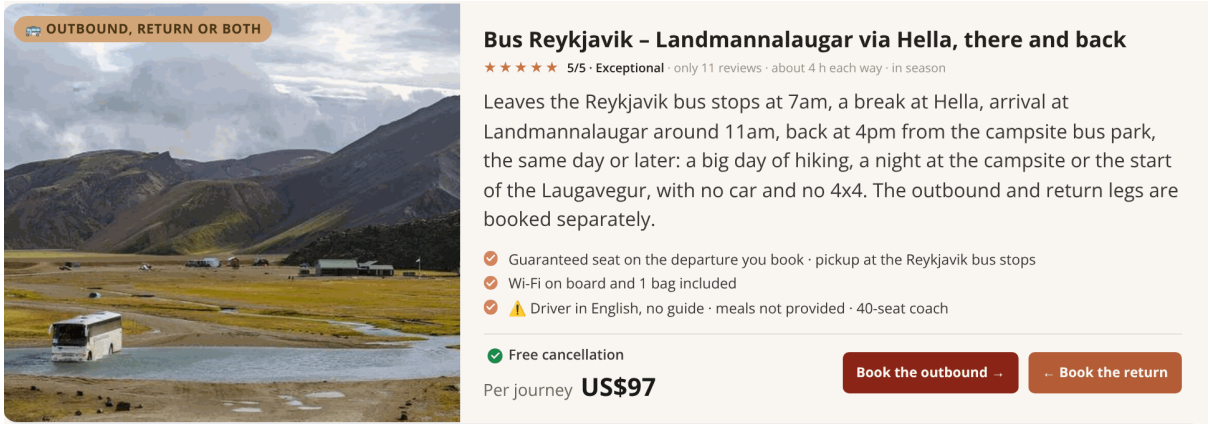
Since the first departure gets you there at 11:30 and the last departure is at 6pm, you can easily spend a lovely day up there and take the chance to hike.

But otherwise you can sleep on site, hike, come back another day, that's absolutely possible! And that's generally what people do, they come to hike for several days.

Price: it stings, a one-way trip costs between €87 and €95, so a return from €165. Yes really.

- **Reykjavik Excursions**
  - Departure from Reykjavík BSÍ at 7:30am
  - Departure from Landmannalaugar at 3:45pm
  - Price: €87 one way

- **Travel Experiences (TRex)**
  - Departure from Reykjavík City Hall at 7:30am and 12:30pm
  - Departure from Landmannalaugar at 2:30pm and 6pm
  - Price: €95 one way
  - *More info*



## *Coming with an agency*

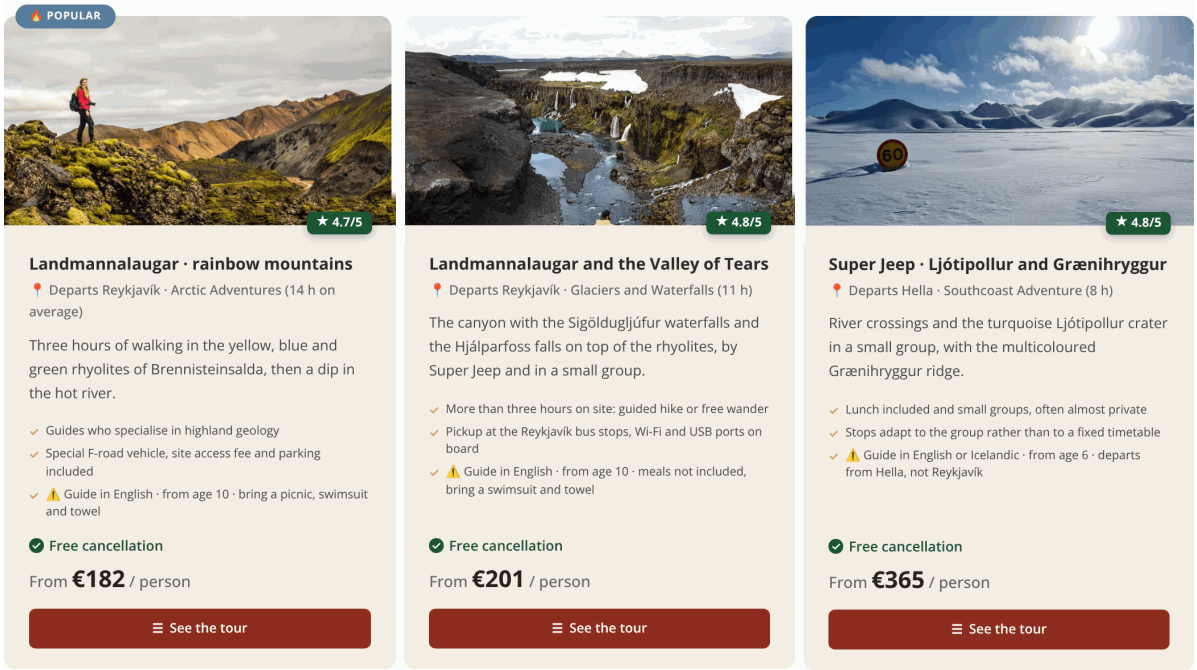
This is the handy one, and it works (almost!) all year round! If you don't want to drive, if you don't want to or can't venture onto the F-roads, or if the F-roads are closed but you still want to come, then you have the option of coming with an agency that will show you this incredible place!

- **Hiking** in Landmannalaugar with **departure from Reykjavík** (or on site) a guide takes you to the most beautiful spots on a fairly demanding hike
    - *Info and booking*

- Minibus tour: a **4x4 minibus** that means business! crossing rivers and all the rest. You'll see the essentials of the region and you can take a dip in the hot pools
    - *Info and booking*

- Landmannalaugar by **Super Jeep** — brilliant! You'll see the region in a different way, in a small group, and you have time for a hike as well as a swim
    - *Info and booking*

- Another **super jeep**, but this one runs all year round, including **winter** — yes, winter! Here it's a really small group and if you come in the snow it will genuinely be a different experience. You see the first photo with the little house in the snow? Well, that was in a super (really super) winter jeep. Impressive!
    - *Info and booking*



# PRACTICAL INFO ON LANDMANNALAUGAR

## *When to visit Landmannalaugar*

It's pretty straightforward: if you want to go on your own, by car, then it's ONLY when the F-roads are open, that is **generally 3 to 4 months a year**, from June to September. It depends on the weather and on the snow; sometimes it's open for the first half of October.

That said, if you come **in winter**, it is possible to visit this place but you absolutely have to go through an agency. I came by super jeep with the lava fields covered in snow, it was a different experience!

## *How long to visit Landmannalaugar*

It depends on whether you want to hike there (a subject I won't cover, because I've never done it) and whether you want to take your time.

But know that the drive to Landmannalaugar is exceptional in itself! As we'll see, there are several roads to get there and each one deserves your time. You'll get one incredible viewpoint after another.

**If you have a campervan** (a 4x4, necessarily), take a day for the drive, sleep on site, then take a day to explore on foot. That's almost what I did, I slept halfway along the F208. Not a sound, not a light, the definition of paradise! And the next day I finished the drive, wandered around a bit and headed back. Honestly, it was too short. That's why I recommend a day for the drive and a night at the campsite there

If you have a 4x4 car, you can sleep at the Landmannalaugar campsite. You can do the round trip in a day but it's a rushed job. At a push, the quickest would be to come in on the F208 and leave on the F225. But you won't get to enjoy the walks on site.



# KERLINGARFJÖLL

On the F35 road, between the north and the south-west, you'll find stunning landscapes, including a *mini Landmannalaugar*. The **Kerlingarfjöll** area is quite simply magnificent, with its colourful mountains where you can wander as much as you like. The advantage is that it's far more accessible: the road is an F track, but less difficult, and the region is less busy with tourists. It's almost as beautiful!

Right next door you'll find a geothermal area with hot baths, little geysers and bubbling pools: **Hveravellir**

I've put all this in the same section as Landmannalaugar because it isn't that far away and it's also in the Highlands.

It isn't possible to reach this area by bus.

The area is only open a few months a year, when the Highlands aren't under snow yet, generally from June to September/early October.

- *But good news! You can come with a guide from Reykjavík and visit it in a day!*



# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WATERFALLS

There are a great many absolutely fantastic waterfalls all over the country. They're all free, generally visitable all year round, and most are easy to reach.

Here's a small selection!

## Gullfoss

In the Golden Circle, an essential and very easy to visit



## Brúarfoss

In the Golden Circle too, reached by a very pretty walk





## Hjálparfoss

Reachable on a normal road, in the south-west heading towards the Highlands



## Háifoss

Normally not reachable without a 4x4 since it's on an F-road (a very tame F-road, mind), superb and great for a hike down to its base — watch out for the wind, though!



## Gjáin

Really pretty, close to Háifoss and Hjálparfoss, reachable on a normal road



## Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss

The two are close to each other, on Iceland's south coast. They're unmissable and very easy to reach





## Svartifoss

A genuinely surprising waterfall in Skaftafell park, with its unique basalt columns



## Dettifoss

On the north coast not far from Mývatn, the most powerful (and loudest!) waterfall in the country. You can go to both banks, and both are very photogenic



## Selfoss

Right next to Dettifoss, Selfoss is a mini Niagara Falls, really nice



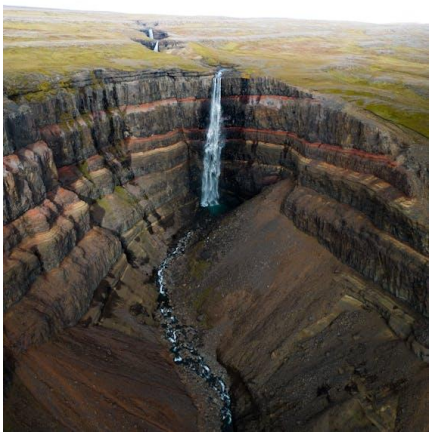
## Goðafoss

The waterfall of the gods. On the north coast between Mývatn and Akureyri, very photogenic, and you can reach it from both sides. Well, if the weather allows!



## Hengifoss

In the east of the island, its distinctive feature is the red lines in the rock. It takes a good hike to get to it.



## Dynjandi

The most beautiful waterfall in the Westfjords. So not easy to reach depending on the season — it's right by the road, if the region is accessible!



## Aldeyjarfoss

A very pretty waterfall in the centre, so only reachable via an F-road a few months a year



## Þjófafoss

Nicely photogenic, and easy to reach on the way back from the Golden Circle



## Hraunfossar

Very, very pretty, a bit inland but still easy to reach from the west



## Kirkjufellsfoss

Because it's right next to the famous Kirkjufell mountain and makes for lovely photos!



## Gufufoss

A mini Skógafoss in the Eastfjords! easy to reach from the road



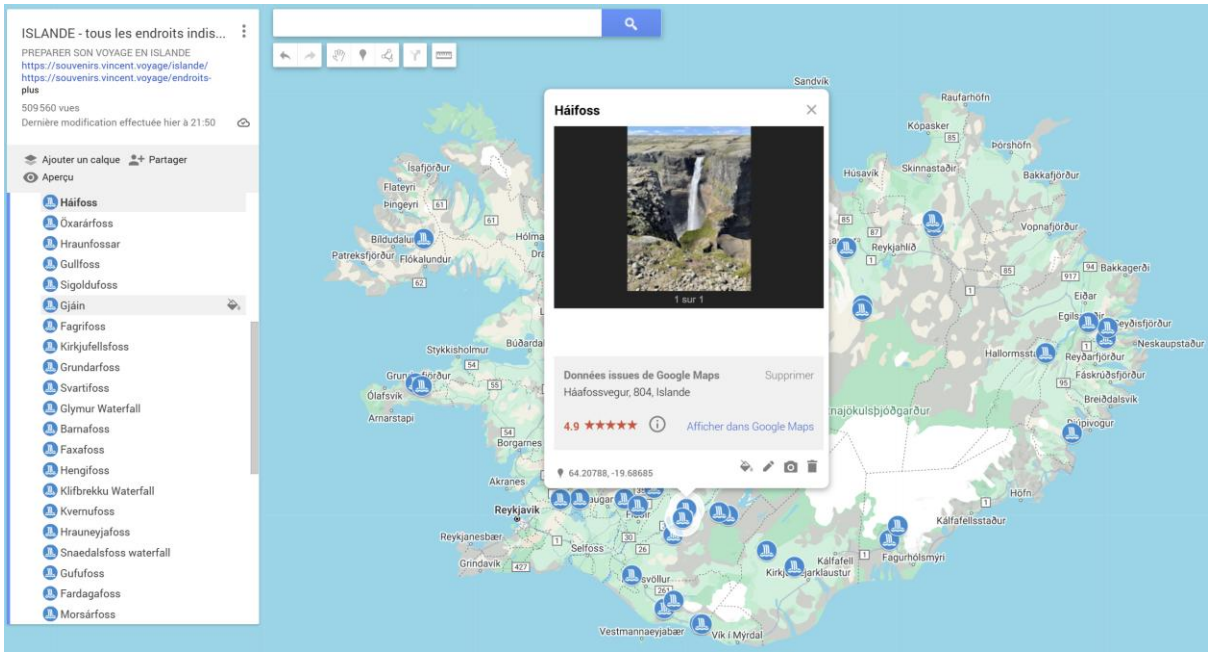
## Klifbrekku

In the Eastfjords again, a very pretty waterfall on several levels — there are a few of those around there!



## All the waterfalls

Find all the waterfalls on *the map dedicated to Iceland* !



# EXAMPLE ITINERARIES

# ICELAND IN 4/5 DAYS

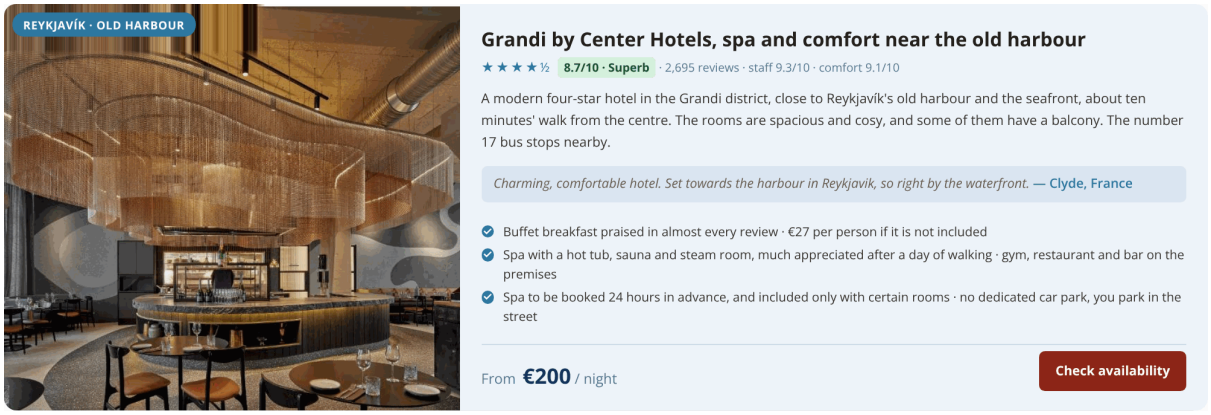
## *Without a car, exploring around Reykjavík*

If you're only coming for 4/5 days then you don't necessarily need a car. Well, it's always super handy for flexibility and for not spending everything on tours. But you can absolutely explore without a car and it's really great.

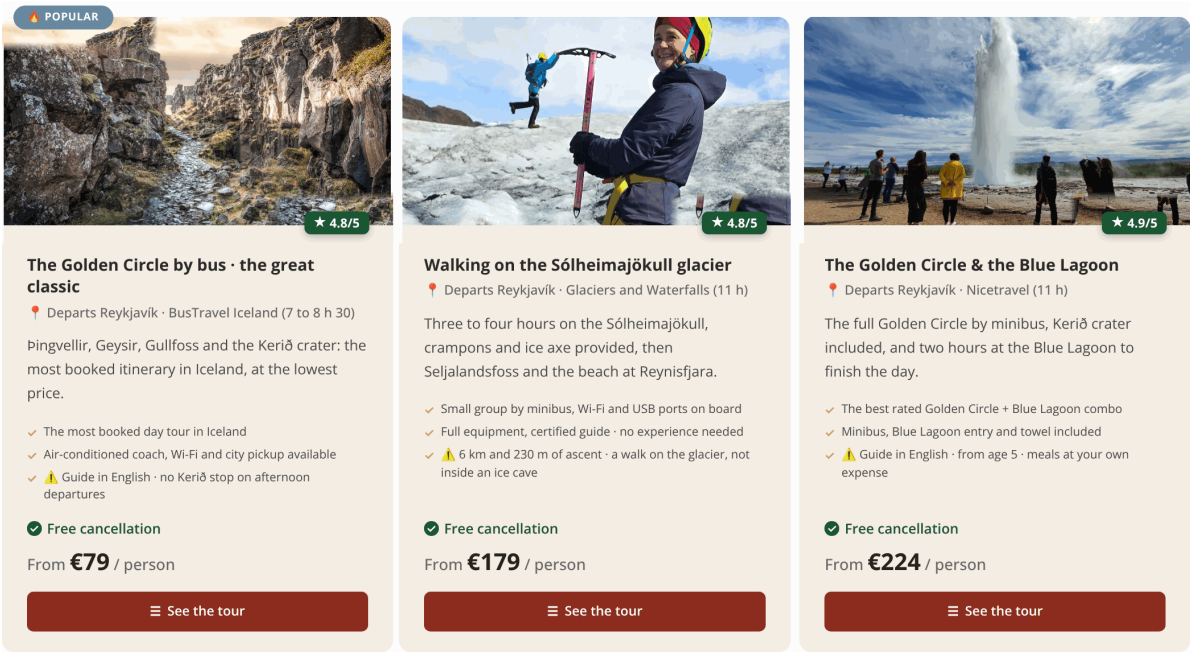
- **Day 1: arrival and discovering the city**
  - **arrival** at Keflavík airport, you need to *take the shuttle* to get to the city centre
  - head off to visit the city centre, see the street art, the Hallgrímskirkja church, the famous Laugavegur street
  - If you arrive early and you have time, go and see *the Perlan museum*
  - **Night** — if your budget isn't very high, sleep in one of the nice hostels like *Eric the Red*. If you'd rather have a hotel, then there's *the Hotel Exeter*, cheap in low season
    - *Discover the best places to stay in Reykjavík*







- **Day 2: the Golden Circle / walking on a glacier**
    - Go through an agency to visit the Golden Circle, the emblematic route for seeing a “best of” Iceland. You’ll get the chance to see Gullfoss waterfall, the Geysir geysers and the Thingvellir site in particular. Afterwards you can add a nice option like the Blue Lagoon, or if it’s the right season, in the evening you can take the chance to see the northern lights!
        - *Discover the Golden Circle by bus*
        - *The Golden Circle in a small group*
        - *The Golden Circle with the Blue Lagoon*
        - *The Golden Circle with the northern lights*

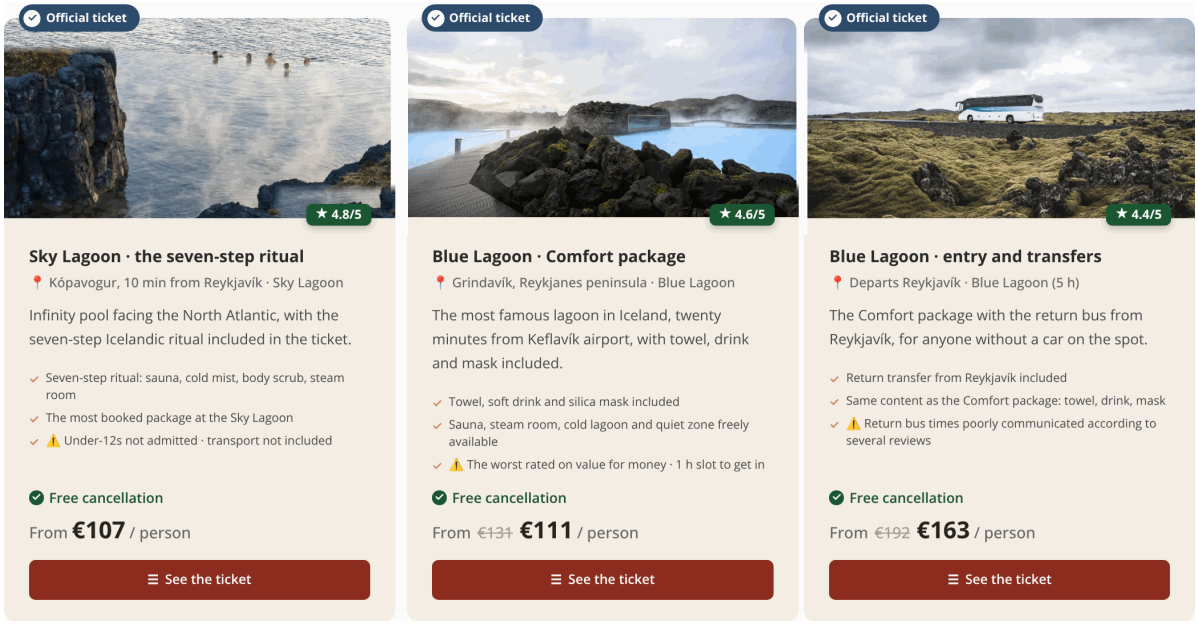


- **Day 3: seeing whales and lounging in a spa**
    - Early in the day, head out to **see the whales** in Reykjavík bay! my advice would be to take the 9am departure, it lasts about 3 hours so you're back for lunch
        - *Info and booking*

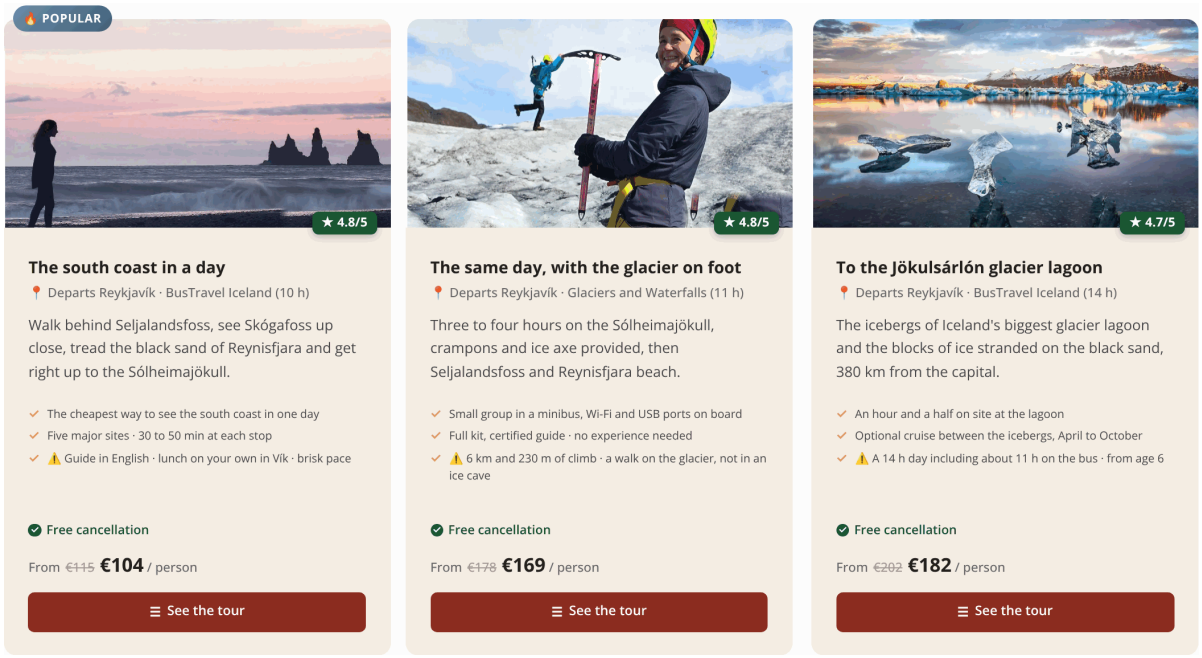



- For the afternoon, go and do yourself some good at the **Blue Lagoon or the Sky Lagoon**, the two go-to spots around Reykjavík. Allowing time to eat and get there, book your tickets (with transport) for mid-afternoon, around 4pm.
    - *Booking for the Blue Lagoon with transport*
    - *Booking for the Sky Lagoon with transport*

- And if it's the right season, in the evening head out **hunting for the northern lights** as well!
    - *The best agencies for seeing the northern lights in Reykjavík*



- **Day 4: getting a taste of Iceland's south coast and/or walking on a glacier**
    - A taste, because you'll be back, trust me! So book with an agency to see the main sites on Iceland's south coast, with the wild waterfalls (Skógafoss, Seljalandsfoss…), the black sand beaches of Vík and why not push on as far as the Jökulsárlón lagoon! It takes the whole day, it's packed, but it's magnificent!
        - *Discover the main sites on the South Coast*
        - *Discover Jökulsárlón and Diamond Beach as well*
        - Or *do a glacier walk on top of visiting the south coast* !






## *Itinerary with a car, seeing the essentials around Reykjavík*

You're coming to Iceland for **a few days and you have a car**. So here's a suggested itinerary, with various places to stay. But you can also just explore around Reykjavík, that works fine!

- **Day 1: arrival and discovering the city**
  - **arrival** at Keflavík airport, pick up *the car you've rented*
  - head to Reykjavík, visit the city centre, the street art, the Hallgrímskirkja church, the famous Laugavegur street
  - If you arrive early and you have time, go and see *the Perlan museum*
  - **Night** — if your budget isn't very high, sleep in one of the nice hostels like *Eric the Red*. If you'd rather have a hotel, then there's *the Hotel Exeter*, cheap in low season
    - *Discover the best places to stay in Reykjavík*





- **Day 2: the Golden Circle**
  - Leave early and head for the **geysers** to watch Strokkur do its morning show, then on to **Gullfoss** before the crowds land.
    If you're on schedule and it's the right season, head to **Brúarfoss** for a magnificent walk. Then go to **Thingvellir**
  - **Night** — sleep towards the south coast, near Hella, for example at the lovely *Loa's Nest*.





- **Day 3: Discovering the start of the south coast**
  - Head for the waterfalls. First **Seljalandsfoss**, its little sister **Gljúfrabúi** right next door, and why not a plane wreck just behind it, 10 minutes' walk away?
    Then you have the famous **Skógafoss** not far off. Then the **Sólheimajökull** glacier!
    Continue on to Vík, and above all to go to **Dyrhólaey** (and see the puffins if it's the season), the black sand beaches of Vík and **Reynisfjara**.
  - **Night** — sleep in Vík, for example at *the Hotel Katla*, really nice





- **Day 4: The 2nd part of the south coast**
  - Continue east, make a quick stop at the **canyon** Fjaðrárgljúfur (thanks, copy and paste). Carry on to the **glaciers** Skaftafellsjökull and Svínafellsjökull.
    If you have the time you can *walk on a glacier*.
    Then head to the **Jökulsárlón** lagoon and **Diamond** Beach
  - **Night** — sleep near Skaftafell, for example at the *Fosshotel Glacier Lagon*





- **Day 5: Heading back and the Blue Lagoon**
  - Time to head back! Drive the same route in reverse as far as Reykjanes, it's a good 4/5 hours. So leave early
  - **Afternoon** — do yourself some good at the *Blue Lagoon*.
  - **Night** — sleep near the airport, for example at the *Konvin Hotel*, for the flight the next day










# ITINERARIES FOR ONE WEEK IN ICELAND

So with a week, you get waaay more options, and that's what's great! The previous itinerary, the 4/5-day one, let you glimpse the main spots in the southwest and the south coast.

Here, with a week, you can fit in one extra small region like Snaefellsnes or Reykjanes, or push further along the south coast as far as Vestrahorn.

So here's what I suggest: the Golden Circle, Snaefellsnes, the south coast and a bit of Reykjavik!

- **DAY 1 – ARRIVAL AT KEFLAVIK AND OFF TO SNAEFELLSNES**
  - **arrival** at Keflavik airport, pick up *the car you rented*
  - since you arrive fairly early, head straight for the **Snaefellsnes** peninsula!
    on the way, enjoy the **red craters** near Ytri-Rauðarmelskúla
    Take road 56 to Grundafjordur, facing **Kirkjufell**
  - **Night:** sleep in **Grundafjordur**, a really nice setting, ideal for starting your tour of Snaefellsnes
    - And the *Kirkjufell Guesthouse* is the perfect spot!







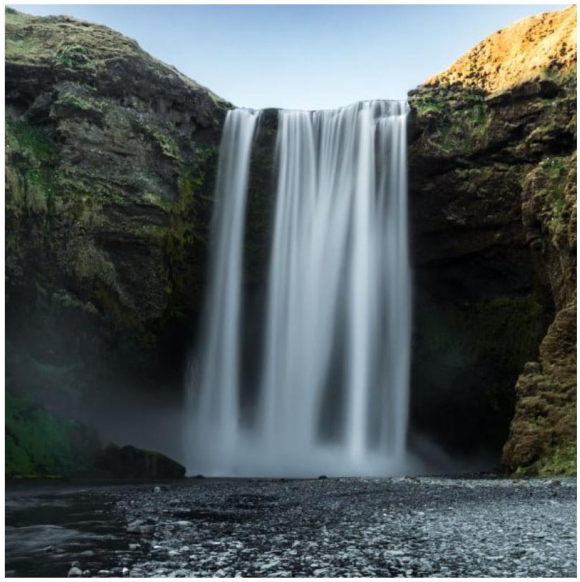
- **DAY 2 – EXPLORING THE SNAEFELLSNES PENINSULA**
    - Head out fairly early to see **Kirkjufell**, before people arrive from Reykjavik. Plenty of viewpoints, especially around Kirkjufellfoss waterfall
    - Over by Rif, there's Kerlingarfoss waterfall and above all the church of **Ingjalshóll**
    - Go to the black sand beaches like **Djúpalónssandur**
    - If road conditions allow, take the F570 and the F575 that climbs up to the volcano **Snaefellesjokull**
    - Head back along the south coast, road 574 then road 54.
    - And then head **for the Golden Circle**
    - **Night:** sleep near Thingvellir park
        - For example the pretty wild setting of the *ION Adventure Hotel*



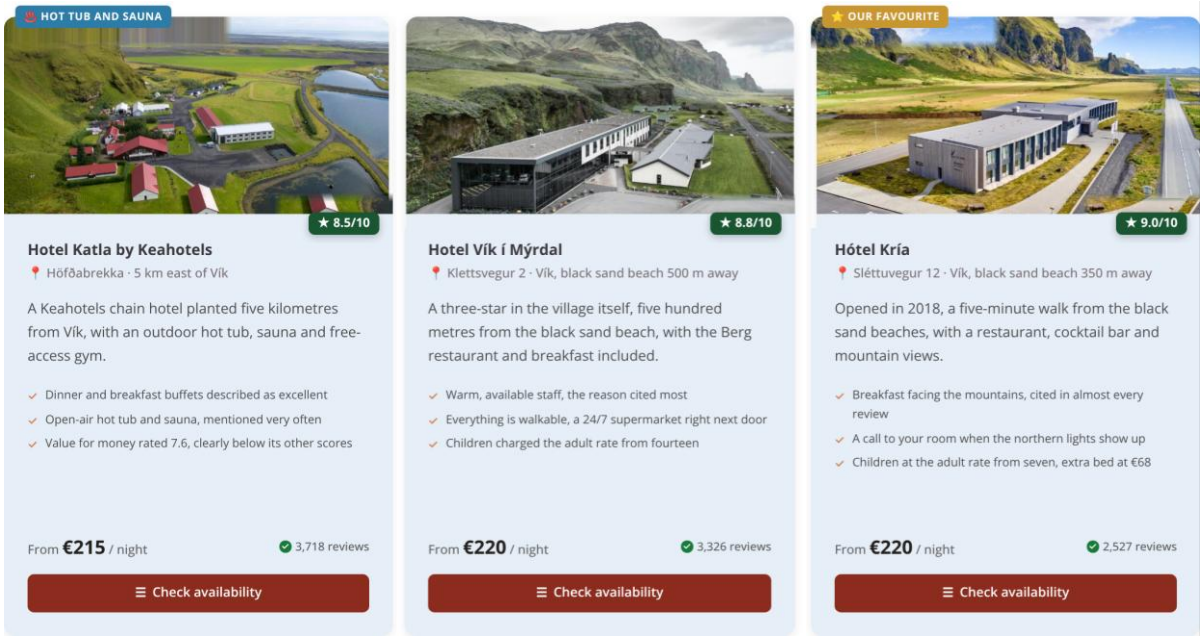


- **DAY 3 – EXPLORING THE GOLDEN CIRCLE**
    - Start fairly early with **Thingvellir**park, where you're staying, and go in particular to the pretty Oxararfoss waterfall
    - If the season allows (and if you have the time), head to **Bruarfoss**waterfall. It's a superb 2-hour round-trip walk
    - Then right next door you have the geysers of **Geysir**
    - And finally, go to **Gullfoss**
    - Since you're visiting the south coast the next day, you'll cover a bit of ground in the evening to save time
    - **Night:** sleep somewhere towards the south coast
        - For example the really nice *Loa's Nest* near Hella. Or if you want to get a little closer still, have a look at *the Selja hotel* !

- **DAY 4 – EXPLORING THE SOUTH COAST – PART 1**
    - Head for the waterfalls. First **Seljalandsfoss**, then its little sister Gljúfrabúi
    - Then you have the famous **Skogafoss** not far away.
    - Treat yourself! go for a ***hike*** *on the Sólheimajökull* glacier!
    - Carry on to **Vik**, and above all to get to **Dyrholaey** (and see the puffins if it's the season), the black sand beaches of Vik and **Reynisfjara**.
    - **Night:** sleep in Vik, for example at *the Katla hotel*, really nice



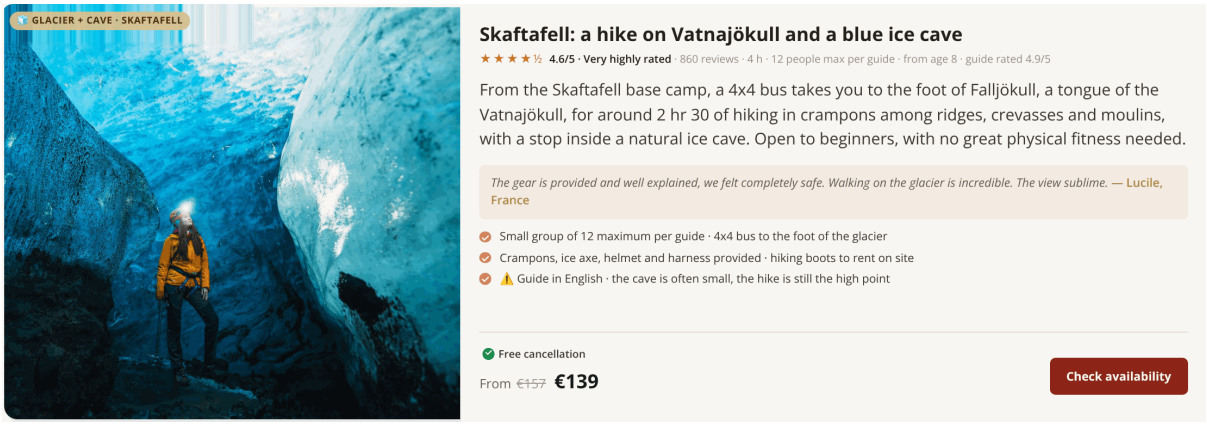




- **DAY 5 - EXPLORING THE SOUTH COAST – PART 2**
    - Carry on east, make a quick stop at the **canyon** Fjaðrárgljúfur (thank you, copy/paste).
    - Carry on to the **glaciers** Skaftafelljokull and Svinafellsjokull, and you can walk out to Svartifoss waterfall.
    - Then go to the **Jokulsarlon** lagoon and **Diamond** Beach
        - If you have the time, and it's the season, you can *visit an ice cave*
    - **Night:** sleep not too far from Vestrahorn, like at the lovely *Guesthouse Nypugardar*, excellent value for money. If it's a good night for the northern lights, you can drive out to Vestrahorn to watch them



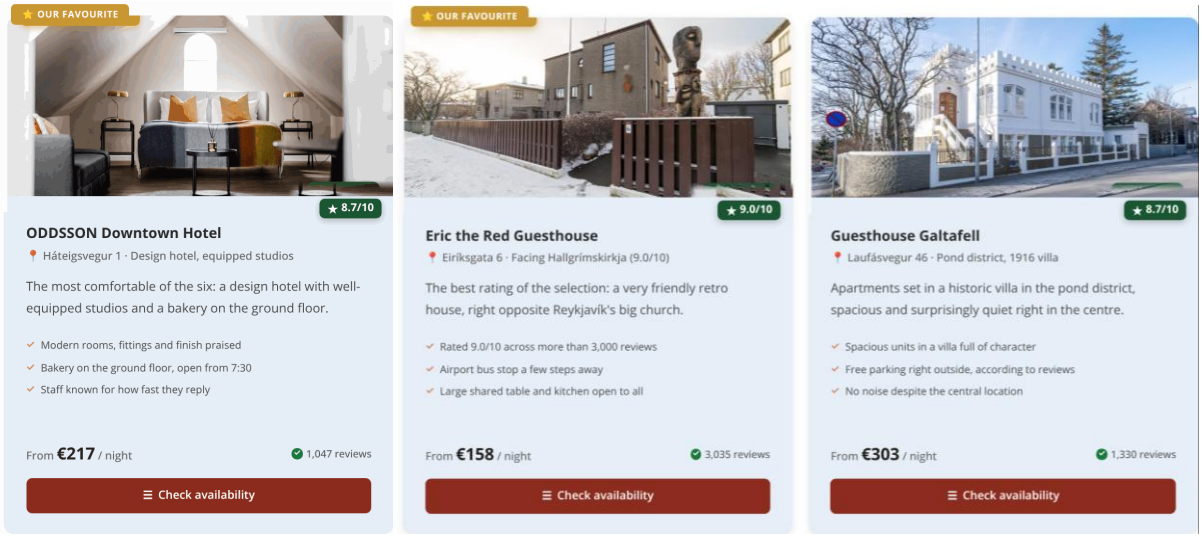




- **DAY 6 – VESTRAHORN AND ON THE ROAD ALONG THE EAST COAST**
    - The first goal of the morning is to get to **Vestrahorn**. Buy your ticket to drive into the dunes, facing this iconic mountain.
    - After that, you have quite a bit of driving to do. On the way you can stop at the places you haven't seen, like the DC3 or the Múlagljúfur canyon.
    - For a change from the earlier recommendations, in the affordable bracket I'd suggest the *Oddson Downtown* and otherwise *the Apotek Hotel*, really great.

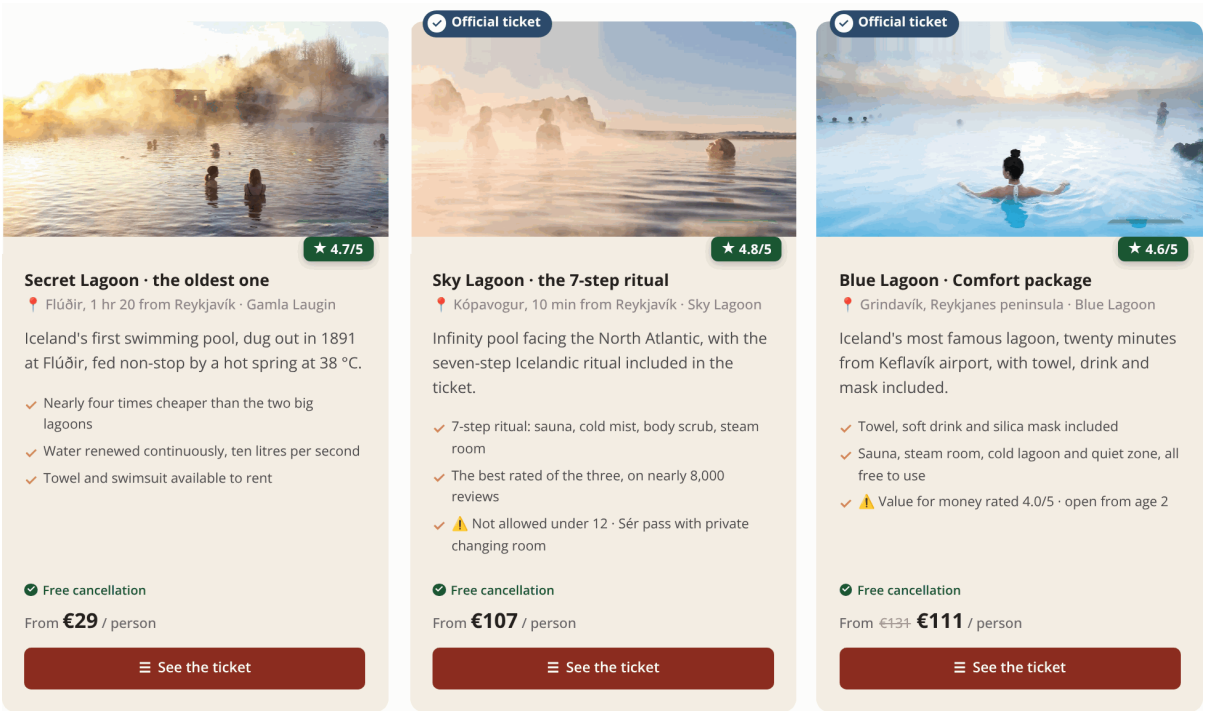







**FIND YOUR DREAM PLACE TO STAY IN REYKJAVIK!**

- **DAY 7 – EXPLORING REYKJAVIK AND RELAXING IN THE THERMAL BATHS**
    - Right, after all that you can take your time exploring Reykjavik and its city centre. It doesn't take all that long
    - If you fancy lounging about and doing yourself some good, what's better than the *Blue Lagoon* or the *Sky Lagoon* ?



# TWO WEEKS IN ICELAND – THE RING ROAD

The Ring Road, as the name says so well, is the road that goes... all the way around the island. Its very big advantage is that it passes most of the island's most interesting and most iconic spots, and it does so all year round.

Which means that unlike the F roads and the roads heading inland, this road is in theory accessible all the time and is maintained even in difficult conditions.

## *How long do you need to see Iceland on the Ring Road*

Some people do it in a week. Very concretely, I find that really too fast. You spend all your time on the road and just make quick photo stops before setting off again. Don't forget that the distances are very long, the speed limits low, the weather can slow you down a lot, and you'll be stopping all the time

**10 days starts to be reasonable**. More time, but not much room for detours along the way, you'll stick to the essentials!

**2 weeks, now that I find really great**. You have the time, you can enjoy it, you can do some hikes, swing through Snaefellsnes and the Golden Circle.





## *Can you do the Ring Road without a car*

So, "yes but". Yes, you can go around by bus. All the main places on the Ring Road have a stop. The catch: there's usually only one bus a day. So when you stop somewhere, you can't leave again before the next day. If there's accommodation next to the stop, fine, but if, like at Jokulsarjlon, there's nothing at all, not even a campsite, you end up stuck.

On the other hand you can get to Vik, Hof, Akureyri, Myvatn, Husavik and explore around them with agencies, that can work. But do realise it's genuinely complicated.

So my advice would be: a few days in Reykjavik and day trips around it with agencies (Golden Circle, Snaefellsnes, south coast). Then take a bus or a plane to Akureyri and explore around there (whales, Husavik, Myvatn, waterfalls). And you'll have seen some superb things

## *Which itinerary along the Ring Road*

*First off, the following article tells you everything about Iceland's Ring Road*

I was saying that in 2 weeks you can go around the island. Here's an itinerary, fairly packed, with detours into the Westfjords and Snaefellsnes. I'm also assuming you'll go and see the puffins at several iconic spots. In short, this itinerary is really adaptable, you can drop a stage, swap the Westfjords for a trip to Landmannalaugar, or add an extra day to enjoy the south coast.

But you see, in 2 weeks it stays very tight, you have to move fast. So don't hesitate to lighten the programme, the distances are long and there are hikes to do everywhere.

If you're going in winter instead, then drop the Westfjords and the hikes, and take more time at each place, because the days are very short and so you get less time to visit.

*You also have **quite a few activities** like whale watching, walking on a glacier, visiting an ice cave.*

### DAY 1 – PICKING UP THE CAR + REYKJAVIK

- **arrival** at Keflavik airport, pick up *the car you rented*
- head to Reykjavik, visit the city centre, the street art, Hallgrímskirkja church, the famous Laugavegur street
- If you arrive early and have the time, go and see *the Perlan museum*
- **Night:** if your budget isn't very high, sleep in one of the nice hostels like *Eric the Red*. If you'd rather go for a hotel, then there's *the Hotel Exeter*, cheap in low season
    - *Discover the best places to stay in Reykjavik*



## DAY 2 – EXPLORING THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

- Set off early and head to the **geysers** to watch Strokkur put on its morning show, then to **Gullfoss** before the crowds turn up.
  If you're on schedule and it's the season, head to **Bruarfoss** for a magnificent walk. Then go to **Thingvellir**
- **Night:** sleep towards the south coast, near Hella, for example at the nice *Loa's Nest*.



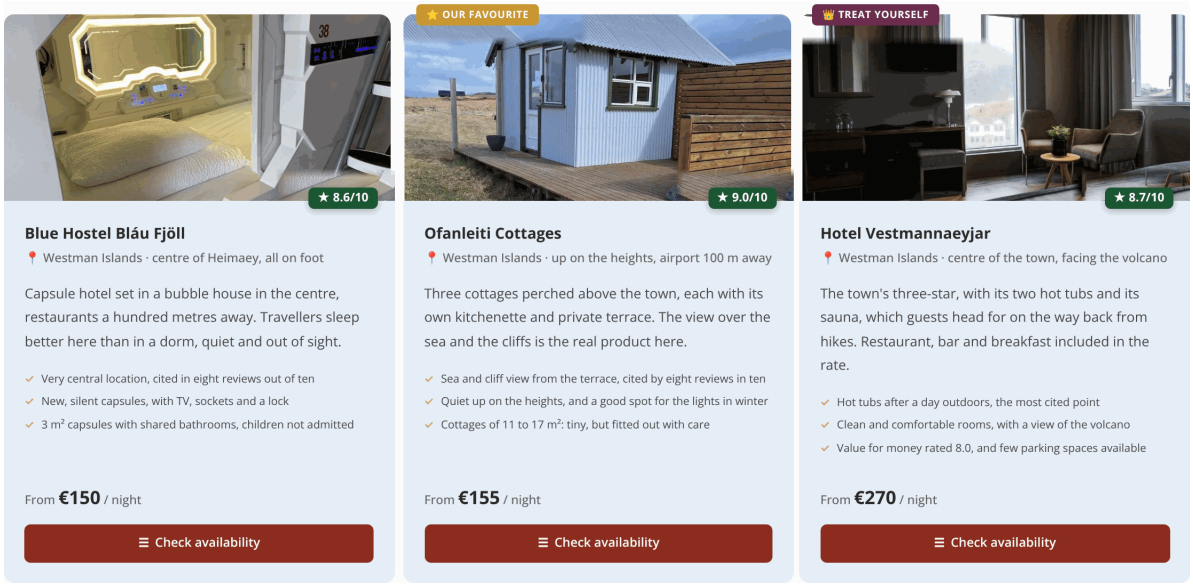


## DAY 3 – VISITING THE WESTMAN ISLANDS

- Take one of the first boats from Landeyjahöfn, at 8am for example, to visit the Westman Islands (*timetables here*)
- Walk around the **volcano**, the **beaches**, go and see the **puffins**
- Sleep on the island so you don't wear yourself out any more, like at the nice and cheap cottages of *Glamping & Camping*

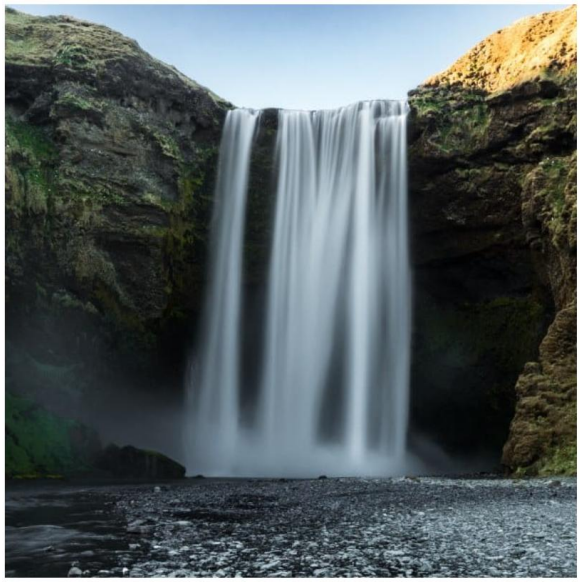


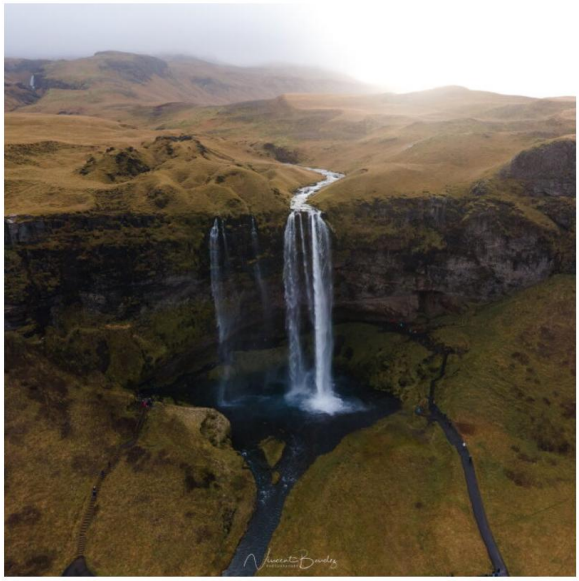


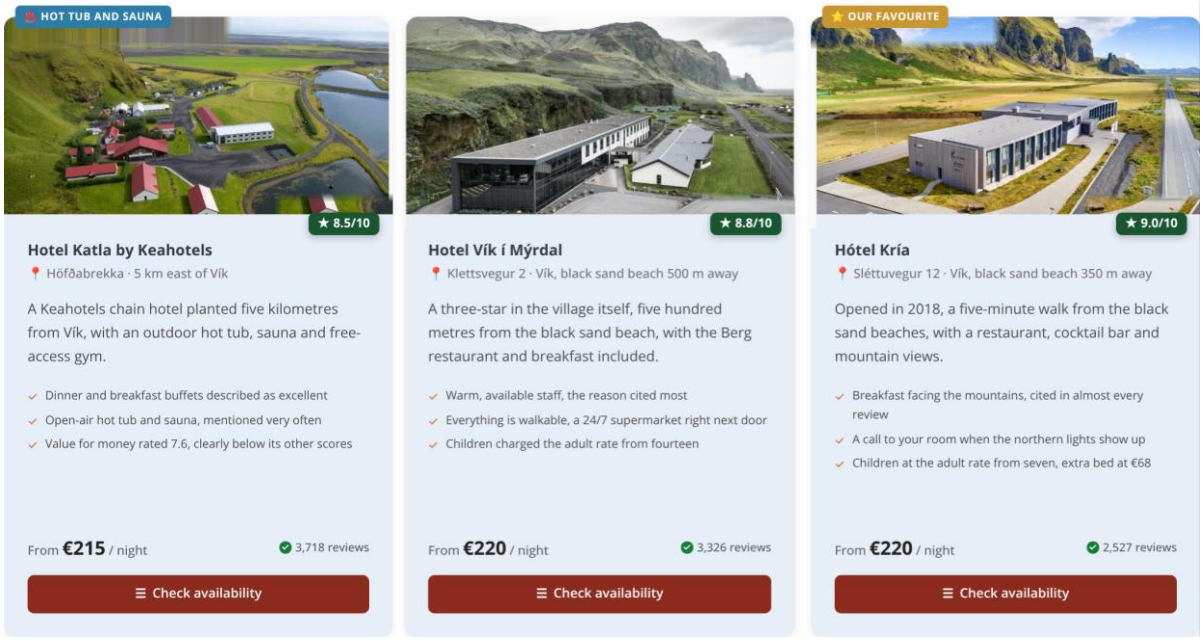


## DAY 4 – EXPLORING THE SOUTH COAST PART 1

- Take one of the first boats from Vestmannaeyjar to get back onto the Ring Road, the first boats leave at 7am (*timetables here*)
- Head for the waterfalls. First **Seljalandsfoss**, then its little sister Gljúfrabúi
- Then you have the famous **Skogafoss** not far away.
- Treat yourself! go for a ***hike** on the Sólheimajökull* glacier!
    - You can just pay it a quick visit if you don't want to walk on it
    - Otherwise go and see the wreck of the DC3 plane
- Carry on to **Vik**, and above all to get to **Dyrholaey** (and see the puffins if it's the season), the black sand beaches of Vik and **Reynisfjara**.
- **Night:** sleep in Vik, for example at *the Katla hotel*, really nice







## DAY 5 – EXPLORING THE SOUTH COAST PART 2

- Take one of the first boats from Vestmannaeyjar to get back onto the Ring Road, the first boats leave at 7am (*timetables here*)
- Carry on east, make a quick stop at the **canyon** Fjaðrárgljúfur (thank you, copy/paste).
- Carry on to the **glaciers** Skaftafelljokull and Svinafellsjokull, and you can walk out to Svartifoss waterfall.
- Then go to the **Jokulsarlon** lagoon and **Diamond** Beach
    - If you have the time, and it's the season, you can *visit an ice cave*
- **Night:** sleep not too far from Vestrahorn, like at the lovely *Guesthouse Nypugardar*, excellent value for money. If it's a good night for the northern lights, you can drive out to Vestrahorn to watch them








**Skaftafell: a hike on Vatnajökull and a blue ice cave**

★★★★½ 4.6/5 · Very highly rated · 860 reviews · 4 h · 12 people max per guide · from age 8 · guide rated 4.9/5

From the Skaftafell base camp, a 4x4 bus takes you to the foot of Falljökull, a tongue of the Vatnajökull, for around 2 hr 30 of hiking in crampons among ridges, crevasses and moulins, with a stop inside a natural ice cave. Open to beginners, with no great physical fitness needed.

*The gear is provided and well explained, we felt completely safe. Walking on the glacier is incredible. The view sublime. — Lucile, France*

- Small group of 12 maximum per guide · 4x4 bus to the foot of the glacier
- Crampons, ice axe, helmet and harness provided · hiking boots to rent on site
- ⚠ Guide in English · the cave is often small, the hike is still the high point

Free cancellation

From ~~€157~~ **€139**

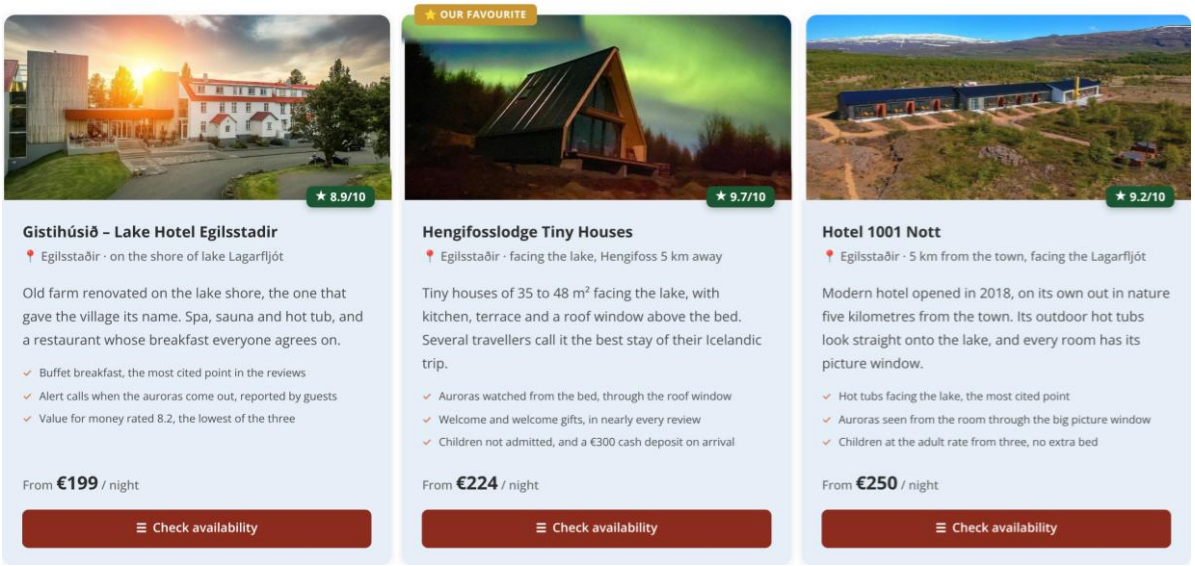
Check availability

## DAY 6 – VESTRAHORN AND THE EAST COAST

- The first goal of the morning is to get to **Vestrahorn**. Buy your ticket to drive into the dunes, facing this iconic mountain.
- After that, take the road that runs along the **east fjords**, don't take the direct road. The landscapes are superb, wild. Mind you, it sometimes closes because of the weather, which can be really mischievous around there.
- If you want to see puffins again somewhere with nobody around, head to **Borgafjordur Eistry**
- And then head to **Eglisstadir** to sleep. There's a really nice and cheap place like the *Eyjólfsstadir Guesthouse*.



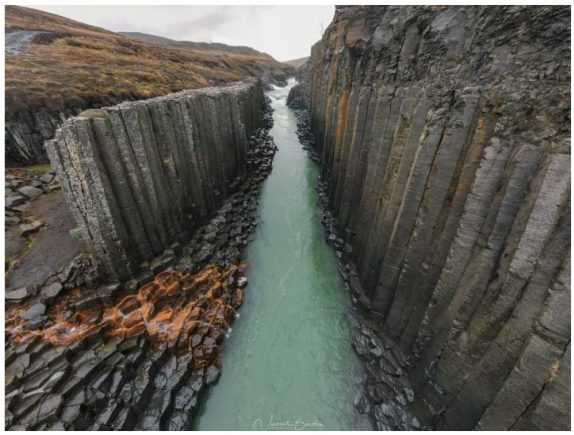


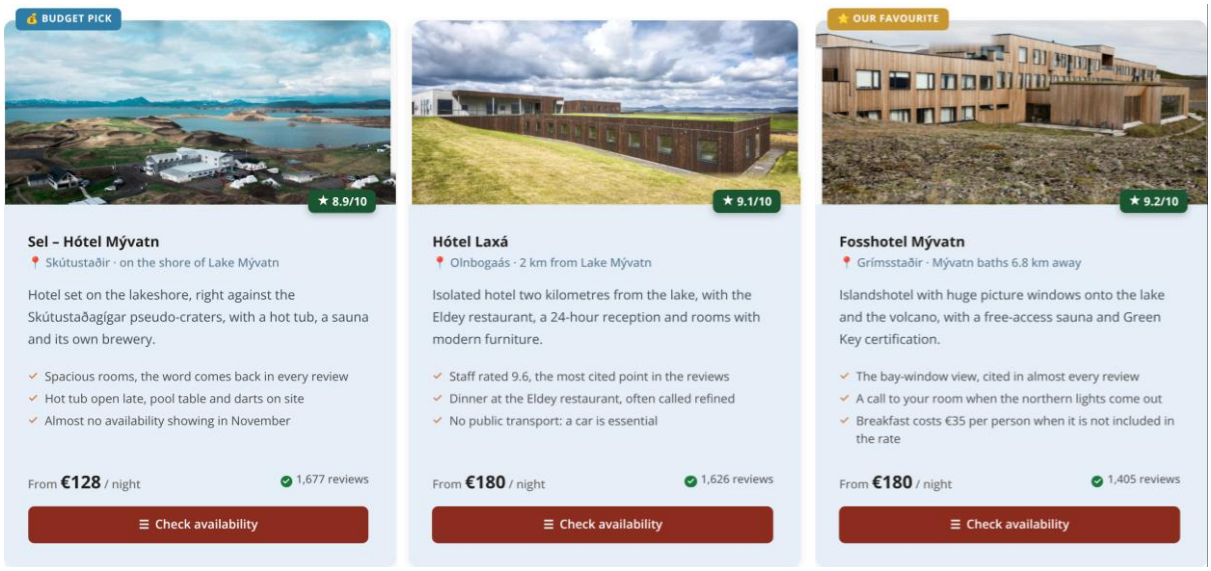


## DAY 7 – STUDLAGIL AND THE WATERFALLS OF THE NORTH

- From Egilsstadir, go to the superb canyon of **Studlagil**, one of a kind
- Then drive for nearly 2 hours to reach one of the most impressive waterfalls in the country: **Detifoss** (you can do both sides, each of which gives a different view)
- Then right nearby, go to the waterfall of **Selfoss**, a miniature version of Niagara Falls
- Finally, if you have the time, go and rest at the *Myvatn thermal baths*, an idyllic setting and not very touristy!
- In the evening, sleep near Myvatn, I'd strongly recommend *the Hotel Laxa*, right by the lake







## DAY 8 – AROUND LAKE MYVATN

- Go all the way around the pretty lake Myvatn (careful, the name means lake of the midges!)
- Visit the surprising Dimmuborgir site, then you can climb the Hverfjall volcano if it's accessible
- Discover the superb Hverir geothermal site
- Then head to Godafoss waterfall before setting off for Husavik to spend the night.
- In Husavik, if you want to sleep in the town centre, then there's of course *Árból Guesthouse*, or otherwise a bit outside at the very nice *Saltvik Farm Guesthouse*. That said, you can perfectly well stay at Myvatn where you were the night before, handy for getting back on the road










**Mývatn: natural geothermal baths (Earth Lagoon)**

★★★★½ 4.5/5 · Very highly rated · 2,306 reviews · day ticket · wheelchair accessible

The geothermal baths of northern Iceland, renamed Earth Lagoon: mineral water drawn from 2,500 metres down, pools and steam rooms in the middle of the fumaroles, a bar in the water and the Kvika café if you want a light meal. Open until 10pm, with the last entry at 9pm.

*They have everything you need to spend a few hours completely relaxed, in the middle of a spectacular landscape and incredible lava fields. — Elisa, Italy*

- New and very clean facilities since the reopening · reopened in July 2026
- Less busy than the other lagoons in Iceland · ideal at the end of the day
- ⚠️ Water hotter or cooler depending on the pool · towel rental, bring your own

Free cancellation

From **€58**

Check availability

## DAY 9 – WHALE WATCHING TRIP

- Husavik is the best place to see whales in Iceland. So go and find them with this *trip on a small fishing boat* ! The outing is in the morning.
- Then it's off to the Westfjords, but stop on the way at the surprising Hvitserkur site (3 hr 30 of driving)
- My advice would be to stop for the night near the entrance to the Westfjords, which you'll be discovering over the next two days. Like at the *Gil Guesthouse* !



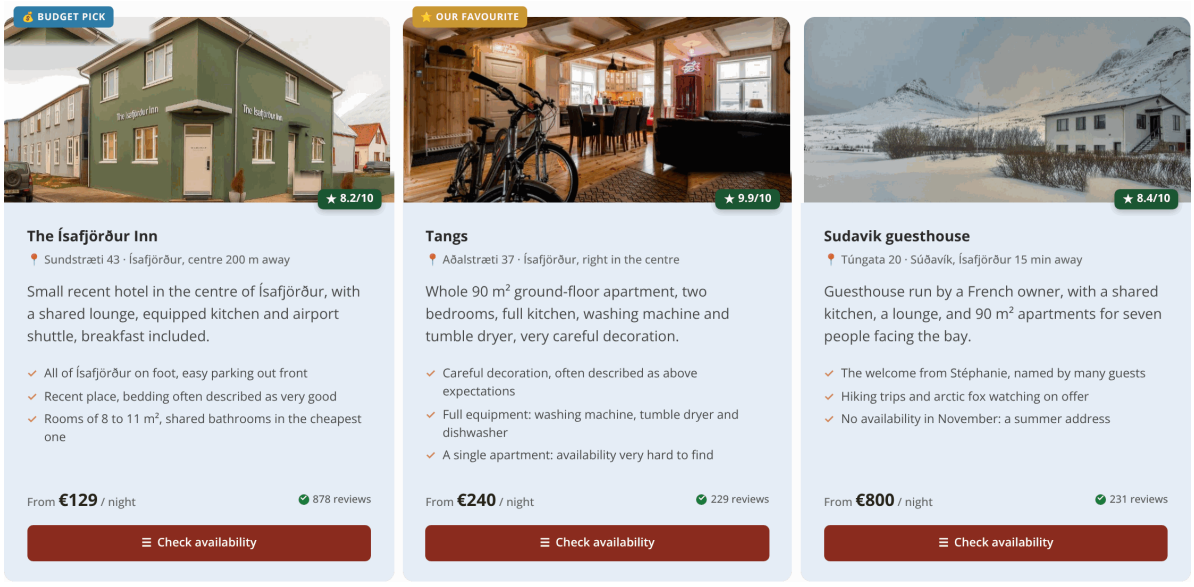



## DAY 10 – DISCOVERING THE WESTFJORDS DAY 1

- For this day, you'll be driving through one of the most hostile places in the country: the **Westfjords**.
- If you're not fed up with puffins yet, head first to the cliffs of **Latrabjarg**, a pretty incredible place
- Then carry on along **road 63** which goes over the highlands to join road 60
- Stop at the superb waterfall **Dynjandi**
- Take **road 626**, far more interesting than the road 60 tunnel
- Then stop at the Önundarfjörður Pier viewpoint and go to the village of **Flateyri**, and its magical setting
    - You can sleep here, and in that case I'd of course recommend *The Old Bookstore*
- Otherwise carry on to **Isafjordur** and right next door you have the *Einarshúsid Guesthouse*



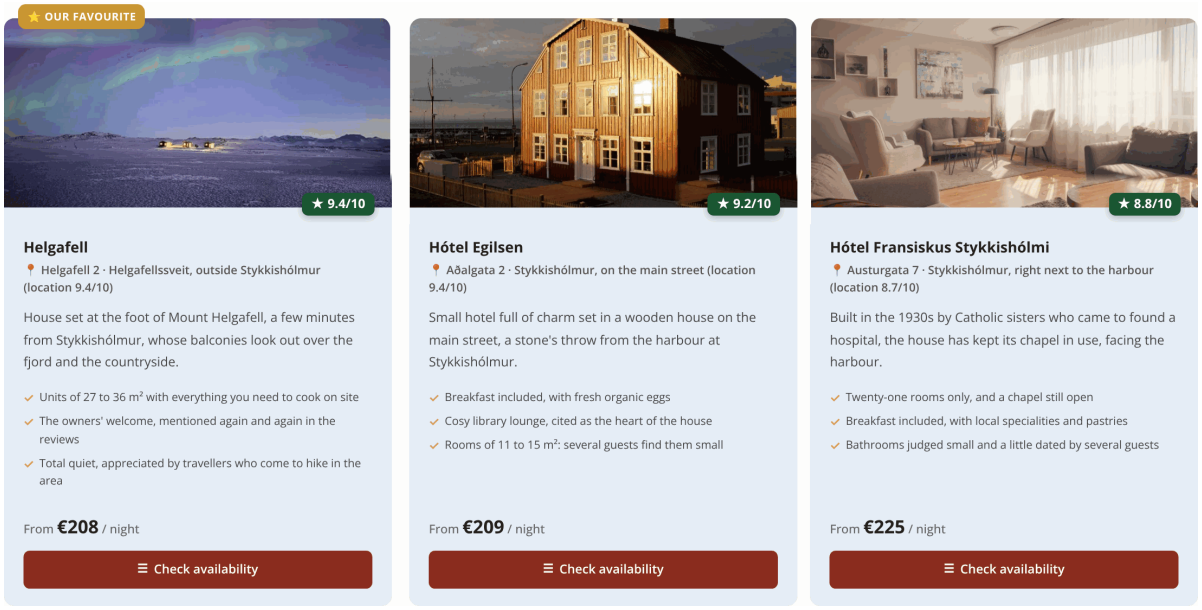




## DAY 11 – DISCOVERING THE WESTFJORDS DAY 2

- The goal for this day: **get out of the Westfjords** and head to Snaefellsnes. And for that you'll take road 61, which runs along all the fjords in the area. 5 huge fjords one after the other
- And then you'll take Route 60 to the entrance of the Snæfellsnes peninsula (a day of around 400km)
- Spend the end of the day in Stykkishólmur, a charming little town on Snæfellsnes and an ideal place to sleep, like the *Stykkishólmur Inn by Ourhotels*

A very full day on the road, but you'll get an eyeful. Really.



## DAY 12 – AROUND THE SNÆFELLSNES PENINSULA

- Today's goal: see the main spots on **Snæfellsnes**
- Head off fairly early to see **Kirkjufell**, before people start arriving from Reykjavík. Plenty of viewpoints, especially down by Kirkjufellsfoss waterfall
- Over by Rif you've got Kerlingarfoss waterfall and above all the church of **Ingjaldshóll**
- Go to the black sand beaches like **Djúpalónssandur**
- If the state of the roads allows it, take the F570 and the F575 that climbs up to the Snæfellsjökull volcano
- Head back along the south coast, on Route 574 then Route 54.
- Since you're doing a great hike the next day, you want to sleep around Akranes. The *Basalt Hotel* is excellent, but not cheap. There's also the *Laxarbakki* which is a bit more affordable and still good.





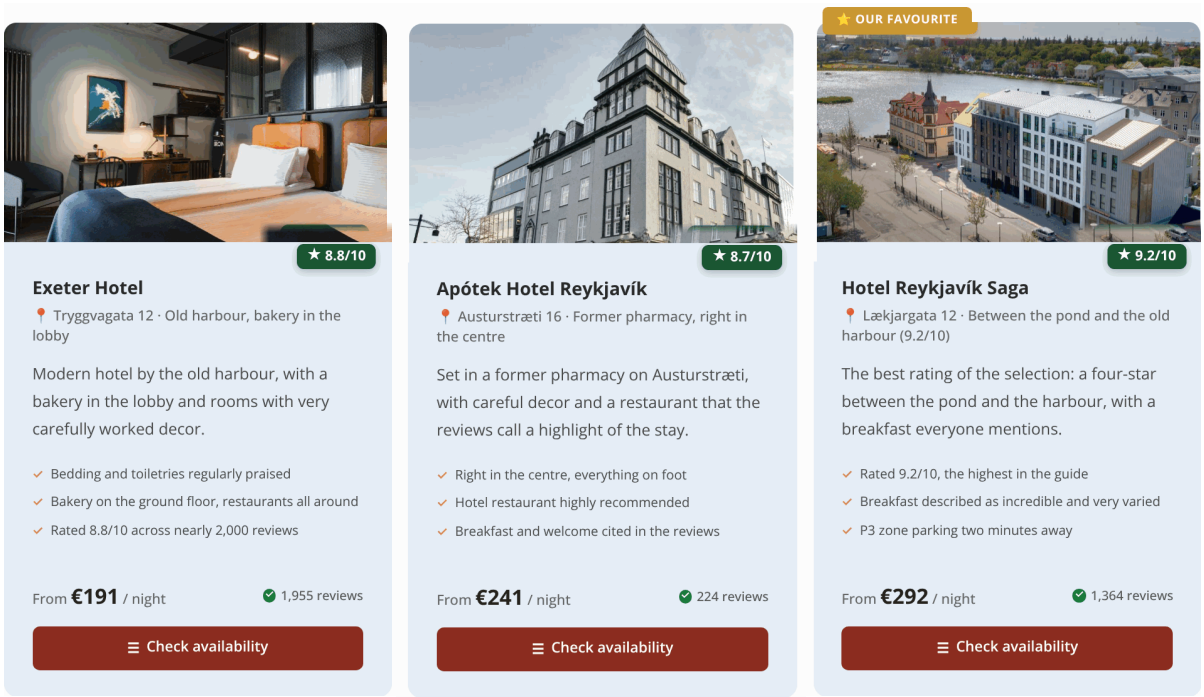
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## DAY 13 – THE GLYMUR HIKE

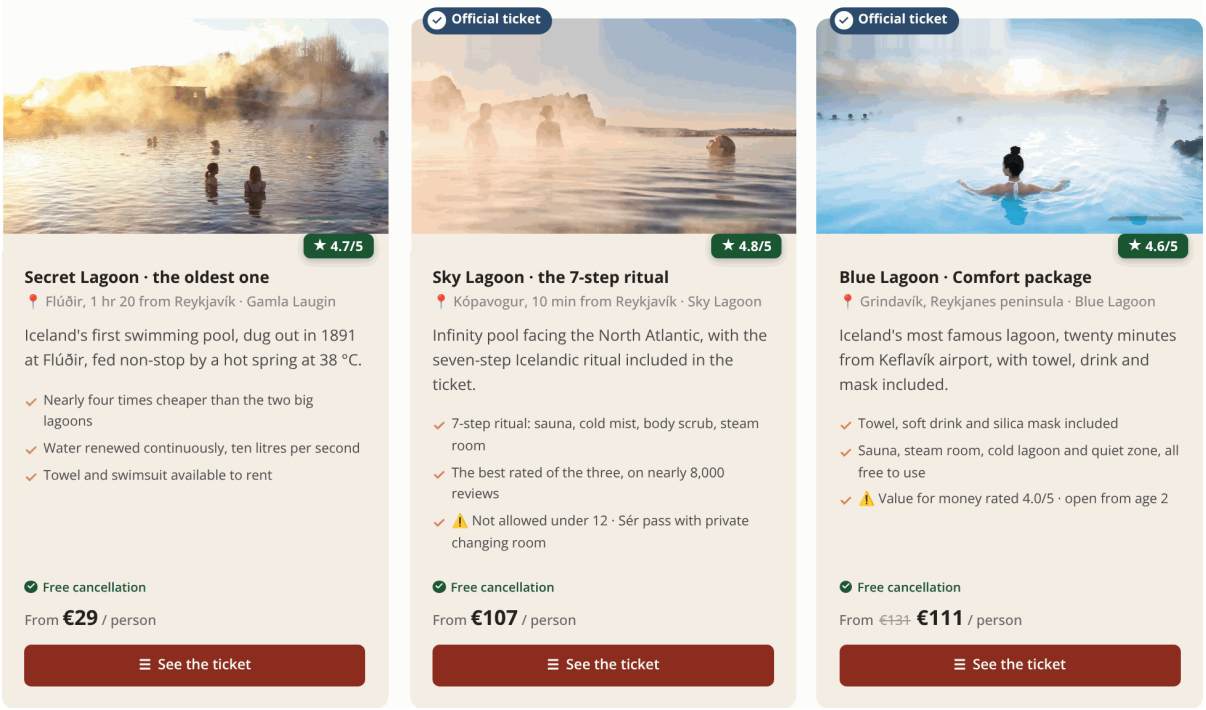
- Today, here's one of the nicest hikes in the country, out to see Glymur waterfall, formerly the tallest in Iceland. It takes about an hour to reach the falls, a bit more for a closer viewpoint. But you'll get an eyeful, especially as this hike isn't the most touristy one! There's a funny bit where you have to cross a river on a log. I wasn't exactly looking brave, it took me ages to get across, but when I saw an old lady trot straight over it, my ego took a hit 😄
- If this is your last day, then sleep near Keflavík airport so you don't have to rush the next morning. Like the ,*Konvin Hotel*. But if you'd rather sleep in Reykjavík, then look at the *Oddson Downtown* and otherwise *the Apotek Hotel*, really excellent
- If this isn't your last day, then sleep in Reykjavík to enjoy the city





## DAY 14 – VISITING REYKJAVÍK OR THE THERMAL BATHS

- For your last day, if you have time before your flight, here are a few activities you can do, in no particular order:
    - Visit the *Perlan museum* and its northern lights show
    - Visit the old town and the street art, do some shopping on Laugavegur
- Treat yourself after all that driving! Go to the thermal baths
    - The *Blue Lagoon*, on the Reykjanes peninsula
    - The *Sky Lagoon*, a bit further east



# GENERAL INFORMATION

*What you'll find in this article*

# HOW TO GET TO ICELAND

## *Getting there by plane*

Right, I'm not going to reinvent the wheel. Iceland is an island that's a long way from everything, so of course the best way to get there is to fly (Vincent, also known as Captain Obvious!).

**Iceland's international airport is at Keflavík**, right at the far end of Reykjanes and a good hour's drive from Reykjavík.

There are small airports scattered all over the island, but they only handle domestic flights (when the weather allows).

The VERY good news is that lots of airlines fly to Keflavík from France and the rest of Europe. And if you book early, it's not (too) expensive. The flight takes 3.5 hours.

From the UK, direct flights leave from London (Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton, Stansted), Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow all year round, plus Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle, Liverpool and Leeds in winter. Airlines (from-prices, return):

- easyJet, from £60
- British Airways, from £110
- Icelandair, from £140
- Jet2, from £190

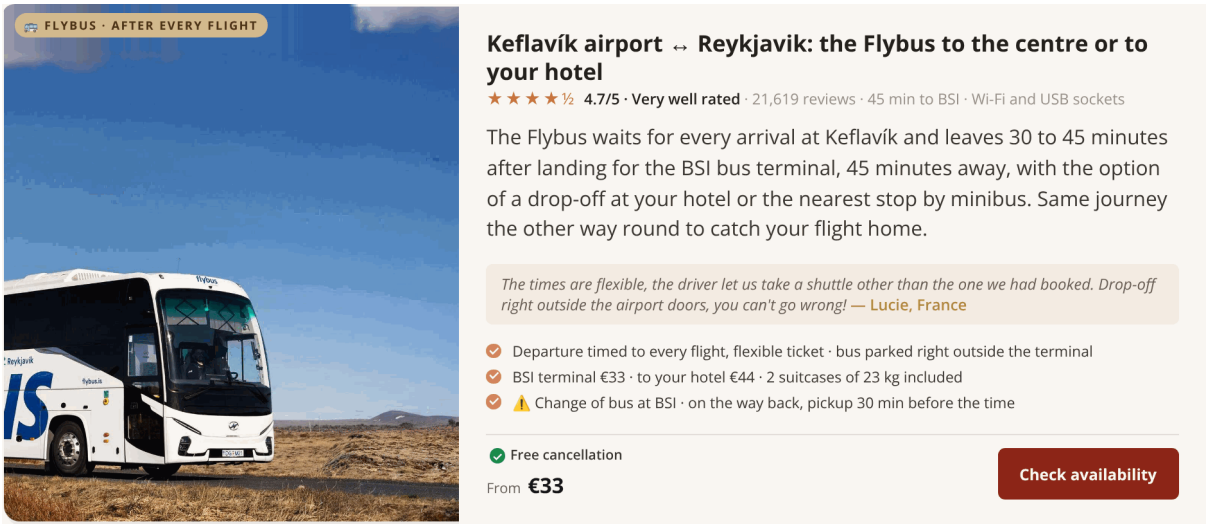
EasyJet's headline fares only include a small under-seat bag, so you're realistically looking at £120–150 with a cabin bag. British Airways, Icelandair and Jet2 all include a cabin bag in their base fare, so the gap is smaller than it looks.

COMPARE FLIGHTS TO GET THE BEST PRICE!

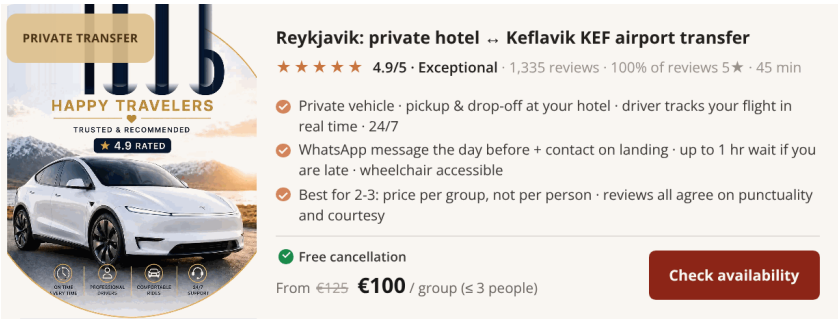
## *How to get from Keflavík airport to central Reykjavík*

Here it's really simple. As I said, the airport is quite far from the city. And if it's far, it's expensive. There are several options:

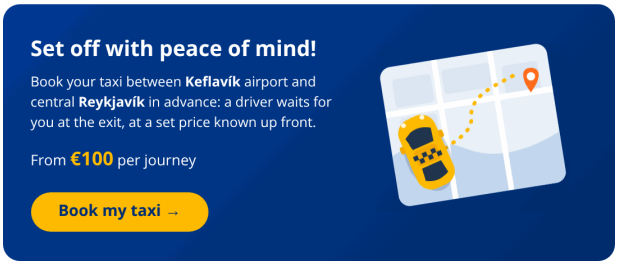
- **By bus**, the cheapest option. It starts at €33, and you're dropped either at the bus terminal or at your hotel (or right next to it). One company runs all of this, Flybus (Airport Direct no longer exists). If you go for the hotel drop-off (which I'd recommend over the terminal, a long way from the city centre), you'll finish the journey in a minibus, handy.
  In the Reykjavík – Airport direction there's one bus an hour from 3am to 10pm
  In the Airport – Reykjavík direction, the buses are tied to flight arrival times, at worst 45 minutes after the plane lands:
  - **Flybus:** *info and booking*



- By **private driver** — the most convenient option. You book a driver, he comes to collect you at the airport at the agreed time. Prices stick close to the taxis, from €110, and depending on the size of your group you can ask for a bigger vehicle
    - *Book your driver at the airport*




- By **taxi** — the simplest of the lot. It's expensive, yes, but they're there, waiting for you. Prices are around €150, and watch out for the night rates which, I believe, are fairly insane.
  There's no Uber or any other ride-hailing app
  If you book your taxi in advance *via Booking*, the prices are far cheaper.




- By **public bus** — it's line 55, and the bus runs roughly every 2 hours. The ticket costs about €16.
  Above all, check the Straeto transport website, *it's this line*.
  So why not, if you'd rather wait. The price isn't much cheaper than the direct bus, so if the timetable works out for you and the stops suit, it does the job.

## *Getting there by boat*

Yes, it's possible! It takes two days, but you can get to Iceland by ferry. You leave from Denmark (Hirtshals) and arrive in the East Fjords, at Seyðisfjörður. And on top of that, there's a stop in the Faroe Islands.

So why take the ferry:

- You can bring your own car or campervan
- You're afraid of flying
- You have time and want to make the most of it

Note that the crossing runs from mid-March to November.

More information about this crossing with *Smyril Line*.

# WHEN TO GO TO ICELAND

To make your life easier (and mine too, while we're at it), I've put together a summary table of activities, prices and useful info, month by month.

It shows you the right time to come depending on what you want to do.

For example, if you want to see *Landmannalaugar* and the *puffins*, the window is narrow and you shouldn't turn up in October (any resemblance to a past experience is purely coincidental). Same thing if you want to see the northern lights: that runs from autumn through to March, for example.

*The great thing about Iceland*: every season is different. So you can't settle for a single trip. Consider yourself warned 😄

But it really matters that you pick the right period for what you want to see and do.

Anyway, here's the summary table below, and above all in the next article I go through *the pros and cons of Iceland month by month*.



# HOW LONG TO STAY IN ICELAND

Oof, not easy! I've already given you a few clues with the itineraries above in this guide.

It's not a destination close to home, so I'd say **the minimum would be 4 full days** on the ground. That's enough to cover the basics (Golden Circle, Reykjavík, Blue Lagoon…) with Reykjavík as your base.

In **a week, you can really enjoy yourself**, get a bit further out. There isn't time for *a full loop of the island* (well, a few lunatics do it, but it's clearly too rushed). But you can see the *South Coast*, Snæfellsnes, the *Golden Circle*… So it's not bad for a first trip!

**Two weeks is really great!** It lets you see the vast majority of the island without rushing, and do the loop at a relaxed pace.

So you can do a relatively quick hop, but I think a short week is the minimum to really enjoy it.

*Watch the time of year too, because in winter the days are much shorter and the itineraries much more limited!*

But broadly, if you ask me: a week for a first stay, and the second one will be two weeks. Because you always come back to Iceland!

# HOW TO GET AROUND ICELAND

Getting around Iceland is simple, but not that simple, actually.

If you **rent a car**, then depending on the type of car you get access to some roads, but not all. The F roads are only open to 4x4s, and even then, only a few months a year. So right away, the choice of car depends on the season, on what you want to see, and on whether you have an adventurous streak or not.

Then comes **the bus**, which has an interesting network but isn't as easy an option as it looks.

Otherwise, you're left with **the agencies** which do let you get around nicely, using towns as a base. For that, I'd suggest looking at *Getyourguide*, *Viator*, *GuideToIceland* which all have plenty of great options.

Anyway, I go through all of it below!

## *Getting around by bus*

At first glance, you'd think it was super easy to see Iceland by bus. As you can see on the map (which you can *download here*), there are lots of lines, lots of stops, and you get the impression you can get off anywhere. Except.

Look at the timetables *on Straeto*, and you can see that in fact… there's only one bus a day on average.

So for getting between towns, going from Reykjavík to Vík í Mýrdal, fine, you have a bus on *line 51* that gets you in at 3:40pm. But if you want to visit Jökulsárlón, you arrive at 8pm and then… well, nothing, especially as there's no hotel nearby, super handy! Same at Skaftafell: you arrive and you can't leave again before the next day, with no hotel close by and no campsite either (bearing in mind wild camping is banned).

So in my view it's worth it for places like Akureyri, Húsavík or Vík, where there are excursions leaving from those towns. But if you stop somewhere small, you won't be able to leave until the next day, so make sure there really is somewhere to sleep!

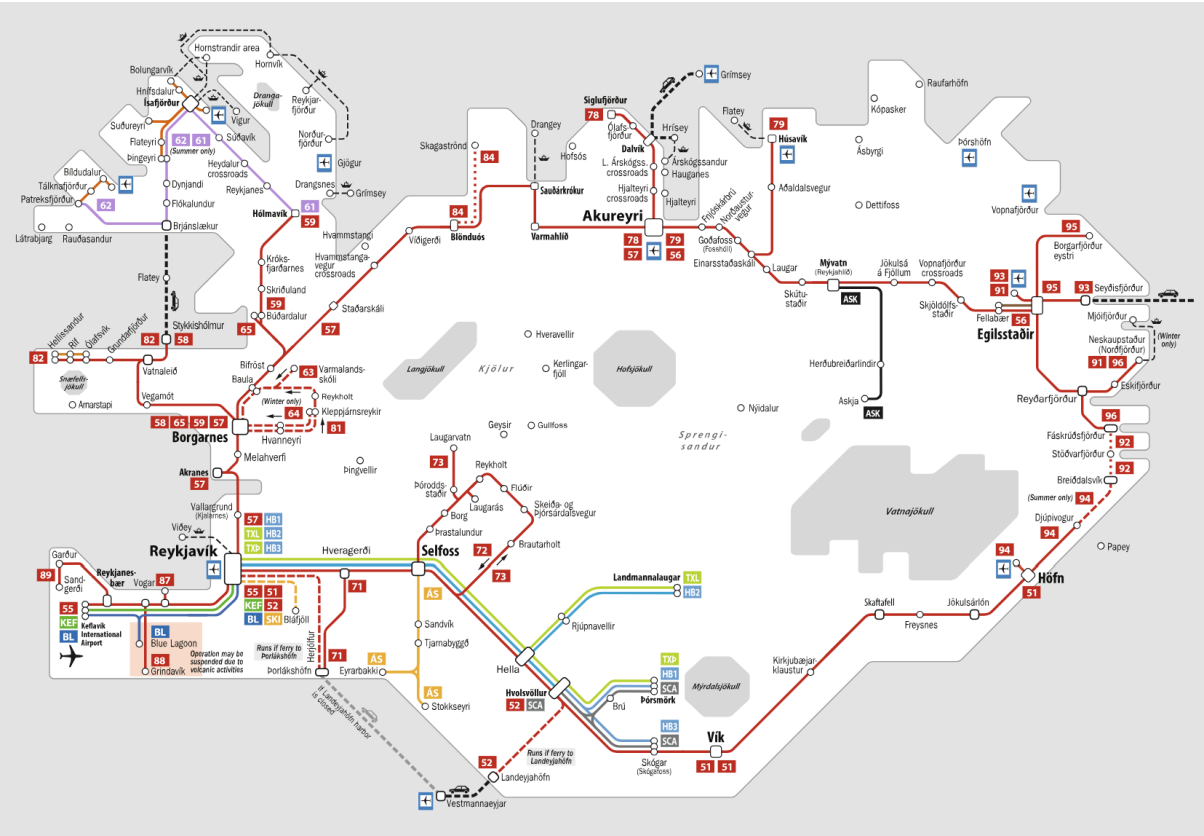
On Snæfellsnes, you have 2 buses a day.

In the Westfjords, one bus, and only in summer!

From Akureyri to Reykjavík, there's only one bus as well.

Reykjavík's bus station is called Mjódd.

And you can pay the driver directly, by card.



## *Getting around by car*

It's the simplest way. Well, if you're in Reykjavík and staying there, the question is worth asking. If you're doing day trips from the city, maybe it isn't strictly necessary, but in my view a rental car costs less than the agencies that drive you around.

So except on the days you spend on Reykjavík itself (everything there is walkable), it's still much more practical to have a car to get around.

Golden Circle, South Coast, Snæfellsnes: all of that can be done by car from Reykjavík as a day trip, but also with an agency, with less flexibility though.

On a road trip, on the other hand, you've seen that bus journeys are pretty limited, so a car really is essential!

**ESSENTIAL DRIVING RULES:**

- driving in Iceland is strictly policed. Speeding fines are VERY steep. And no, there's no negotiating (they take it very badly, Nordic people are very honest)
- Icelandic driving is very considerate. People let you cross, nobody stresses, it's calm, nobody honks, nobody pressures you to let them past
- Speed limits are low. And that's not for nothing. The roads are in a tricky state because of the weather. There's also a lot of wind, and black ice. So if there's a limit, there's a reason for it. And yes, the main road at 90km/h can feel a touch long at times.
- Car parks are usually paid, so watch out, they will track you down afterwards! (speaking from experience!) and you pay via the Parka app
- **IMPORTANT:** NEVER stop on the road to take photos. It's seriously dangerous. You'll tell me: *"but Vincent, come on, that's common sense"* well, no: I've seen it happen many times, in Iceland and in Norway. There are plenty of places to pull over at the side. Never on the road.

Driving in Iceland is a pleasure because the landscapes are exceptional, make the most of it, take the time to enjoy them 😊



## *A few winter driving tips (and not just winter!)*

Driving in winter in the Nordic countries is no small thing. Since I spend every winter in Norway, and a fair bit of time in Iceland, I think I can give you a few essential tips.

**Driving on snow isn't especially complicated**. But there are a few basic rules you absolutely have to follow:

- **ALWAYS respect the markers at the side of the road**. Because you don't know what's under the snow on the verge. Usually it's a ditch to drain the meltwater. So if you go in, you'll end up stuck.
- **Leave much bigger gaps**. OK, you won't meet much traffic in Iceland. But braking distances are much, much longer on snow than on a normal road. So you really do need to leave room.
- **Anticipate!** No sharp turns, no sharp braking, no movement that would take you off your line. So anticipate your braking and that kind of thing, it's really important if you don't want to skid

**You absolutely have to check the weather** so you know what the conditions are. If you don't, you can find yourself in a snowstorm, in fairly tricky conditions. Bearing in mind the weather varies a lot from one region to another.

**NEVER stop at the side if there's no pull-in**. And never stay on the road, not even to take photos. There are plenty of places to park the car without getting in the way. Sometimes you have to walk a few dozen metres, but you'll survive 😊
You'll tell me: *"but Vincent, come on, that's common sense"* well, no: I've seen it happen many times, in Iceland and in Norway. There are plenty of places to pull over at the side. Never on the road.

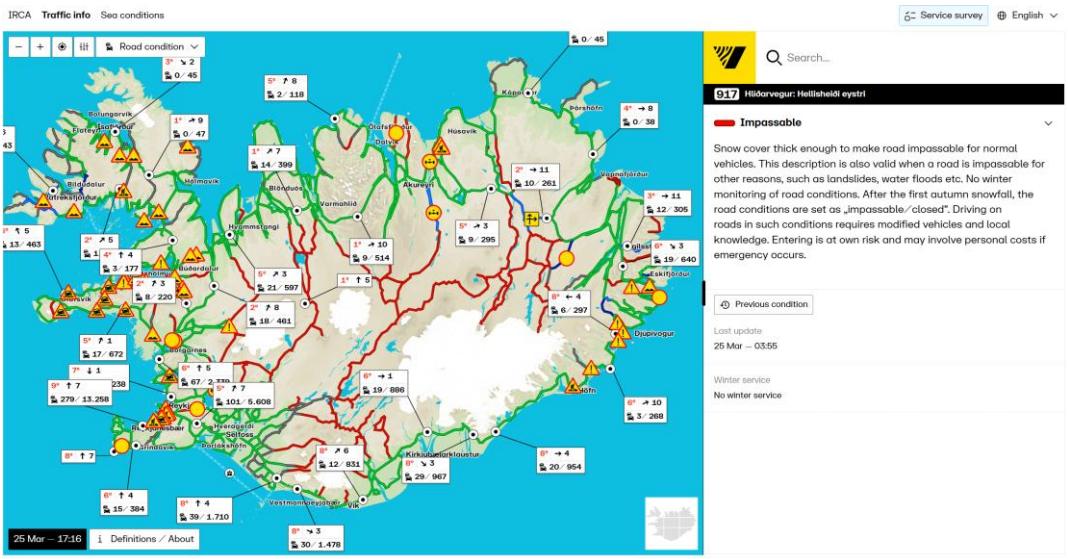
In winter you'll have a suitable car. Which means **studded tyres**, enough to drive on snow and on ice (as long as you follow the rules above).

*Finally, and above all, if it doesn't feel right, don't go out. If you have no visibility, don't go out.*

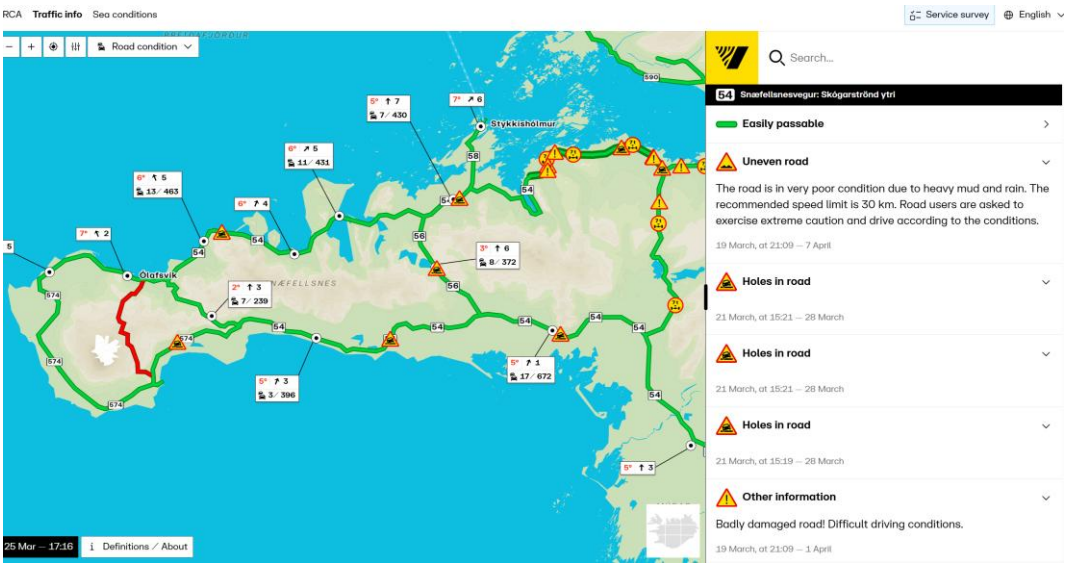
# *Road closures in Iceland*

Your best friend on Icelandic roads is the website *umferdin.is*, formerly *road.is*, which gives you the state of the roads in real time, section by section. Open, closed, why, accidents, roadworks…

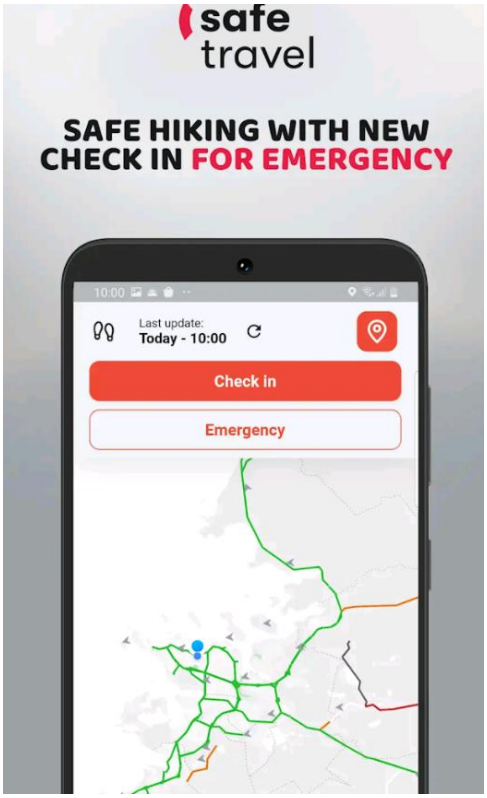
You can see that in low season the whole interior is closed, and a great many F roads are shut because of "no winter service", meaning nobody comes to clear those secondary roads when it snows.




**Every road is detailed**, which is really handy for knowing what's waiting for you. Take this road on Snæfellsnes: normally not hard to drive, but since it's an unpaved road, the weather conditions make it very difficult when the snow melts or when there's too much rain.



But you also have the app ***SAFE TRAVEL***, which gives the same information, the state of the roads and the conditions, but also lets you call the emergency services or report a problem with one click.



# RENTING A CAR IN ICELAND

Renting a car is getting easier and easier in Iceland, because there are plenty of companies, both at Keflavik airport and in town.

The advantage of renting at the airport is that you don't need to take the shuttle into the centre. That said, if you're staying mainly in Reykjavík, it isn't necessarily needed — you can get by perfectly well without a car, as we saw earlier.

But if you want to roam around freely, with no agency, and above all do a road trip, then renting a car becomes essential.

*I'll talk about campervans in the section just below!*

## *What kind of car should you rent?*

To rent a car in Iceland, there's one thing to settle first: 4WD or a regular car?

**A 4WD**, even a small one, lets you take the F roads, which are off limits to "regular" cars. A Jimny or a Duster does the job just fine on most F roads. What you can't do is cross rivers (and there can be a lot of them in Iceland!)

**The bigger 4WDs** let you venture further inland, precisely by crossing those rivers, which can be pretty imposing! And so reach really isolated places — usually the most beautiful ones.

**A regular car** gives you access to 80% of the roads: the main road, the regional roads. It can do the job perfectly well if you're not planning to head into Landmannalaugar, for example.

If you're going in winter, or in a season when most of the F roads are closed, is there really any point in taking a 4WD? Not so sure.

## *Things to watch out for*

When you make your booking, here are a few little things to check:

- **Mileage:** you're going to drive a lot, the distances are big. So if you have limited mileage, you risk paying for extra km, and they are expensive.
- **Reviews:** this is the most important one. Look at the reputation of the agency you want to rent from. Read the detail of the reviews, why the ratings are negative (extra charges taken, dodgy tricks, that kind of thing). The higher the rating, the better, obviously
- **The insurance included:** this one is really important, because with the weather, the sand and the gravel, you can quickly be charged for just about anything. And the bill climbs fast!

## *Which company should you rent from?*

I don't have one particular agency to recommend, because it's true that the last few times I was in a campervan. Which is exactly why you have to compare and check all the details carefully!

So you need to compare. Prices vary from one day to the next, from one agency to another, and from one comparison site to another, because they don't have the same deals with the agencies.

Personally, I use two comparison sites: ***Discover Cars*** and ***Rental Cars***. Two safe bets, never a disappointment, clear on prices, on what's included, on the insurance, and they don't slip in extra fees at the end.

## *How much does a car rental cost in Iceland?*

Prices can climb very fast and go over €100 a day if you don't book ahead.

Otherwise it starts around €30 for a fairly basic car, but be careful: if the price is too low, there might be a catch!

And **the insurance**, even if full cover costs €7–10 a day, can be worth it, because a chip in the windscreen can cost €1,000 for example (yes, that happened to me).



## *The per-kilometre tax*

Since 1 January 2026, Iceland has replaced fuel taxes with a per-kilometre tax (kílómetragjald). It applies to every vehicle, whatever the fuel, motorbikes included. It first covered electric and plug-in hybrid cars in 2024, before being extended to the whole fleet in early 2026.

- **The rate**

The base rate set by the state for a passenger car is 6.95 ISK per kilometre, or about €0.05 per km. For a 4WD, it's better to check its weight category, because the rate per km depends on it.

- **How it works for customers**

Tourists don't declare anything themselves: the rental company reads the mileage and collects the tax through the rental contract. There are two models, depending on the agency:

- By actual kilometre, calculated from the odometer on return. Hertz, for example, adds a service fee of 1.40 ISK/km (+ VAT) to the 6.95 ISK of tax.
- A daily flat rate, whatever the distance. MyCar charges about 1,390 ISK per day, while Cars Iceland, Lotus and Blue Car Rental are around 1,550 ISK per day. Lotus, for example, adds 160 ISK of administrative fees per day.

Some rental companies include the tax in the displayed price, others add it separately at payment. So it's a line to keep an eye on when you compare offers.

*Basically, it's one more thing to tie your brain in knots.*

# DISCOVERING ICELAND BY MOTORHOME / CAMPERVAN

## *Why discover Iceland by motorhome*

If you visit Iceland, you'll see an impressive number of little houses on wheels. That was already the case on my first visits, but it's even more common now. Travelling by campervan in Iceland is completely normal, and I'd even say it's really practical.

But is it for everyone, and in every season? We'll try to answer that, because even though you get the flexibility, there are still a few drawbacks.

**PROS**

- Flexibility: you can move around according to the weather, go where you want, enjoy it when you want, if you find a nice spot to stop. You can deal with every surprise.
- Simplicity: instead of having to book a car and accommodation and plan it all, you just set off and do whatever you want
- The price: well, yes and no. Having a campervan should cost less than accommodation plus a car. But in high season a good motorhome is really expensive. And it drinks fuel! Don't forget the price of the campsites either. Which are compulsory.
- It's just really fun! That's the main reason, actually. Plain and simple.

**CONS**

- The lack of space: let's say you have to like feeling as if you were in a Parisian flat. Then again, since you're always outside, it's fine, but when it rains you stay in. For two, it's OK. With the family, it's... very cosy, let's say!
- The toilets: if you have a "regular" campervan, you won't have a toilet, let alone a shower. That can be a problem if you're somewhere a bit out in the sticks. And worse, the night-time pee! It means getting dressed and going out into the cold. If you have a motorhome, you normally do have a toilet.
- In case of a storm: you'll get an alert telling you to take shelter, and you can't sit it out in your accommodation while it passes — you really have to park your van somewhere safe.
- The campsites: : you absolutely have to sleep in campsites to avoid fines.





## *Renting a motorhome or a campervan, 4WD or not*

First of all, what's the difference between a motorhome and a campervan?

**CAMPERVAN**

A campervan is originally a van or an MPV that has been converted. Kuku Campers, for example, takes Kangoos, adds a folding bed in the back and somewhere to settle in. So it's a hand-built conversion in a vehicle that wasn't made for it in the first place. But it's really well done!





The most practical ones are the **big vans** like a Sprinter, a Trafic or a Master, and there it's great. There's room for a folding bed, a table, a little kitchen. In the biggest ones there's also room for a mini shower. Pure luxury! There's heating too, which really isn't useless.





**MOTORHOME**

A motorhome is genuinely built for this, mass-produced to take people, a family. Beds, a shower, a toilet, a kitchen corner, everything you need to settle in quietly. It's far more comfortable, less make-do. But it's bigger, and it's more expensive.





**4x4 VEHICLE**

A 4WD is essential for the F roads, the ones that aren't paved and therefore aren't maintained. Taking a 4WD campervan can be worth it to drive those roads. But careful, you won't always be allowed to cross the fords; for that you really need a specialised vehicle.

Are there 4WD motorhomes? Well, yes, there are, but they're often smaller models with mostly sleeping space, raised vehicles, genuinely off-road. Or at Campeasy there are also big, well-fitted ones.





## *Which company to rent your campervan or motorhome from*

Both times I visited Iceland in a **campervan**, I rented it from ***Campeasy***. Why? Good value for money outside high season, and I found the vans well thought out and well fitted. And since it went well the first time, I went back to them the second time.
And honestly, no regrets! They provided a tablet with all the info, the itineraries, the campsites, the weather, the road closures, GPS... and the people are nice. So I recommend them!

They're not the only ones, though. ***Happy Campers*** also gets great feedback from its customers, with quality campervans.

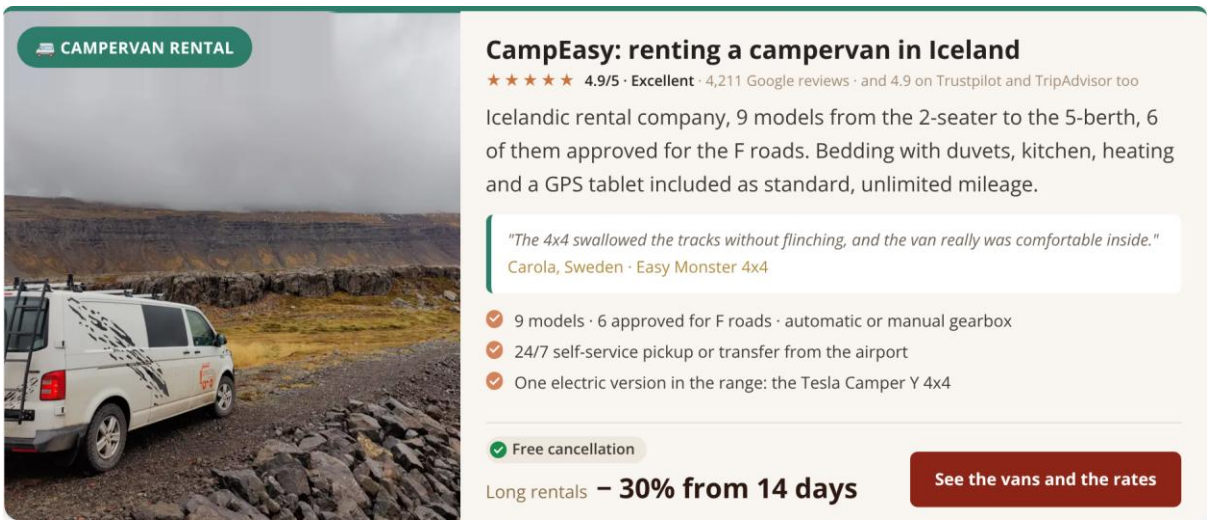
Among the **small converted vans**, the benchmark is ***Kuku Campers***. They mainly built their reputation early on with their funny paint jobs (a Chuck Norris, a snail...). But they are very good quality.

For choice, I really like the range at ***Rent.is***, there really is every size, with or without a shower. I've never tried them but honestly it looks good!

For **motorhomes**, there is choice but less of it. The campervan is really the trend. Some of the providers I've just mentioned do have motorhomes; otherwise take a look at ***McRent***, which has quite a few, from €200 a day.

Anyway, there really are plenty of them, because it's a very popular way to travel in Iceland. The most important thing is to check the reviews beforehand. Generally everything is reliable, but you're never safe from a dodgy deal, so check carefully that the company is trustworthy.

Unfortunately **I haven't found a comparison site** along the lines of Kayak. As soon as I find a reliable one, I'll put it here!



## *Where do you sleep when you're in a van? The wild camping question*

Right, this will be quick: **wild camping is strictly forbidden in Iceland**. The fines are steep and the checks frequent, especially on the south coast, the most touristy part.

You absolutely have to park your van, or pitch your tent, in a campsite. There are loads of them all over the country.

There are several categories of campsite. Some are free, but that's very rare. Others have electricity, showers, toilets and a place to sit down and cook. Those are great. And there are some in between, where it's just somewhere to park your van and a toilet whose cleanliness isn't amazing.

But almost all of them charge. And they're not cheap, especially on the south coast.

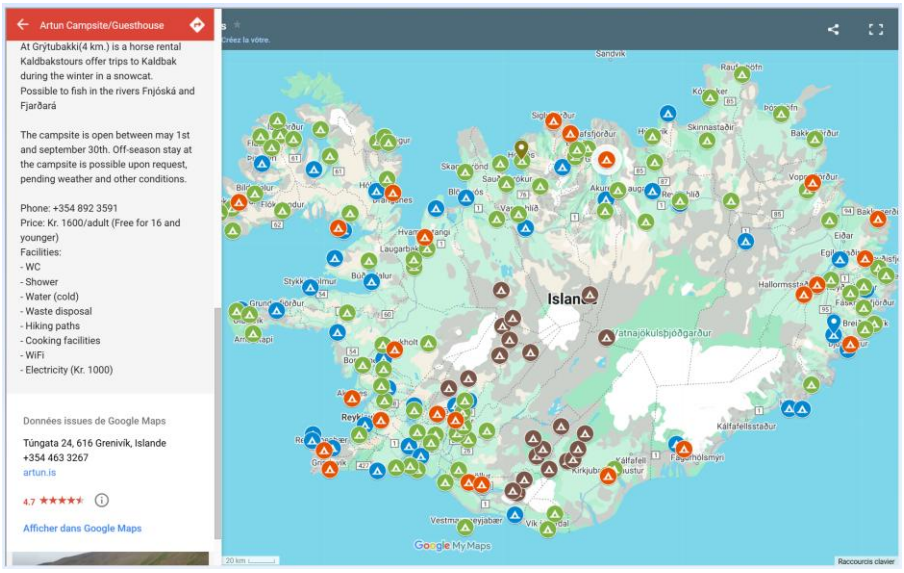
Reckon on €10 to €20 per person, because the price is usually per person and not per motorhome. It can also be worth getting the ***Camping Card***, a card you pay for to get a certain number of nights at partner campsites. If it matches your route, it can be a really good deal!

There's no need to book, there's always room.

**WARNING: the vast majority of campsites are closed from October to April/May**. So if, like me, you travel off season, it can be a bit of a nuisance — let's say you need to plan ahead.

That said, during that period, in the less touristy areas there is still somewhere to sleep, **let's say there is some flexibility**. In my case, since it wasn't unusual for me to end up really far from any open campsite, I set my van up in campsites that were closed. No access to toilets or showers, fine, but I would then go either to the municipal swimming pools or to the toilets at petrol stations. At least I wasn't getting a fine.

You can find *the campsite map here* but generally, if you've rented a van, your rental company will give you a tablet with the map and allllll the practical information, which really is essential. Opening times, prices, facilities (like a hot tub, a kitchen, that kind of thing...)

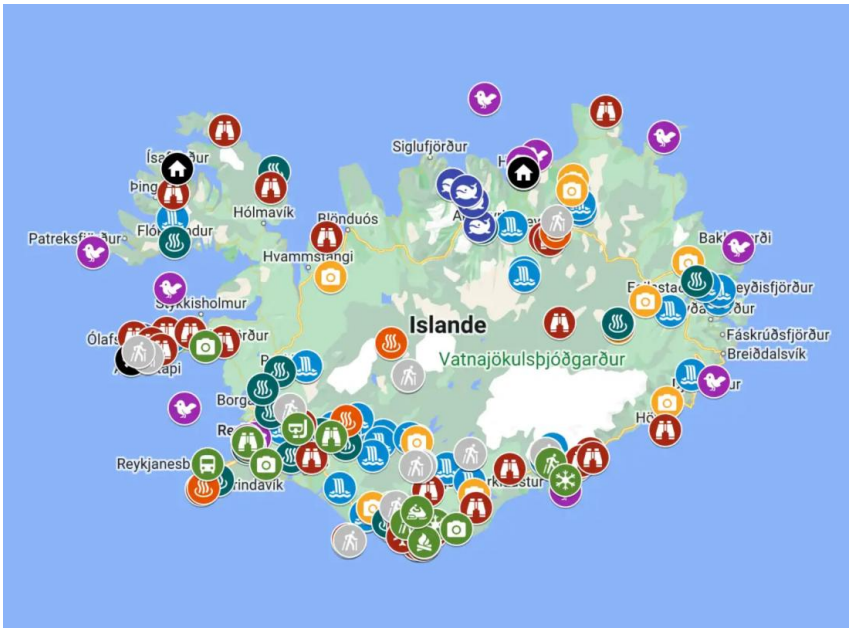


## *Can you do it all year round?*

Honestly yes, but there are pros and cons to each period:

- **High season:**
  - All the campsites are open
  - All the roads are generally open, you can go to Landmannalaugar if you have a 4WD van for example, and take some of the F roads (but you're not allowed to cross the fords in a campervan)
  - Light all the time, great for enjoying the landscapes and getting around without constraints
  - But much higher prices
  - Lots of people, especially on the south coast. It's very touristy!

- **Low season:**
  - Watch the weather, it's not unusual to have to take shelter from a storm (it happened to me, all the campers were holed up in a little village, huddled together like penguins)
  - In winter the days are very short, it's going to be cold, windy, snowy. Driving can be difficult at times
  - The F roads are closed, so the interior is out of reach
  - Most campsites are closed, especially away from the south coast, and sometimes that's a nuisance
  - The puffins have left
  - But there's hardly anyone left on the roads and at the tourist sites
  - Rentals are cheaper, far cheaper!




*(click to open the most complete map of Iceland)*

# HOW TO ORGANISE YOUR TRIP

## *Which questions to ask first*

The first question to ask yourself isn't "when do you want to go", because to know which is the right period, you first need to know what you want to do and see in Iceland.

- Which activities do you want to do
- Do you want to see the northern lights
- Do you want to explore the interior?
- What is your budget?

Because every period is different, every month has its pros and cons. In terms of daylight, of activities, but also of price.

So here I'll point you to this infographic, which will help you choose the best time to go. And after that, you'll see, it's really simple (more details in the "when to go to Iceland" section)



You also need to ask yourself how you're going to travel. **Car plus accommodation, or** motorhome? That's a really important question, because both are great fun.

**Motorhome:**

- You gain flexibility
- You don't have to bother with accommodation
- But you have to find a campsite to sleep in (wild camping is forbidden and punished)

**Car and accommodation:**

- Needs booking ahead, really, otherwise you'll pay full price and you're not even sure you'll find anything, on the south coast in particular
- You have a roof over your head in bad weather
- More comfort, even if some motorhomes are very good

## *When to make your bookings*

**The hardest thing in Iceland is the accommodation**. There is a lot, a lot of demand and little supply. And a good part of that supply sees its prices take off for the high season. So if you want to be sure of getting accommodation that isn't toooo expensive (relatively speaking, mind you, it's still Iceland), that's what you need to book, and as early as possible. For example, I'm writing this in early May and there are well under half the rooms left for the summer in the hotels of Vik i Myrdal in the south.

So for Iceland, try to plan 3 or 4 months ahead for your accommodation. I think 2 months is really the absolute minimum in peak tourist season. There will still be things left, but more expensive. So if you can book 3 or 4 months ahead, it really isn't overkill. *Have a look on Booking* to get an idea of availability

As for **the flights**, prices are higher for the summer (more than double) but since there are quite a few daily connections, I'd say it's urgent, but less so. In any case, to fix the dates of your accommodation you need to fix the dates of the trip.

For the **car**, there's a bit of a supply problem too. Inevitably, the longer you wait, the more prices climb. Here is what I can tell you after the simulations I have just run:

- In the middle of summer, looking 3 months ahead, you'll get a small manual car for €60 a day and a 4WD like a Duster for €100 a day.
- The closer the date, the higher it goes. And it goes high.
- Compare, absolutely. *Discover Cars*, *Booking Cars* in particular will be your friends.

So this is a good example of it—**you need to book a good 3 months ahead** to get prices that aren't too silly, and availability.

If you book later, a month before for example, you'll almost always find space and cars, but you'll pay a lot, a lot more (there'll be the fancy-pants suite at the Hotel Katla left at €600 instead of €250, for example).

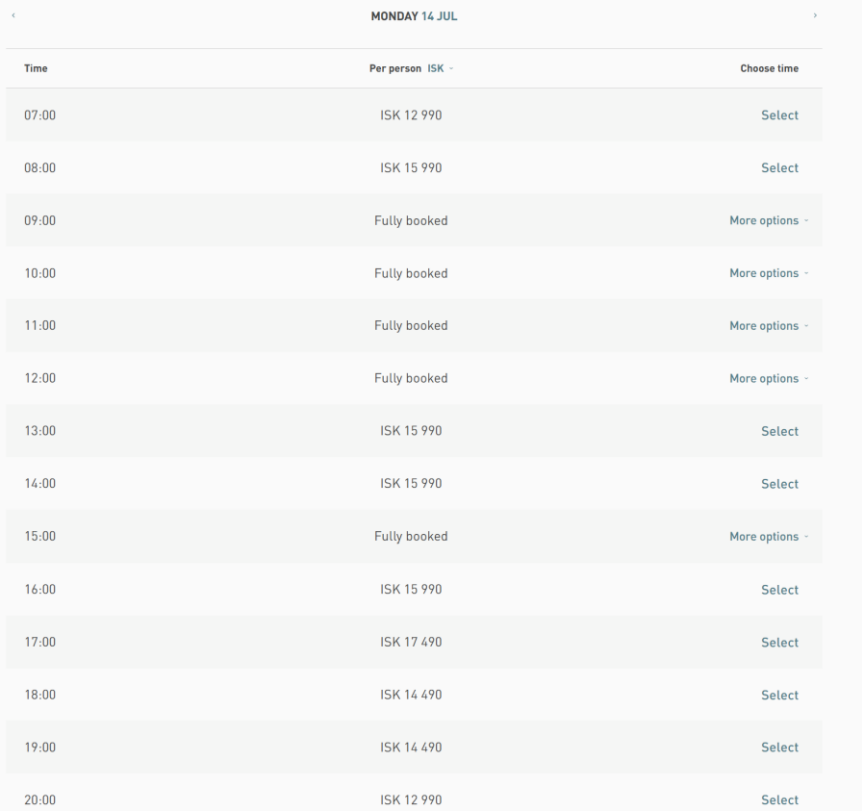
## *When to book the activities*

Here you have time. In the middle of summer, book 2 or 3 weeks ahead if you want to do the most popular ones:

- Ice cave
- Walking on a glacier

**For the Blue Lagoon:**

- You need to book 2 or 3 days ahead in the **low season** (the day before for the next day is almost always full, apart from the super expensive packages)
- For **July and August**, you need to book 2 months ahead. It's early May now, and I'm looking at July: there are slots already full in mid-July (a few in August but that's rarer). So booking at least 2 months ahead isn't a bad idea if you want the slot you fancy
    - *Book your Blue Lagoon ticket.*



MONDAY 14 JUL

| Time | Per person ISK | Choose time |
|---|---|---|
| 07:00 | ISK 12 990 | Select |
| 08:00 | ISK 15 990 | Select |
| 09:00 | Fully booked | More options |
| 10:00 | Fully booked | More options |
| 11:00 | Fully booked | More options |
| 12:00 | Fully booked | More options |
| 13:00 | ISK 15 990 | Select |
| 14:00 | ISK 15 990 | Select |
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# BOOKING ICELAND THROUGH AN AGENCY

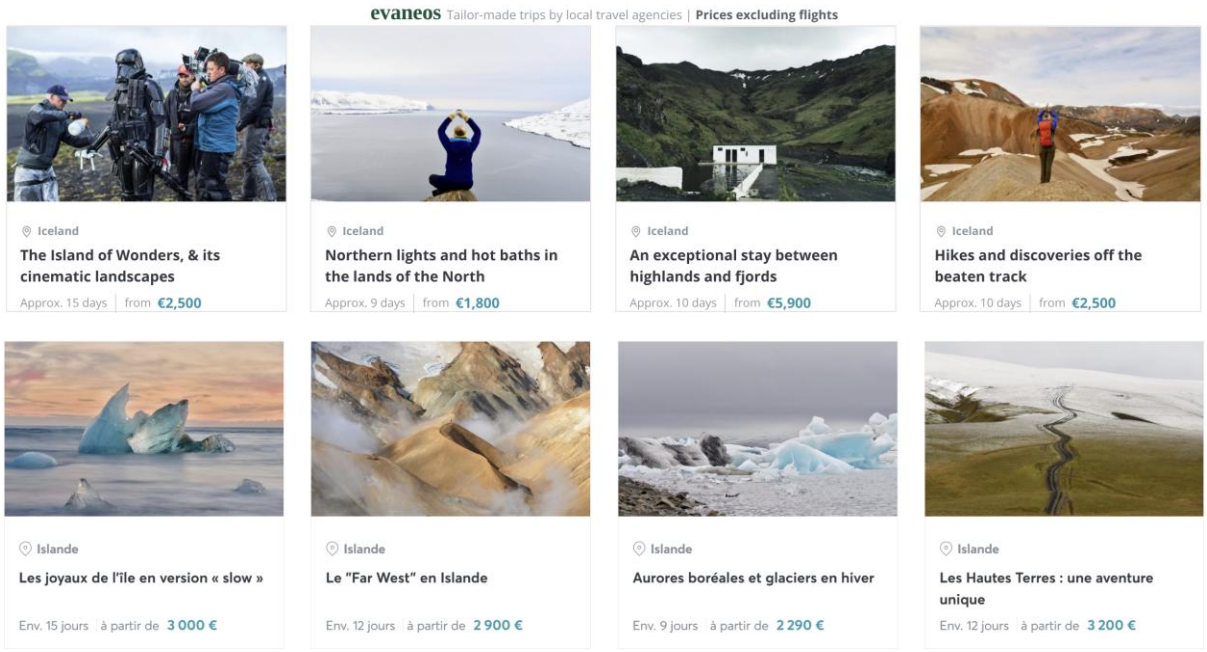
If you don't feel like handling the bookings yourself, or deciding on a day-by-day itinerary, you can go through an agency that will do all of that for you. Honestly, travelling in Iceland isn't complicated, because you generally stay on ONE main road, but there are some good agencies

## *The EVANEOS agency for travelling to Iceland*

Evaneos is probably the best French agency, because it works with local agencies. Every itinerary on offer is put together by locals, by people who work on the ground. So the routes make a lot of sense.

There are "turnkey" trips, but you can also contact the trip designers so they build something tailored to you. Not bad at all!

Here are a few examples of the trips on offer. You can click on them to see the details



## *Discovering Iceland in a small group with Guide to Iceland*

Guide to Iceland also offers small-group trips along the Ring Road, the country's circular route, over shorter or longer periods. I had a look at the trips below and honestly they're pretty good! But not cheap.







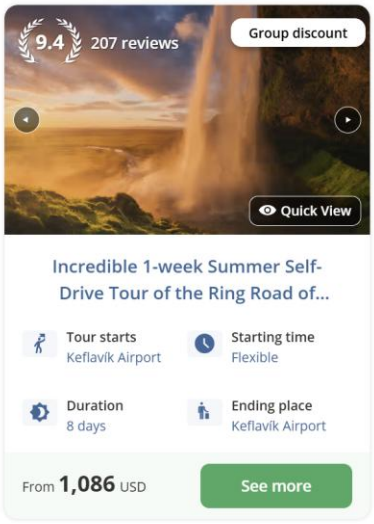


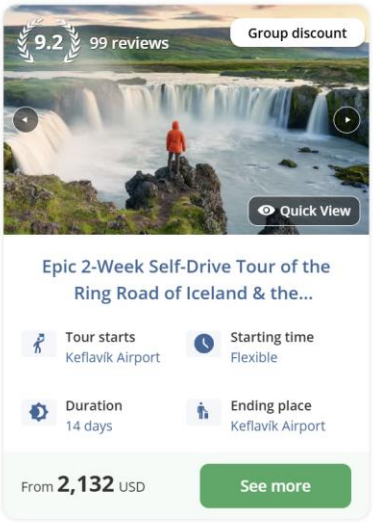


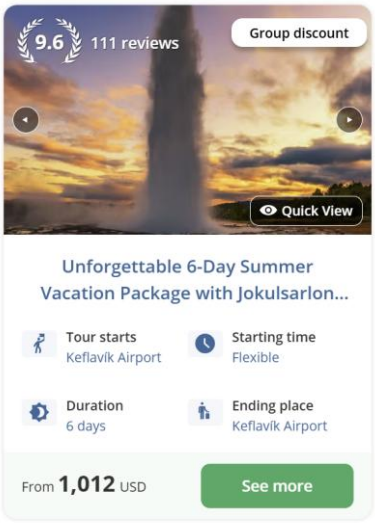

## *The self-drive itineraries by Guide To Iceland*

Guidetoiceland is an Icelandic agency that offers plenty of activities and self-drive trips, meaning with a car and accommodation included, and you're not in a group, just you behind the wheel. Here are a few examples of the trips on offer. This kind of thing is really practical.




*Browse all the trips with GuidetoIceland!*

# WHAT IS THE TYPICAL ICELANDIC WEATHER LIKE

Oh, that's fairly simple. People like to say you can get all four seasons in one day. I'd say that in Iceland, that's the baseline. You'll easily go from a pretty blue sky (without much warmth) to a storm with very strong wind in 10 minutes. And then snow. Normal.

**The wind**

Think you've already experienced strong winds? Then imagine that Icelandic wind is worse than that. It can easily flip over trucks and campervans that haven't found shelter.

Generally speaking there is a lot of wind in Iceland, and almost all the time. It isn't always apocalyptic, don't worry, but when it really blows, things get complicated. And when storms are forecast, you get warned, so you have time to go and hide in town.

**The snow**

It snows for a good part of the year. Well, it depends where. In the centre, the highlands, it snows around 8-9 months a year, from mid-October to early June. That's one of the reasons this region isn't accessible for much of the year.

In the south, you'll get snow from late October to the end of March or April, with a few possible falls in May but only now and then, just to remind you that the weather really can change.

In the north, it starts snowing earlier, from October, when temperatures really begin to drop. The climate is generally harsher in the north.

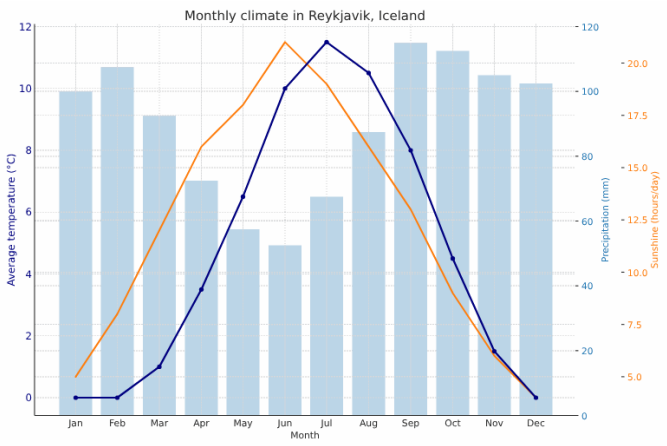
**The rain**

The baseline. This is Iceland! If it isn't snowing, then it's raining. So even in summer, especially in autumn, and quite a bit in spring. It's damp, very damp. It's not like Brittany where it only rains a little now and then. That happens, but it can also rain a lot.

**Temperatures**

Not warm! Assume it will be between 0 and 8°C most of the time. In summer you may get a few warm spells, but it's generally around 10°C.

In winter, on the coast, it isn't as cold as in Norway or Finland. Temperatures do go below zero, but what really brings the cold is the wind. That damn wind.



# WHAT TO WEAR IN ICELAND

First of all, whatever the season, assume this:

- It will be very wet (snow or rain)
- There will be a lot of wind

**A waterproof windbreaker will be your best friend!** So of course, the safe bet is the K-Way. It's small, really waterproof, it takes up no space, but it isn't cheap. Personally, I'd recommend *the long version* because if you're going to be protected from the rain, be properly protected. *The short version* stops just above your backside, and I don't think that's enough in Iceland. At Columbia you'll find the excellent *Watertight II Jacket* which does the job.

But that's for when it isn't cold. If it is cold, really do get a technical waterproof, water-repellent jacket (essential), no down! Because down is less waterproof, it doesn't last long, and it then soaks up all the water.

For a windproof, waterproof jacket when it isn't too cold, I really recommend *the Vaude Escape*.

If it gets colder, I wouldn't necessarily go for one very warm jacket, but rather stack the layers. Be an onion!

Take for example *this Helly Hansen jacket*, excellent value for money. It does the job very well because it blocks the wind, and underneath you can add *a good fleece like this one*, or a jumper.

What I love are thermal base layers. Leggings, t-shirts, they're so effective! Personally I mainly use *these ones in Norway* in winter, spring and autumn, and then I adjust the layers on top.

If you go in winter, or with snow around, your feet will be the first to suffer. So the classic trick is to wear two pairs of socks, a thin silk one with a wool one over the top.

As for shoes, if you go in winter, you won't need extreme-cold boots like the *Sorel Caribou*. Go for hiking shoes instead, waterproof, able to handle -5/-10. I use *these ones from Decathlon*, for when I walk in Norway, even in winter. And honestly, they're great!

Things not to forget:

- Crampons in winter. I use *these ones* for normal walking on ice. If you're heading somewhere a bit sketchy, you need better crampons, and for that I use *these ones*.
- Some *waterproof rain trousers* wouldn't be a luxury either. You'll quickly see why 😄

# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## *What languages do people speak in Iceland*

Well, I don't know about you, but I don't speak Icelandic, one of the hardest languages out there, and one that has barely changed because the island was isolated for hundreds of years. It comes from Old Norse, so if you understand German or a Scandinavian language you'll spot some similarities, but that's as far as it goes.

Luckily, though, every single one of them speaks English! And that's seriously handy 😊

## *Local currency and payment - How to pay on site*

The currency is the Icelandic króna, ISK. €1 = 143 ISK. Not the easiest conversion, but you can remember that **1,000 ISK = €7.** And that works.

The good news is that everything can be paid by card. Cash is barely used. That said, you sometimes need some to pay for campsites, it happened to me several times, not all of them have a card terminal.

Then there's **the question of which bank card to use to avoid fees**. As this is outside the eurozone, your bank may well charge you fees. Conversion fees (for going from ISK to euros when you pay) and a fee on every payment, either a percentage or an extra €0.15.

Do contact your bank beforehand to avoid any nasty surprises!

For my part, it's very simple. I use **Boursorama**. No exchange fees, no extra charges. You pay at the real rate and it's free! I use it in every country (Norway, Iceland, Peru...) and never a nasty surprise, I really like it a lot.

## *Do you need a visa to come to Iceland*

Iceland is part of the Schengen Area. Which means that if you come from within that area (the European Union plus a few countries such as Norway, Switzerland...) you don't need a visa.

The same goes for a great many countries, Canada, the United States (and almost the whole American continent): a valid passport is enough (one that doesn't expire during your stay)

## *Safety in Iceland*

Iceland is one of the safest countries in the world. Thefts are starting to increase, though, which deeply annoys the locals, because Iceland is normally one of those countries where you can leave your wallet on the table while you go to the toilet. That's still true, "but". Just as you can no longer leave your van unlocked if you aren't inside it.

# ABOUT ME

Well, I'm Vincent, from the blog Vincent Voyage (very original, isn't it!)
I've been in love with Norway, Iceland and the Nordic countries for many years, and I now spend several months up there each year to enjoy the calm of the region, its fantastic landscapes, all of it under the northern lights, obviously.

I'm also a travel blogger, specialising in Norway, the northern lights — but not only that! I'm equally fond of two very different places—Iceland and the châteaux of the Loire Valley. I have a passion for Burma and Peru and I dream of going back to New Zealand.

This blog mostly exists to show that it's simple. Travelling is simple, and I try to answer every question I asked myself along the way. Because whatever questions you have, you're not the first to ask them, so I'll try to make your trip easier 😊

*If you'd like shortcuts to my blog articles, here's what I can offer you:*

- Discover Norway
  - Tromso
  - Senja
  - Lofoten Islands
  - Bergen
  - Oslo
  - The Norwegian Fjords

- Discover Iceland
  - Reykjavik
  - The Ring Road
  - The South Coast
  - The North Coast towards Myvatn

- Discover Finnish Lapland

- Everything you need to know about the northern lights
  - How to be a good northern lights hunter
  - What steps to follow to see the northern lights
  - What are the best places to see the northern lights
  - How to photograph the northern lights

# SOCIAL MEDIA

You can find me on several social networks:

- ***Instagram*** — photos and videos, mainly about Norway and the northern lights. Handle: Vincentvoyage



Join me on **Instagram!**

- **My page on Facebook** : photos and videos, but not only that! A look at my work and at other people's work, and an easy place to chat with the community. It's really simple to talk things over there, and I often ask people what they think about this or that.
  Handle: Vincentvoyage.




You can get in touch with me at contact@vincent.voyage

And if you're interested in Norway, you can join us in the Norway Facebook group too!

# HOW TO SUPPORT THE BLOG AND THE FREE CONTENT

The blog and photography are not my job, whatever some people might think. It's a passion I pursue in my free time, just like writing these guides. The upside is that I don't want it to become a job, precisely so I don't lose that freedom and that passion (and I love my "real" work, which I have no wish to give up).

I do try to make the blog bring in a little money while staying as transparent as possible with readers.

I don't work with tourist boards, I run no advertising, and everything you see here in this guide, if I tested it, it's because I paid for it and I liked it. So you won't have any problem with how honest my opinions are 😊

And if I haven't tested something, it's because I checked that the reviews were good and that the quality really was there.

On the monetisation side of the blog and the guide, there are sometimes affiliate links. Which means, and this is completely transparent for you, that if you use some of my links to book with *Booking* or *Getyourguide* for example, you won't pay more and I get a small percentage. I'll say it again, you won't pay more. *So you can bookmark these little links, and everyone wins!*

I refuse to work with partners who inflate prices in exchange for a higher commission. So EVERYTHING I suggest here is checked to find the lowest price for you with a partner I trust. I generally make sure you get free cancellation so you don't end up stuck.

**So, to support the blog and help it pay for itself, you can use the links suggested in the guide.**

But you can also, if you travel elsewhere, use these generic links (next page) when you plan your trips, *and even keep these links bookmarked for later*, it still won't cost you any more and I'll get that small commission. Thank you so much in advance! 😊

*If you enjoyed this free guide*, you can also leave a little something on *Buy Me a Coffee*, a site for supporting creators



# THE OTHER FREE GUIDES

This guide on Iceland isn't the first! I've already finished two guides:

- One on Norway
- Another on the Châteaux of the Loire Valley

And they're available in French and in English. Just click on them to download them!

More are coming. A Spanish translation first of all, but guides dedicated to the following destinations are also in the works:

- Lanzarote
- Finnish Lapland
- Rome
- Budapest

You can find *all the guides here*







