Family Nature Adventure

Self Drive 7 days

Reykjavik
Welcome to Iceland!

To make your stay in Iceland more enjoyable, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- This booklet contains a standard itinerary. If you have added nights, please note that the itinerary has not been customized to show such amendments.

- This itinerary is a guideline for your travel in Iceland. The route may vary according to your overnight stay and road conditions, especially during April/May and September/October.

- Even with the long daylight, you will not be able to visit every nook and cranny nor enjoy all the fun things suggested. Please choose between the sites mentioned depending on your interest as time limits your possibilities.

- The kilometer/mile distance per day is not precise. The distance may vary depending on the location of your accommodation and the detours you take each day.

- On your accommodation itinerary you will find a detailed address list, describing how to reach your accommodations. The accommodation itinerary also has a reference number, which is valid as your voucher. Official hotel check-in time is 14:00-18:00. If you arrive any later, it’s courteous to notify the hotel.

- Breakfast is always included during your stay, but no other meals. Many of the rural hotels and guesthouses offer a nice dinner at a reasonable price.
A few favourites from the trip
Day 1: Arrival

Pick-up your rental car and drive to Laugarvatn

**Approximate driving distance:**

160 km / 100 miles

Please see your Iceland Travel Itinerary for details about your overnight stay

Upon your arrival in Iceland you’ll find your rental car at the car rental desk in the arrival hall at Keflavik Airport. The desk is open every day from 5:00am – 5:00pm and again from 9:00pm-1:00am. The staff will advise you where to find your vehicle.

If you are arriving early enough in the day we recommend that your first experience in Iceland be the Blue Lagoon. Follow road no. 41 towards Reykjavik until you find road no. 43, leading south towards Grindavik. Before you reach Mt Þorbjorn you make a right turn to the Blue Lagoon area. To make it easier you can just follow the steam rising up through the air! At the Blue Lagoon you can wash off the jet lag, relax in the milky waters of the Lagoon and perhaps allow the kids to smudge on a bit of algae mask which can be found in wooden boxes to your left when entering the lagoon. It’s said to bring out the skin’s inner glow, and it makes for a great family portrait!

Kindly note that the Blue lagoon is very popular year around and therefore you should book ahead.

If you are not relaxing in the lagoon at the beginning of your trip you continue on road no. 43 taking you to the South Shore of the Reykjanes Peninsula where you’ll turn left on the road 427 towards Þorlakshofn and later route 34 to Stokkseyri. There you can find an interesting museum, called the Ghost Center or Draugasætrið, tel. 483 1202, displaying all of the most well-known ghosts in Iceland. The entrance is located on the south side of the building by the harbour. The museum is not recommended for children younger than 12 years old. The museum is open June-August from 13:00-18:00.
Take route 34 to Selfoss, where it might be a good idea to stock up on a few supplies such as a picnic lunch for tomorrow or just to see what an Icelandic supermarket looks like. We recommend that you try Skyr (Icelandic pronunciation: [ˈscːr̥]) which is an Icelandic cultured dairy product, similar to strained yogurt and has been a part of the Icelandic cuisine for over a thousand years.

From Selfoss you will continue your trip on road no. 1 in direction to Hveragerdi but taking a right hand turn on road no. 35 to the region of Grímsnes. Grímsnes has experienced at least 10 different lava flows and it is very difficult to distinguish between them. Kerið is only one of the groups of Tjarnhólar craters, but is the easiest to gain access to and probably the most famous and most beautiful of them all, as it has a lovely blue pool at its bottom.

When you reach the intersection with road no. 37, turn and continue until you reach Laugarvatn, a geothermal area. It is said that when Christianity was legalized in the year 1000, the chieftains from the north who refused to be baptized in the cold water of Þingvellir, were brought to Laugarvatn to be baptized in the warm spring. At the Fontana Geothermal Baths you can relax in the warm geothermal pools and natural steam rooms while enjoying the spectacular views over the lake.

### Day 2:

Laugarvatn, Reykholt, Gullfoss, Haukadalur, Plant a tree, Geysir

Exploding Geysers, National Park with Geological Wonders (UNESCO)

Approximate driving distance: 280 km / 173 miles

Please see your Iceland Travel Itinerary for details about your overnight stay

Start your day with a hearty breakfast and after making sure you are not forgetting anything in your room, head east on road no. 37.

Turn right on road no. 355 until you reach road no. 35 to the small village of Reykholt. When in Reykholt, turn right on Lyngbraut and collect your plant at Kvistar gardening center. Don’t forget to check if they have any fresh berries for you to purchase. Head onwards on road no. 35 until you find route no. 359 towards Flúðir.

Here you can decide to continue on road no. 35 until you reach Geysir. However, if you would like a bit more adventurous road that would take you even closer to nature, you can turn right and head towards Fludir on route 359, cross Tungufljót river and then shortly turn left on route 358 towards Einholt. When
you find yourself at the end of this road, turn left on route no. 30 and head towards route 35.

**Gullfoss** waterfall, the “Golden Waterfall”, is a beautiful double-folding fall that many believe to be the most scenic in Iceland. It thunders 32 m (105 ft) over a fault into a gorge, which measures 2.5 km (1.5 miles) in length and up to 70 m (230 ft) deep in places.

**Geysir** area is a colorful geothermal field in a 3 km² (1,2 mi²) area where hot springs and geysers are abundant. Geysir spouting spring is the world’s largest geyser, whose name is the generic term for this strange phenomenon. Geysir, believed to have formed in the thirteenth century, has a bowl 18 m (59 ft) in diameter with a 20 m deep chamber below. Its eruptions are majestic and after the big earthquakes in 2000 it has erupted several times. A smaller, adjacent hot spouting spring, Strokur, is a popular attraction, erupting at 5–10 minute intervals. The whole area contains a variety of hot springs and bubbling pools.

**Please be careful around the hot springs and around the waterfall and stick to the hiking-paths.**

To plant your family tree please head towards Haukadalsskogur forest on route F333, leading from the parking area next to Geysir. Shortly before entering the area you will see our sign on the right hand side. The staff from the forest will have left you shovel right there next to the sign.

Now you’ll head back and continue on road no. 35 through the town of Laugarvatn where you will drive via Lyngdalsheiði on road no. 365 to Þingvellir National Park.

**Þingvellir National Park** is of great ecological, geological and historical interest. The park itself is situated in a stunning volcanic landscape of mountains and lava flows, on the border of Iceland’s largest lake. Surrounding the lake are impressive faults and gorges that are considered among the finest examples of the results of tectonic movements in the world. It is the area where the tectonic plates for Europe and America meet, and one can literally see the ridge between the continents. This is also the former site of the oldest parliament in the world, **Alþingi**. It was founded in Þingvellir in 930 and there most of the greatest moments of Icelandic history took place over a period of 750 years. In the 18th century a major earthquake took place at this location, after which the parliament was transferred to Reykjavík. It may interest you that Þingvellir was in 2004 inscribed upon the List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites concerning the Protection of the World Cultural.

While in **Þingvellir** you should visit (you can get directions at the information centre):

**Lögberg** (The Law Rock), the law speaker, the president of Lögrétta (the Low Council) stood there facing the gathering below to recite the laws during the period when the old Alþingi was held at Þingvellir.

**Neðrivellir** where Lögrétta was, the most important institution of the ancient parliament, the Alþingi, where the “goðar”, the local chieftains, and bishops gathered to debate, pass new law and amend old ones. These two sites are on the eastern side of the Almannagjá gorge.

**Drekkingarhylur** (Drowningpool) in Öxará River, where women found guilty of adultery were drowned.

**Öxarárfoss waterfall**, a beautiful waterfall in the Öxará River, which falls thunderously over a steep slope at the edge of the Almannagjá rift.

**Þingvallakirkja Church**, from 1859, situated on the spot where one of the first churches in Iceland was built around 1016, shortly after Icelanders converted to Christianity in the year 1000.
The tree you'll be planting today is a 2 year old birch tree. We chose this tree with the local forest service as the Icelandic birch is the most suitable for the soil in this area in Haukadalur.

1. Prepare the hole
   - Take the shovel we have waiting for you and dig a hole that is 4-5 times the width of the root ball. This will give fresh roots room to grow without stress. Try to create a small “pedestal” of dirt in the center of the hole where the tree will rest. This pedestal prevents the root ball from sitting continuously in water. Any excess water will naturally flow to the deeper areas of the hole around the edges where the roots can drink from if needed. Having a pedestal in the center of the hole is very important since one of the major reasons why trees die is “drowning,” meaning the tree is getting too much water and the root ball is sitting in a pool of water. The point where the tree comes out of the ground should be slightly higher than the ground around it. Slightly higher means 1/4 to 1/2 inch. This prevents water from collecting next to the base of the trunk which causes the tree to rot.

2. Plant the tree
   - Place your tree gently into the hole. Be sure the hole isn’t too deep or too shallow. The ground level of the plant in the pot should match up with the ground level after you fill the hole in. Do not bury over the crown (where the stem changes to root) or leave any roots exposed.

3. Smile and share
   - Thank yourself for adding another tree to the world, and for planting your roots in Iceland. We would love it if you would send us your moment via email or social media by using #icelandtraveltree.
From Þingvellir you continue towards the Borgarfjörður area. There are two possible routes to Borgarfjörður, the usual one suitable for all cars, and the highland track Kaldidalur valley, only accessible with 4wd.

Driving towards Hvalfjörður you will drive along the base of the beautiful Mt. Esja (918 m or 3.011 ft) seeing the capital city Reykjavik from a distance.

You have the choice between either taking the tunnel (ISK 1000 per car), or continuing north along the beautiful coastline of Hvalfjörður, one of Iceland’s longest fjords (30 km / 19 miles), on road no. 47. During World War II, Hvalfjörður became one of the most important Allied naval bases in the North Atlantic as a refuelling station for the Allied fleet. The many large oil tanks around the village of Miðsandur, often the cause of much tourist curiosity, are indeed remnants of this refuelling station. Here you also find Iceland’s only whaling station, which operated until 1986.

---

Day 3: Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Craters, Volcanic Landscapes, Snæfellsnes Glacier, Sea Cliffs with Birdlife, Rock Formations, Quaint Fishing Villages

**Approximate driving distance:**
220 km / 136 miles

**Please see your Iceland Travel Itinerary for details about your overnight stay**

Today you will drive the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. From Borgarnes, you will drive on road no. 54 to the Snæfellsnes peninsula. You will drive through the Mýrar district, through moors and lava fields and over some of Iceland’s best salmon fishing rivers to the Hnappadalur valley, where you will see the regularly shaped extinct volcanic crater Eldborg. There is a marked hiking path all the way to the top of the crater from the farm Snorrastaðir.
The walk is relatively comfortable and takes about 2 hours.

Drive onwards to Búðir, which is picturesquely situated by the shore, surrounded by Búðahraun lava. This is a unique place to walk in the sandy lava fields, see the charming black church and stroll on one of the few yellow beaches of Iceland. Here you get endless possibilities for photographing.

You drive on westwards on road no. 574 through the romantic little fishing villages of Arnarstapi and Hellnar, both known for their coastal rock formations in the shapes of arches, caves, stacks, as well as cliffs alive with huge colonies of birds. At Hellnar there is a small café by the seashore worth visiting. In Hellnar you can visit the Snæfellsjökull National Park’s Visitor Centre, which displays a part of the country’s trade history and the geology, geography and animal life of the park. It also serves as an information centre and is open daily from mid May to mid September 10:00-18:00.

In Arnarstapi local fishermen can in summer be seen fishing and unloading the catch of the day. A suggested walk is from one of the islands most picturesque harbors along the basalt cliffs, ravines and grottoes, which surround Arnarstapi pier, towards the manmade stone troll Bárður Snæfellsás.

There are myriads of birds in the ravines, especially kittiwakes. Be careful of two things; walk only on the path to avoid falling into the ravines and be aware of the arctic terns nesting close to Bárður Snæfellsás. Another recommended walk, approx. 45 minutes, especially for bird watchers is from Arnarstapi to Hellnar.

Snæfellsjökull glacier (1.446 m / 4.742 ft) is the crowning jewel of Snæfellsnes peninsula, considered to be one of the most beautiful glaciers in Iceland and believed by many to have supernatural powers. It first became famous after the publication in 1864 of Jules Verne’s Journey to the Centre of the Earth. The glacier
itself and its surroundings were established as a National Park in the year of 2001.

Continue your journey around Snæfellsnesjökull glacier. At the tip of the peninsula, near Dritvík, look for a sign saying “Djúpalónsandur”, a small inlet used as a landing for small fishing boats in earlier centuries. The fishermen got wages according to their strength; measured on weight-stones, still to be seen down by the landing. Here the roar of the ocean cannot cover the sound of the seagulls constantly on the move. Continue your journey through the small fishing villages on the northern shores of the peninsula. Hellissandur, a busy fishing village stands on the edge of the sea on an elevated coastal plateau near the outermost tip of the peninsula adjacent to another seaside fishing village Rif. In medieval times, Rif was an important trading port. En route to Stykkishólmur you'll find the towns of Rif, Ólafsvík and Grundafjörður.

Be sure not to miss the short detour on road no. 577 to the farm of Bjarnarhöfn, tel. 438 1581, where you may learn how to take care of shark once pulled out of the water. Then drive on road no. 58 towards to Stykkishólmur.

Stykkishólmur is the largest town of the Snæfellsnes peninsula. It has a fine natural harbour sheltered amongst beautiful rock formations. Fishing is the main occupation with emphasis on shellfish. Trade began in Stykkishólmur in the late 16th century. Iceland’s first meteorological measurements were made here in 1845 by Árni Thorlacius, who in 1832 built the Norwegian house, a fine timber
building that has been beautifully renovated and houses the local folk museum.

The Café Narfeyrarstofa is located in the centre of the village in one of those older houses.

While in Stykkishólmur, we recommend the museum Vatnasafn or “Library of Water”, tel. 433 8154, in the former library building, overlooking the ocean on one side and the harbour and town on the other. Ice from 24 glaciers around Iceland was extracted and the results are stored in liquid form inside glass columns scattered through the building. This is a work created by American artist Roni Horn in collaboration with Art Angel as a multi-faceted long-term installation and community centre in the town of Stykkishólmur.

Day 4:

Boat tour from Stykkishólmur, Haukadalur, Budardalur, Saelingsdalur

Birthplace of Leif Eiriksson

Approximate driving distance:
120 km / 75 miles

Please see your Iceland Travel Itinerary for details about your overnight stay

Wake up, have breakfast and go out to explore before joining a boat tour around the islands of Breidafjordur. Hopefully the fresh sea air has left everyone ready for a scenic drive along the country road no. 54 taking you into the Dalir area.

Head north once you find road no. 60, but
a short detour on the road no. 586 will take you along the lake Haukadalsvatn to the Eiríksstaðir Museum, where you will find an exact replica of a Viking farm. This is the birthplace of Leifur Eiríksson, the discoverer of America according to Icelandic sources. Please call the museum before making that detour to make sure it is open: tel. 434 1118.

Further north on road no. 60, you’ll find the village of Budardalur, one of the first settlements in Iceland. The name translates directly as “Camp Valley”, as this was where settlers would set up a temporary camp when visiting this part of the country. In Budardalur you’ll find all basic services, and it might be a good idea to stock up on basic necessities as the two nights will be away from any shopping.

Onwards to Sælingsdalur, which you’ll find on Sælingsdalsvegur no. 589.

Sælingsdalur is fertile valley with low mountains, sitting on a geothermal area with 2 springs with a temperature of about 60°C. According to the Icelandic sagas the water was directed from the springs into pools where people bathed. In the hill above your hotel you’ll find one of these pools; Gudrunarlaug, which was reconstructed after the original pool was destroyed in a landslide 140 years ago.

Day 5:

Sælingsdalur, Fellsströnd, Klofningur, Saurbær, Olafsfjordur, Sælingsdalur

Approximate driving distance:
132 km / 83 miles

Please see your Iceland Travel Itinerary for details about your overnight stay

Today is all about you as a family. Go for a drive around the small peninsula in search of the White tailed eagle and view the islands of Breidafjordur, but remember to bring with you snacks as you’ll find no shops in this remote area.

Visit Olafsdalur which is one of the most important historical sites in West-Iceland, where you’ll find the old and beautiful school house from 1896 still standing and open for public. Olafsdalur is a great place to let the kids
run around a bit while you take in the beautiful surroundings.

If you choose to stay in Sælingsdalur, you’ll find plenty of interesting things to do: Take a hike up to the rocky hill of Tungustapi, which is thought to be a cathedral and bishopric for elves, go for a swim in the nice geothermal pool or explore the hillside above the hotel.

**Day 6:**

Háafell farm, Deildartunguhver, Hraunfossar, Reykholt, Hvalfjörður, Reykjavík

**Adopt a goat, Picturesque Waterfalls, Europe’s Most Powerful Hot Spring**

**Approximate driving distance:**
320 km / 198 miles

**Please see your Iceland Travel Itinerary for details about your overnight stay**

Today you’ll head south on route 60 but before crossing Brattabrekka heath, be sure to stop at Ærsstaðir dairy farm for some delicious homemade ice cream before continuing to the intersection of road no. 1. Here you’ll take a right until you find road no. 50 on your left. When you find road no. 522, take a left, only to take a right turn when finding road 523. On this road you’ll find Háafell goat farm (Icelandic Goat Centre) where you’ll stop for a visit, chat with the farmer and get to choose a goat which will be “yours” for a full year! The Icelandic goat is an endangered species and the farmers at Háafell are working towards protecting and maintaining the goat stock in Iceland. Visitors receive a warm welcome from the goats, which are very people-friendly. Other animals on the farm are horses, sheep, Icelandic chickens, silky chickens, dogs and cats.

Continue on road 523 but now you’ll cross the river Hvítá to find road no. 518. When taking a left of the bridge you find the picturesque waterfalls Hraunfossar, as they pour from under a lava field, in succession of cascades, into the river Hvitá. Barnafoss waterfall is nearby.

Drive back down 518 until you find your next stop, which will be Reykholt. Reykholt is a
school center today and one of Iceland’s most noteworthy historical sites. Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241), the best known Icelandic Saga writer and scholar, lived in Reykholt, where he wrote famous works such as Heimskringla, Snorra Edda and perhaps Egil’s Saga. In Reykholt you will find the exhibition Snorra-stofa, which is a culture- and medieval center founded in memory of Snorri Sturluson. Snorra-stofa manages various research projects and provides reception, souvenirs and information for tourists.

Continue on road 518 and nearby you find **Deildartunguhver**, probably the largest hot spring in the world with 180 litres of 98°C (208 Fahrenheit) hot water every second. It is located a bit north of the junction of road no. 50 and road no. 518, which lead to Reykholt. At the car park you can purchase fresh tomatoes, grown in the local greenhouses and packed for travellers who stop at Deildartunguhver.

You’ll now follow road no. 50 south towards road no. 1 which will take you all the way into Reykjavik.
Day 7:
Departure

Departure from your accommodation is recommended 3 hours before the departure of your flight, as it takes approx. 1 hour to drive to the airport and check in will start 2 hours before your departure.

If you did not visit the Blue Lagoon on your way to the city on day one, but have time to spare today you might want to use the opportunity en route to the airport. For this detour, please be sure to allow for at least 2-2.5 hours extra to make sure you’ll have ample time at the lagoon.

The rental car should be returned to the Avis airport service area which is located only 2 minutes from the airport building. A shuttle will then transport you to the departures hall.

We at Iceland Travel hope you have enjoyed your stay in Iceland and wish you a safe journey back home.

It would be great to hear how your holiday went when you get back home! You can either log onto our website’s comment section at www.icelandtravel.is/comment/ or visit our TripAdvisor profile.