

# DRIVING AROUND ICELAND

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TRAVEL TIPS FOR YOUR ROAD TRIP

SPECIAL PROMOTION





Road 85,  
between Vopnafjörður  
and Bakkafjörður.

## ZIGZAGGING

Compared to those of other European countries, Icelandic roads are narrow and winding. They are also flanked by beautiful scenery, so it can sometimes be difficult to stay focused on the road and remember to regularly peek at the speedometer. The maximum speed limit in Iceland is 90 km/h (55 mph) on paved roads, and 80 km/h (50 mph) on unpaved ones. Keep in mind that it is strictly forbidden to drive off-road as it results in serious damage to sensitive vegetation, which may take nature decades to repair.

The greatest dangers you face when driving in Iceland, apart from the icy and snowy road conditions common from September until May, which sometimes result in temporary road closures, are livestock (usually sheep) on the road and transitioning from asphalt to gravel at full speed, or meeting a car on one of the single lane bridges which are found all around Iceland.

There are still 39 single lane bridges on the 1,400 km (875 mile) long Ring Road 1, circling Iceland. The first ones, driving from Reykjavík, are about 150 km (90 miles) north or east of the capital. And the farther you go from the capital region, the more common they become. Icelandic law requires that vehicle headlights be on at all times, day and night, when driving.

But driving in Iceland is not all about danger. And some roads are more scenic than others—like the 100-km (60-mile) long stretch of the Ring Road between Höfn and Djúpivogur in the east; or Route 61 between Hólmavík and Ísafjörður in the West Fjords; Route 85 between Vopnafjörður and Þórshöfn, Northeast Iceland; and Route 574 from Arnarstapi to Ólafsvík, on Snæfellsnes peninsula.

Some of the highland roads, like F208, Fjallabak, from Landmannalaugar to Hólaskjól, are very beautiful, but ‘F’ in front of the road number indicates that you need an SUV to cross all the unbridged rivers and brooks crossing the road. All F roads in the highlands are closed to traffic due to snow from mid-September until late June, or early July.

Before every journey in Iceland, drivers should take a look at three informative online resources: the Icelandic Association for Search and Rescue’s travel website, [safetravel.is](http://safetravel.is), the website of the Icelandic Met Office, [en.vedur.is](http://en.vedur.is) and the website of the Road and Coastal Administration, [road.is](http://road.is), which covers road and weather conditions of all of the 13,000 km (8,000 miles) of roads zigzagging the country.



# JUST YOUR SPEED

Get to know Iceland on your own with Avis' My Way guided tours.

For most people visiting Iceland for the first (or second, or third) time, getting out into the countryside and enjoying the stunning landscape is a major priority. But while many visitors want to learn more about the unique history and geography of the places they visit, they don't want to be beholden to a set tour schedule and the whims of a large tour group. Luckily, Avis offers a great solution for independent travelers: My Way, a set of GPS-oriented audio programs that give you all the informational benefits of a guided tour, while still allowing you to travel at your own speed.

## YOUR OWN PERSONAL TOUR GUIDE

More than just a collection of pre-set driving directions, My Way is like traveling with your very own—and very knowledgeable—tour guide. Linked to a Garmin GPS system, My Way determines your exact location and then shares interesting anecdotes, historical tidbits, and geographical facts about the area as you drive, as well as pointing out lesser-known points of interest that you might otherwise miss. My Way offers three enjoyable day trips, all of which can be narrated in either English or German.

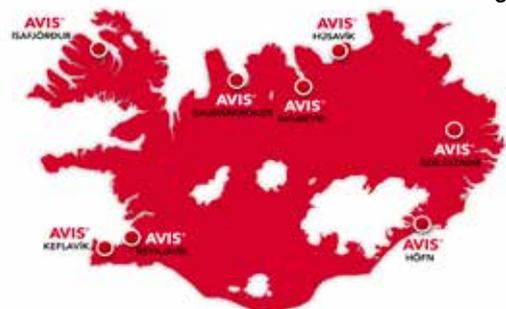
The classic Golden Circle route will take you to some of Iceland's most cherished natural wonders, including Pingvellir—a volcanic rift valley and the site of the world's oldest parliament—followed by the magnificent Gullfoss waterfall and the Geysir geothermal area. Take a trip along the gorgeous southern coast to experience waterfalls, black sand beaches, glaciers and volcanos, all in one fantastic trip. Or enjoy some of the country's most extreme landscapes on the Reykjanes peninsula, celebrated for its sprawling lava fields, its sulfuric springs, and, of course, the world-renowned Blue Lagoon.

## SAFE TRAVELS

Driving around Iceland's diverse countryside is an incredibly rewarding experience, but the changeable and sometimes harsh weather can present challenges for drivers who are unfamiliar with such conditions. Avis works closely with Icelandic weather and road authorities to provide its customers with up-to-date information about driving conditions, but encourages drivers to be vigilant about winter weather hazards, such as strong, gusty winds and unexpected patches of black ice on roadways.

Before setting off on your journey, it's also a good idea to familiarize yourself with local road signs, traffic laws, and the different kinds of roads that you might encounter—such as gravel roads, single-lane bridges, and restricted highland routes. Avis offers all its customers a helpful 'Driving in Iceland' pamphlet which summarizes the most important information. But, with eight sites strategically located around Iceland, you can be confident that help will always be close at hand if you need it.

[en.avis.is](http://en.avis.is)



# FREEDOM AND FLEXIBILITY



PHOTO BY STEVEN SHANNON.



PHOTO BY DANIEL HAMPEL.

## Roam Iceland's roads with Lagoon Car Rental.

Exploring Iceland by car gives travelers the freedom and flexibility that tours simply can't match. Whether it's a multi-day ring road drive in the summer or a short Reykjavík getaway in the winter, a car allows you to cruise Iceland's roads and experience the best sights on your own schedule. Lagoon Car Rental is a small, family-owned agency that only rents new cars and has offices in Reykjavík and Keflavík. All the cars rented out are less than two years old and are well-equipped for traveling in Iceland's unique weather conditions.

### CONVENIENCE AND PERSONAL SERVICE

Lagoon Car Rental's Keflavík office is located just five minutes from Keflavík International Airport and is open 24/7. For guests who have just arrived in Iceland and are picking up their car in Keflavík, a representative from the company will be waiting in the arrivals hall. The employee will be ready to help with your luggage and drive you to the rental office where you pick up your car. The friendly staff are always available to answer questions and provide personal customer service by selecting the right car for your journey, as well as offering information on roads and conditions.

### MANY MODELS TO CHOOSE FROM

The company currently has scores of cars available for rent, ranging from small economy cars to large mountain trucks. Some of the vehicles available include more compact options like Toyota Yaris, Renault Clio, and Hyundai i20, as well as mid-size cars like VW Golf, Dacia Logan Wagon, and Suzuki Jimny. For those that want to explore the F-roads during the summer, guests can choose from a Dacia Duster, Toyota Rav4 and Subaru Forester, among others. For especially rough terrain, guests could opt for an Isuzu D-Max 4.4 mountain truck with 33-inch tires.

### SAFETY FIRST

Driving in Iceland isn't always easy, especially during the winter when travelers can encounter snow, rain, sleet, ice and high winds. The staff at Lagoon Car Rental make sure that customers are informed about the weather and road conditions. "We like to go over where they plan to go with the car and we discuss whether the plan is safe and what kind of car makes the most sense for them," says Einar Smárason, manager of marketing and sales for Lagoon Car Rental. "Safety is a top priority and it's important that customers know the specific conditions in Iceland, like wind and ice. That's why all our cars have studded tires during the winter."

[lagooncarrental.is](http://lagooncarrental.is)



Once you've experienced a personal 4x4 tour with **Discover Iceland**, you'll understand why they're TripAdvisor's review favorite.

**F**rom the moment you climb aboard your Discover Iceland super jeep, right at the door of your Reykjavik hotel, your experience of a lifetime begins and whether you have chosen a private or a shared tour, the service is memorably personal.

### GETTING ACQUAINTED

Discover Iceland uses a fleet of ten specially-customized super jeeps on monster tires between 38 and a whopping 46 inches (96-116 cms). Inside, the vehicles are comfortable, roomy and quiet—which means you'll soon spark up a conversation with your companions and your knowledgeable, friendly guide. Groups are usually four or five guests to a vehicle, and never more than six, so if you don't already know your companions at the start of the day, prepare to make new friends! Private tours for up to nine passengers are also available.

Why book with them? Because the small group sizes make Discover Iceland tours more personal and mean you have unfettered access to your guide. Discover Iceland guides have intimate knowledge of the Icelandic landscape, its stories and secrets, and they know exactly where to go for the ultimate 'wows.'

And because all Discover Iceland tours are longer and more detailed than your average coach tour. Most of them include one or more secret stops at special locations you'll remember for years but most other people will never get to see.

### NO DIRT, NO FUN

Whether you choose a day tour or a longer trip, Discover Iceland guides take every opportunity they can to bring you off the main Route 1, or Ring Road 1, as much as possible, and that often involves traversing rocky highland trails, fording rivers, and even scaling glaciers.

Discover Iceland's private multi-day tours range from two to 12 days and most include a stop at the company's own private luxury lodge near Geysir—naturally complete with its own hot tub. Whether you want to see the West Fjords, the majesty of Lake Mývatn, the Southern Highlands, or anything else, look no further than Discover Iceland.

Private or shared day trips in Southwest Iceland include the Golden Circle with the added pleasure of glacier snowmobiling, Eyjafjallajökull glacier volcano, Landmannalaugar hot springs and many more.

### SPREADING REPUTATION

A young, family-run company, Discover Iceland started with the boom in volcano tourism during the 2010 eruptions. Couple Georg and Karen soon realized that the demand for their high-end super jeep tours would long outlive the volcano hype, and so Discover Iceland was born.

In the five or so years that followed, Discover Iceland has received hundreds of reviews on TripAdvisor and has a five-star rating from the website, making it the top-rated jeep tour company in the capital.

**discover.is**

# EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

The weather in Iceland is not casual conversation, but serious business.



The weather can change rapidly in Iceland, from calm winds and clear skies, to rain, snow, sleet and punishing wind gusts, and back to calm wind and clear skies, all in the same hour. It's unpredictable, frustrating, exhilarating and confusing for many travelers, but Icelanders have learned to adapt and go with the flow. As a result, plans tend to be loose, whether it's meeting a friend for coffee, or even an appointment for a job interview.

Whether you're a local or traveler, the best course of action is to have flexible plans.

Some of the most extreme weather you could experience in Iceland is wind; the type of wind that could literally knock you off your feet. If the weather forecast is showing strong winds, it's important to alter your plans accordingly. Do not underestimate the wind, or any storm advisories. Be safe, smart and stay prepared.

## DRIVE SAFELY

Driving in Iceland can range from peaceful to harrowing, depending on the weather. To check road conditions, visit the Road Administration's website at [road.is](http://road.is). If there is an advisory due to wind, rain, snow, or a volcanic eruption or avalanche (it happens), stay off the road. Advisories are to be taken seriously. Always remember that road conditions are unpredictable and car accidents involving foreign drivers are too common. You can be traveling on a quiet, scenic, paved road that suddenly turns into an unpaved, rough section. Inexperienced drivers can lose control of the car quite easily.



## UNIQUE HAZARDS

In addition to Iceland's extreme wind patterns, the island is home to other hazards that travelers must be aware of. For instance, earthquakes can occur, as well as avalanches, glacial

floods, sandstorms and volcanic eruptions. There is nothing to fear, but it's important to stay informed, listen to advisories and stay safe. It is essential to closely follow Iceland's weather website [en.vedur.is](http://en.vedur.is) (you can also download the free Vedur app from Google Play or Apple App Store).

The Icelandic Met Office updates the weather forecasts and warnings every three to six hours, with observations updating every hour, giving guests and locals the most current conditions. The agency has a long-term advisory role with the Department of Civil Protection and issues public alerts about impending natural hazards.

Travelers must remember that traveling to Iceland for "good weather" is unheard of. The changing conditions are part of the experience of a trip to Iceland, and the key is being prepared with layers of clothing, proper footwear and waterproof outerwear for walking. For driving, be sure to monitor the weather forecast and road conditions, and always have a map and charged mobile phone.

[en.vedur.is](http://en.vedur.is)



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY SIGÓSIG PHOTOGRAPHY.

# TRAVEL SAFE WITH SAFETRAVEL.IS

The best motto for traveling in Iceland? Be Prepared!

Given the singularity of the landscape and the innumerable wonders that are visible just beyond the windshield, driving through the Icelandic countryside is an experience that most visitors never forget. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that driving in Iceland also poses its own particular challenges and hazards—factors which drivers must be attentive to if they are going to safely enjoy their travels.

## DON'T LIKE THE WEATHER?

"Don't like the weather?" a popular joke in Iceland asks. "Just wait a few minutes!" It's the kind of quip that resonates with locals because it rings so true: weather conditions in the country change dramatically and unexpectedly. This is especially true in the winter, when you can expect a lot of snow and ice, even when driving on Route 1, the Ring Road. This may be Iceland's main thoroughfare, but it isn't plowed every day and parts of it—such as in the East Fjords—are sometimes closed during the winter. So it's very important to prepare for all sorts of eventualities when driving in Iceland, particularly in rural areas.

## ONE WEBSITE, MANY RESOURCES

A great way to keep apprised of current weather conditions is to check [safetravel.is](https://safetravel.is), the website maintained by the Icelandic Search and Rescue Association (ICE-SAR). This is an invaluable English-language resource where you can obtain up-to-date travel advisories. On the 'Driving' page ([safetravel.is/driving](https://safetravel.is/driving)), you'll also get in-depth information about Icelandic traffic laws, road signs, off-road driving restrictions, and more.

Outdoor adventurers will benefit from the website's equipment lists, crevasse maps, and Personal Location Beacon (PLB) rental information. And all travelers in Iceland are advised to take advantage of the website's Travel Plan registration system, which allows you to log your personal information and travel itinerary directly with ICE-SAR in case of emergency.

## 112 FOR EMERGENCIES

Good preparedness can help you to avoid dangerous situations in Iceland. In the event of an emergency, however, it's important to be able to not only contact ICE-SAR quickly, but also to accurately pinpoint your location. 112 is the emergency number in Iceland; call to connect with local fire, police, ambulance, search and rescue, natural disaster, or child protection departments.

The freely available 112 app for smartphones is also a great resource while visiting the country. This app has two functions: click the green 'check in' button at regular intervals and your location will be recorded with ICE-SAR. This will make it easier for ICE-SAR to find you in an emergency situation. Or click the red emergency button, sending your location to the 112 center, and place a call to 112. Once in contact with 112, answer their questions and be as clear as possible in describing your emergency need.

An SMS to 112 can work even when signal conditions are poor, but should you find yourself completely without a signal, most often, all you need to do is move to a more elevated area.

[safetravel.is](https://safetravel.is)

# SMALL GROUPS AND PERSONAL SERVICE



Iceland Guided Tours offers tours with small groups to some of the best spots in the country.

Traveling around Iceland with professional, knowledgeable tour guides in small groups is a great way to explore the country. Iceland Guided Tours is a small family-run business that strives to offer personal service and enthusiastic guides. The company provides daily scheduled tours to some of the best destinations on the island, including sights along the Golden Circle and South Coast. Comfortable minibuses, instead of large impersonal buses, usually transport guests in groups of up to 19 people.

## AWE-INSPIRING SIGHTS

Iceland Guided Tours offers a variety of options catering to everyone from thrill-seekers to hikers. For instance, the company offers day tours with paragliding or snowmobile rides for those

seeking a little more adventure. For guests seeking a classic Golden Circle tour, they will visit Þingvellir National Park, Gullfoss waterfall, and Geysir, along with a stop at the Haukadalur geothermal area, plus some extras along the way. Hikers will be thrilled with Iceland Guided Tours' South Coast and Glacier Hike option that takes travelers for a walk on Sólheimajökull glacier. The company is launching a new three-day tour with a stop in the ice cave in Borgarfjörður in the west and an aurora trip to Mývatn in the north.

Iceland Guided Tours takes great pride in providing small groups with personal service. Guides are happy to share information about Icelandic nature, geology, history, news and things to do, and to help travelers find ways to explore this unique country.

[igtours.is](http://igtours.is)

## FREEDOM TO ROAM

Explore Iceland with **CampEasy** Campervans



Camping in Iceland offers you the freedom to roam the country without having to worry about booking accommodation for the night. By day, guests can explore stunning landscapes, including towering glaciers, spectacular waterfalls and black sand beaches. At night, travelers can park at one of Iceland's many campsites after an exciting day on the road.

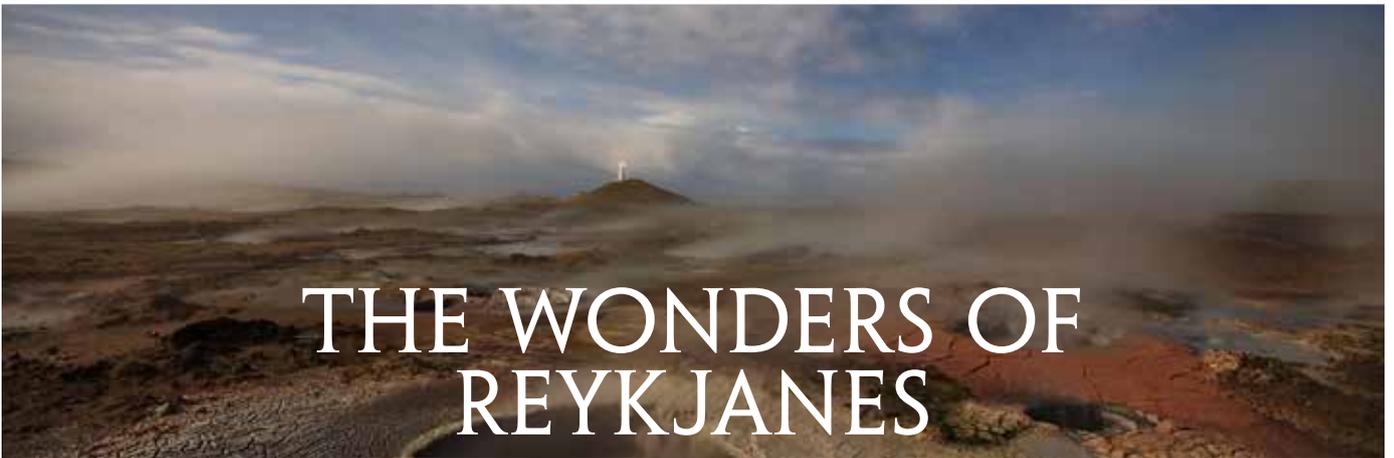
CampEasy is a campervan rental agency that offers a variety of first-class campers that allow travelers to explore the island comfortably. The company offers six different models that can accommodate up to five people, ranging from a budget-friendly 'Easy Small' van to an 'Easy Clever 4x4' with automatic transmission. Each vehicle includes at least one bed and seats for two to five people, depending on the model chosen.

## COMFORT ON THE ROAD

All of CampEasy's vehicles are equipped with a Webasto heating system, an extra battery, as well as a gas stove, sink with running water, refrigerator/cooler, and cookware. Linen, pillows and duvets are also provided, as well as a manual with detailed information.

After booking with CampEasy, you will receive a free voucher for the FlyBus from Keflavík International Airport to Reykjavík, where you will be picked up by a CampEasy employee to retrieve the van. It's easy to navigate the roads and there are many great camping areas. Combine driving and camping by renting a camper in Iceland with CampEasy!

[campeasy.is](http://campeasy.is)



## THE WONDERS OF REYKJANES

Spend the day exploring the unique landscape of Reykjanes.

**T**he Reykjanes peninsula is home to a striking, dramatic landscape that features lava fields stretching for kilometers, hot springs, volcanic craters, geothermal waters and lava caves. The terrain is rugged and even desert-like in some areas, with most of the ground covered in moss, heather and lichen growing on lava stones. Reykjavík Excursions offers a tour of the region, The Wonders of Reykjanes & Blue Lagoon, that includes stops at two geothermal sites, views of dramatic coastlines in the south and visits to welcoming towns like Eyrarbakki and Grindavík.

### GEOTHERMAL SITES

The Krísuvík and Gunnhver geothermal areas are popular among geology buffs and hikers. Gurgling mud pools amid the yellow, red, orange clay-like earth, are intertwined with dancing steam and hot springs. The area gives you a great sense of Iceland's raw, natural geothermal energy that powers much of the island. Take some time to roam, but guides will direct you to be sure to stay within the designated roped-off areas to avoid getting burned by spray and steam.

Travelers will also get to see on the tour the legendary Strandakirkja church, dramatic waves crashing by the Reykjanesvíti lighthouse, and guests will get to walk on the 'Bridge Between the Continents' which connects the American and Eurasian tectonic plates.

### SOAK IN THE BLUE LAGOON

For those who would like to visit the Blue Lagoon, the bus makes a stop at the world-famous spa. Visitors from around the world travel to soak in the glorious, healing waters and dream-like atmosphere. The naturally-heated water, which ranges from 37-40°C (98-104°F), is heavenly at any time of year. Spending a couple of hours relaxing in the milky waters of the outdoor lagoon is a must on any visit to Iceland. The water is not deep and the bottom is covered with white silica mud, the result of a natural process of re-condensation. It's common to see visitors cover their faces with the mud, as it does wonders for your skin.

There are also two steam baths on the property, as well as a dry sauna and massage area. A number of spa treatments are also available. The entrance fee is ISK 6,400 and it's necessary to book in advance. You can rent a towel at the front desk, along with swimsuits and bathing caps.

The eight-hour Wonders of Reykjanes & Blue Lagoon tour is available year round and includes the bus fare and guided tour. Admission to the Blue Lagoon is not included and must be booked separately. The tour costs ISK 12,500 and is free for children under the age of 11.

re.is



## CONVENIENT AND COMFORTABLE

Bus4u provides transport on a variety of private coaches.

**B**us4u is a Keflavík-based transportation company that provides a range of vehicles, and excellent drivers, to shuttle travelers around the country. The company transports locals, tourists, school groups, airline crews, travel agency tours, and select vehicles are equipped to accommodate disabled passengers. Trip planning for companies and organizations is also available.

Situated just five minutes from Keflavík International Airport, Bus4u is a convenient choice for guests traveling around Iceland. The husband and wife-owned company has been in business for 16 years and has a strong reputation for delivering personal customer service. Drivers are friendly and helpful and go out of their way to give guests a comfortable and enjoyable experience. The company's motto is "big enough to handle, small enough to care."

### IMPRESSIVE FLEET

Bus4u has a diverse fleet of vehicles that can transport five to 58 passengers each. Vehicles are new, in excellent condition and have seat belts in every seat. Safety is a top priority for the owners and staff members alike. In addition to its private coach business, the company will handle public transport in the Southwest Iceland municipality of Reykjanesbær (where Keflavík is located) beginning this summer.

The company prides itself on providing a personal and safe service to all guests; so consider Bus4u for your transportation needs during your next trip to Iceland.

[bus4u.is](http://bus4u.is)

For road and weather information call 1777 or check [www.road.is](http://www.road.is)

Our English speaking operators will be glad to assist you



Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration



# ICELANDREVIEW.COM

Go to [icelandreview.com](http://icelandreview.com) for travel information and daily news from Iceland.