

Active volcanoes, hot springs, gigantic waterfalls, geysers, fjords, bright green valleys, and black sandy beaches—everything you want of wild nature, *Iceland* has to offer.

Iceland is an island country in the North Atlantic between Norway and Greenland with its own language and currency.

It's the second largest European island after Great Britain and with just 3.3 inhabitants per square kilometer, it is the most sparsely populated country in Europe. Eleven percent of the landmass is covered with glaciers and 64.5 percent consists of so-called wasteland, in which there is little to no vegetation. Strong storms and constant volcanic activity change the appearance of the island all the time.

Reykjavík, the political, cultural, and economic center of the country, is home to around 65 percent of Iceland's population and is also the world's northernmost capital of a sovereign state. With its numerous cafés and lively cultural scene, the city surprises with Mediterranean flair in the summer.

During the financial crisis of 2008, Iceland suffered the most serious banking breakdown in economic history for an economy of its size. But Iceland has weathered the crisis, and thanks to the strong growth in tourism in recent years, has returned to an economic level similar to before 2008. Marketing experts were able to promote the country's natural beauty to travelers, nature lovers, and photographers.

Iceland can be divided into seven regions, each of which has its own specific landscape features.



The south of Iceland is particularly popular with tourists. Here the Golden Circle Route connects the most important sights.

Travelers who want to explore the whole island should go on a trip along the Ring Road. The 1,341-kilometer (833 mi.) road encircles the main island of Iceland and leads past all major cities. It has only been fully paved since August 2019. Before that, particularly in the south, it was mostly a gravel path.



Ring Road leads to several trails that are suitable for mountain biking. However, booming tourism makes for crowded trails, especially during the tourist season.

The highlands are much more interesting and beautiful anyway. Since you have to repeatedly cross rivers by car, there are significantly fewer tourists here. The trails are scenically impressive and easily accessible. The extraordinary lava floor ensures comfortable cycling, but

interior paths require a higher level of experience. As the distances between urban areas are often considerable and the weather is unpredictable, travelling alone in the Icelandic interior is not recommended.

Around the Landmannalaugar campsite, which is located within the Fjallabak Nature Reserve, there are several different routes you can ride. If you want to go deeper into the highlands, it makes sense to book a guide from Icebike Adventures. ♦

FACTS	Ø Temperature (Trip): 13°C (55°F)	Elevation (Trip): 740 m (2,460 ft.)	National Cuisine: hákarl, lamb, lobster
DESTINATION: Skógafoss	Trail Distance: 25 km (16 mi.)	Passability: medium to difficult, loose lava underground, creeks need to be crossed	Don't forget: earplugs to survive windy nights in the tent
TRAVEL TIME: July–August	Trail Duration: 1 day		