Self Drive 9 days

Highlands and Lowlands
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 explore Reykjanes Peninsula

Approximate driving distance:
104 km / 64 miles

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

Upon your arrival in Iceland you’ll find your rental car help 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 driving along the southern coast of the Reykjanes peninsula. Start your journey with a soak in the Blue Lagoon. Follow road no. 41 towards Reykjavik until you find road no. 43, leading south towards Grindavik. Before you reach Mt Þorbjörn you make a right turn to the Blue Lagoon area. To make it easier you can just follow the steam clouds rising into the air. At the Blue Lagoon you can soothe away the jet lag and relax in the milky waters of the Lagoon and perhaps enjoy a glass of the famous Blue Lagoon cocktail while you let the algae mask bring out the skin’s inner glow!

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

If you don´t plan on visiting the lagoon at the beginning of your trip you continue on road number no. 43 until you find your way to Grindavik. Take a left onto road no. 427 and explore the southern coastline on your way to Hveragerdi.

Follow this winding road along the shoreline, past stand-alone houses, lava rock formations, and endless sea views. Take a quick detour on road no. 42 to Seltún (Krysuvik) Geothermal Area and Kleifarvatn Lake, which are a part of the Reykjanes fissure zone.

Continue your journey on road no. 427 until you reach road no. 38 which will take you to the charming village of Hveragerdi. The village is one of the few sites in the world located
directly on top of a geothermal area and because of the numerous greenhouses using geothermal heat it is often called the flower village.

Day 2:
Þingvellir, Gullfoss, Geysir

National Park with Geological Wonders (UNESCO), Spouting Geysers, Massive Waterfall

Approximate driving distance: 240 km / 150 miles

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

Today you’ll drive east out of Hveragerdi and drive along road no. 1 and road no. 36 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 rift valley between the continents. This is also the former site of the oldest parliament in the world, Alþingi, it was founded here in 930 and this is where all the greatest events in Icelandic history have taken place in the past thousand years. In the 18th century a major earthquake took place at this location, after which the parliament was transferred to Reykjavík. In 2004 Þingvellir was placed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

While in Þingvellir you should visit:

Lögberg (The Law Rock), the law speaker, the president of Lögrétta (the Law 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 laws and amend old ones. These two sites are on the eastern side of the Almannagjá gorge.

Drekkingarhylur (Drowning Pool) 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 first churches in Iceland was built around 1016, shortly after Iceland converted to Christianity in 1000 AD.

From Þingvellir you will drive via Lyngdalsheiði on road no. 365 to the lake Laugarvatn area. Laugarvatn is a geothermal area, and it is said that when Christianity was adopted 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. Here you find the inviting services of Fontana Spa.

You continue your tour to the beautiful Gullfoss and Geysir region. The Geysir area is a colourful geothermal field where you find geothermal pools and a spectacular erupting hot spring or geyser. In fact the Icelandic word "geysir" is the commonly used generic term for this natural phenomenon. Every 5-10 minutes the geyser Strokkur (the Churn) erupts sending water and vapour shooting skywards in a spectacular display. Please be very careful near the hot pools and geyser and keep to the hiking paths.

You continue you journey further north to Gullfoss waterfall, the “Golden Waterfall”. It is a beautiful two-tiered waterfall 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.

You head back and return to road no. 31 and turn south. Turn left at a junction to the road
no. 31 to visit the bishopric at **Skálholt**, which played a major role in Icelandic history from the year 1056 to 1796, when the bishopric was moved to Reykjavík following a series of powerful earthquakes.

Earth tremors in 2000 shook the ground in the district you are now driving through. These tremors, of a magnitude of 6.5, damaged older buildings but thankfully nobody was killed. Such powerful tremors are the result of tectonic tension in the bedrock and we can expect this to occur every 100 years.

**Fun things to do**

**River Rafting on the River Hvítá**  
*Duration: 3-4 hours*  
Arctic Rafting, tel. 562 7000.  
**Snowmobile Tour on Langjökull Glacier**  
*Duration: 2.5-3 hrs*  
Mountaineers of Iceland, tel. 562 7000.

**Day 3:**

**Kjölur, Hveravellir, Skagafjörður**

*Uninhabited Interior, Geothermal Area, Natural Bathing Pool, Viking Horses, Glacial Rivers*

➔ **Approximate driving distance:**  
230 km / 143 miles

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

Drive road no. 35, and head to **Gullfoss**, the Golden Waterfall. Continue from there to the highlands, still on road no. 35 but the road soon becomes rather rugged. This is a rough road and not suitable for other than cars with 4wd. Please ask about road conditions at **Gullfoss** before leaving, as the road is usually just open from mid June to September.

This highland crossing is called **Kjölur** and is an old trade route and originally one of the horse tracks used by chieftains from N-Iceland to ride to **Pingvellir** for parliament meetings. You will be crossing the barren deserts of the uninhabited interior highlands. You will traverse black sandy plains with glacial rivers in the background.

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**Please note!**

The **Kjölur mountain road** is usually just open from mid-June to September, so please ask for information regarding road and weather conditions before setting off on this route. It is only suitable for cars with 4wd.

You can buy food and beverages at Hveravellir but there is no petrol service there. It is therefore wise to have a lunch box and vital to have a full tank of fuel before setting off.

The road conditions on Kjölur are rather rough until Hveravellir, but just north of that the conditions improve considerably.

There are several theories regarding the name Kjölur, which means a boat-keel. Interestingly, you notice as you traverse the highlands that a few of the mountains resemble boats turned upside down with their keel showing.

About half way across the highlands you will come to **Hveravellir**. Hveravellir is one of the many amazing natural wonders in Iceland. It is positioned between two glaciers, Langjökull and Hofsjökull. The hot spring area, natural hot pool, glaciers and magnificent view are the main attractions.

At Hveravellir there are both steam and water hot springs. Amongst them there are **Eyvindahver** (Eyvindur’s Spring) and **Bláhver** (Blue Spring). Eyvindahver draws its name from **Fjalla-Eyvindur**, who was a famous outlaw that survived twenty years in the wilderness. He lived about two years with his wife at Hveravellir and still today you can find **Eyvindarhellir** (Eyvindur’s Cave) and **Eyvindarrétt** (Eyvindur’s Pasture, where he grazed his sheep).

After the rough ride you can relax in the natural hot pool closeby one of the huts. You drive through the **Blanda** power-plant area with its huge reservoir but you will hardly notice anything, because most of the constructions are underground. After that you will come to road no. 732 and then 731 until you reach road no. 1 where you take a right turn.

Drive on road no.1 towards **Skagafjörður fjord** and valley. Skagafjörður stretches from the Arctic Ocean to the highlands and is one
of the “cradles of Icelandic history” playing a central role in the events of the 13th century civil war and in cultural developments for centuries afterwards. Skagafjörður is one of the most popular areas for river rafting in the country, as there are several large glacial rivers originating from the highland interior, ideal for that purpose.

Varmahlíð is a small village situated at the junction of road no. 1 and road no. 75.

### Fun things to do

**Horse Show in Skagafjörður**
*Duration: 1 hour*
Varmilækur Farm, tel. 898 7756 or 453 8021

**Horseback Riding in Skagafjörður**
*Duration: 1.5 -2 hours*
Hestasport Tours, tel. 453 8383 or 453 8211

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**Day 4:**

**Akureyri, Lake Mývatn**

Iceland’s Second Largest City, Waterfall of the “Gods”, Bizarre Lava Formations, Geothermal Activity, Rich Birdlife

**Approximate driving distance:**
190 km / 118 miles

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Before you head off to Akureyri you could visit Glaumbær. Glaumbær is located on road no. 75 only about 14 km (9 miles) from Varmahlíð - watch out for a signpost. This is an old farm with turf buildings in traditional style, some parts of which date back to the 18th
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century. Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir, the first woman to go to America and who gave birth to the first American of European descent, lived at Glaumbær in the 11th century. A part of the museum is a charming café called Áskaffi serving traditional pastries in a lovely, old-fashioned parlour.

Another place worth the visit is the small turf church Viðimýri, located very close to Varmahlið, but on the other side of road no. 1. It is open 09:00 – 18:00 from 1. June - 31. August.

Continue your drive east on the road no.1 to the “capital of the north,” Akureyri.

Akureyri boasts some of the finest timber buildings in the country, beautifully restored. Because of its excellent natural harbour and good communications, Akureyri has become the northern centre of education, culture, trade and industry. Akureyri has a whole street in its centre, Listagil (Art Gorge), devoted to arts, crafts and design, where it is ideal to visit the Akureyri Art Museum. This charming town is located inland at the base of Eyjafjörður Fjord, the longest fjord in Iceland, which means that Akureyri, together with Egilsstaðir, is one of the two towns in Iceland closest to the centre of the country. This provides Akureyri with a climate, which is more continental than oceanic, with colder winters and warmer summers than in most other towns in Iceland. Therefore, in spite of its location, about 70 km (44 miles) south of the Arctic Circle, the town is verdant with a public park and botanical garden, Lystigarðurinn, which was opened in 1912. It was originally only planted with various kinds of trees, but it now also includes over 400 to 450 Icelandic vascular plants.

There are many other interesting places and museums in Akureyri. One is Nonnahús, a museum and former home of children’s writer and Jesuit priest Jón Sveinsson, “Nonni”. (It is located at Aðalstræti 54b). Next-door, and equally interesting, is the Akureyri Museum. Akureyri also has a new swimming pool with indoor, outdoor and children’s pools, Jacuzzis and slides.

At the Tourist Information office in the Hof Culture Centre you can pick up a map of the town and get further other interesting information.

You will continue your journey and drive on road no. 1 east to the Lake Mývatn area. If you are interested you can make a short detour by taking the road no. 83 to the Laufás Museum, where you can see one of the country’s best preserved turf/sod farmhouses. The museum is open from mid May until mid September from 09:00-18:00.

From Laufás you would continue by taking the road no. 835 until reach road no. 1 again approx. 18 km (11 miles) from Godafoss waterfall, the waterfall of the gods, one of Iceland’s most beautiful tourist attractions.

Mývatn is one of the country’s most fascinating places. The unique ecology of the lake and its unusual environment has made it one of northern Iceland’s greatest attractions. Lake Mývatn is famous for many things, such as rich bird life, beautiful landscape influenced by volcanic activity and steaming solfataras. In and near the lake, all the Icelandic duck species, apart from the eider, breed annually, all together 15 species. During the summer the lake is teeming with birds, which feed on the high abundance of aquatic insects in the lake. The area is protected by international law as a very important breeding place for different birds. Birds to look out for, apart from the ducks, are great northern divers, red-necked phalaropes, Slovenian grebes, red-throated divers, merlins and gyrfalcons. NB You might need bug repellent / nets.

There are several remarkable natural phenomena in the district worth visiting, such as:

Skútustaðargígar pseudo craters: A cluster of colourful and beautifully formed pseudo craters situated close to Skútustaðir and easily accessible from there on foot.


Dimmuborgir: Translated as “Black Castles”, a landscape of rugged crags and strange lava formations. There are 3 different routes marked for walking. Please stay on the paths, as this area is like a labyrinth.
Hverfjall: A huge explosive tuff crater. It looks like a giant circular stadium with a crater bowl of 1,040 – 1,200 m (3,411-3,936 ft) in diameter and 140 m (459 ft) in depth. It stands only 150 m (492 ft) above its surroundings so it is not difficult to hike to the top. Well worth visiting and exploring on foot.

Vogafjós-café: A small café located inside a cowshed where you can see the milking of the cows. It is possible to taste the fresh milk and even try your hand at milking. The cows are milked twice a day. The emphasis is on home-made local food such as smoked trout, Mozzarella cheese from their own milk and geyser bread baked in the warm earth. You will find Vogafjós on road no. 1 where it circles Lake Mývatn, just a 10-minute drive from the village of Reykjahlíð.

Gamli Bær is a small café with a nice atmosphere close to Hotel Reynihlíð, where you can sit outdoors on a nice summer’s day.

Námafjall: A mountain ridge singed and boiled by sulphurous vapours. The area is famous for the colourful solfataras and bubbling pools of hot viscous mud of amazing patterns and colours. Please be very careful here and do not get too close to the bubbling pools as they might splash hot mud.

Grjótagjá: Is a lava cavern half full of hot spring water, which made it a popular place for bathing in the past. Today, however, the water is too hot to do that. Please watch your step if you climb down.

Krafla: A high temperature field with active volcanic craters, where a steam-powered electricity generating station has been built.

The Nature-Baths: The geothermal spa called, Mývatn Nature Baths is the latest addition to the region’s many visitor attractions and are well worth visiting. It contains a unique blend of minerals, silicates and geothermal micro-
organisms. It’s open all year around: 1 June - 31 August from 09:00 to 24:00 and from 12:00 to 22:00 in the wintertime. For directions you can call the baths directly tel. 464 4411, or ask local hotels and service-centres in the Mývatn area.

Bird Museum (Fuglasafn Sigurgeirs): A private collection of birds, now open to the public. For directions you can call the museum directly, 464 4477.

Leirhnjúkur: Part of the Krafla fissure complex. It is one of the most interesting sights in the Mývatn area. A highly active volcano and a small but very colourful high-temperature geothermal field situated west of Krafla, which last erupted in a series of nine eruptions from 1975–1984.

West of it are a series of craters and volcanic fissures of the same name. In this area you can also see the lava fields from 1984, which are still hot. A vast magma chamber lies under the region, in some parts as close to the surface as 3 km (1.9 miles). From the car park, a circular footpath leads you around the volcano and up to its summit from where there is a beautiful view over the impressive volcanic landscapes surrounding it. This is a very interesting walk but one has to be extremely careful when crossing the high-temperature area. It is important to wear good walking boots. On rainy days there is considerable mud in the geothermal area and it can become quite slippery there, so one has to take extra care when crossing it.

Please note!

Please note that the water in the high-temperature geothermal area is very hot, or well over 100°C (212 Fahrenheit). Therefore it is very important to pay attention to signs indicating where it is safe to walk. The natural habitat in these areas is very fragile. Please only walk on marked footpaths and respect all fences, for your own safety and in order not to damage the delicate vegetation and unique volcanic landscape.

Day 5:
Húsavík, Dettifoss, Egilsstaðir

Whale Watching, Glacier Carved Gorge, Europe’s Most Powerful Waterfall

Approximate driving distance:
320 km / 199 miles

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

Today you will drive to the fascinating town of Húsavík. It is situated in a picturesque fjord surrounded by majestic mountains topped with snow, even in the summertime, and is a commercial centre for the agricultural locality, as well as a busy fishing port.

The Húsavík Whale Museum provides information on whale species, their evolution and biology, whale stranding and the history of whaling. Open from 8:30-18:30 in May-September but less in other months, tel. 414 2800.

Recommended cafés and restaurants in Húsavík are Gamli Baukur located right on the pier in a charming house made mainly of drift wood and Salka restaurant.

If you are not travelling between mid-June and mid-September, please note that the roads to Jökulsárgljúfur and Dettifoss waterfall are closed.

Please ask locally for information on road conditions before leaving Húsavík. If the roads to Dettifoss are closed, you must take road no. 87 from Húsavík to Mývatn and from there towards Egilsstaðir on road no. 1. NB Road nr. 862 between Hljóðaklettar and Dettifoss can be very rugged (4x4).

If the roads are open, you continue from Húsavík to the Tjörnes peninsula, famous for its fossiliferous layers and bird life. You will continue on road no. 85 to Jökulsárgljúfur Canyon National Park, the largest and most rugged gorge in Iceland, through which flows Jökulsá, one of the country’s mighty glacial rivers. Once there, you should visit:
Ásbyrgi, at road no. 861, a natural horseshoe-shaped rock enclosure, whose impressive walls reach a height of 90 m (295 ft), sheltering fertile and lush vegetation.

The Nature Reserve of Hljóðaklettar (The Echo Cliffs) on road 862 from Ásbyrgi, a great labyrinth of crags and rock formations which, like other strange rock formations and canyons in the National Park, is the result of catastrophic floods and water erosion.

Hólmavirkjun Nature Reserve, also on road 862 with beautiful, colourful rock formations and rich flora.

Dettifoss, Europe’s most powerful waterfall, contrasting strikingly with the smaller waterfalls of Hafragilsfoss and Selfoss.

After this you will take road no. 1 over the mountains, passing Grímsstaðir and Möðrudalur, which are the only inhabited places in the mountain area. Driving the the road across the gravel desert of the highlands is a unique experience. In good weather you may see the table volcano Herðubreið to the south, and the snow-clad stratovolcano Snæfell, further east. Arriving in the eastern part, you follow road no. 1 to Egilsstaðir.

Fun things to do

Whale Watching from Húsavík
Duration: 3 hours
Norðursigling at 464 2350
Day 6:

East Fjords, Höfn

Narrow Fjords, Steep Mountains, Picturesque Coastline, Mineral Collection

**Approximate driving distance:**
300 km / 186 miles

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

Egilsstaðir is situated some distance inland, on a fertile plain on the border of Lake Lagarfljót, which is a huge glacial river. According to local legends, similar to those about Loch Ness in Scotland, you might expect to see a sea serpent called Lagarfljótssormurinn reputedly living in the lake’s murky waters. Egilsstaðir is a natural centre for regional social services and transportation to many of the towns and villages in the eastern part of Iceland.

You can make an interesting visit to Hallormsstaður, a state forestry plantation in the beautiful Hallormsstaðaskógur, where 80 species of trees from various parts of the world are growing. Hallormsstaðaskógur is the largest forest plantation in Iceland. From Egilsstaðir to Hallormsstaður the distance is 26 km (16 miles), but if you have the time to drive around the lake, which in all is 84 km (52 miles), we recommend a stop on the other side of the lake, 20 km (12.5 miles) from Hallormsstaður, called Skriðuklaustur. The building was designed by the German architect Fritz Höger and built in 1939 for the writer Gunnar Gunnarsson. Today it is an institute which enables artists, writers and scholars to stay temporarily to work, but a part of it
is open to the public. If you are here in the afternoon, you can enjoy one of the finest refreshments in Iceland. Everything is home-made and served by local women.

Seyðisfjörður is only 27 km (17 miles) away from Egilsstaðir along road no. 93. It is a beautiful town worth visiting, situated in a deep, 18 km (11 miles) long fjord of the same name. Trading started in Seyðisfjörður in 1834 and in the latter part of the 19th century it became, for a while, one of the largest towns in Iceland. Many beautiful Norwegian-style houses date from that time. Every week the Smyril Line car ferry comes to Seyðisfjörður.

**Eastern Iceland** is a very mountainous region of deep fjords isolated from each other by sheer mountains. There is very little volcanic or geothermal activity there as the region is geologically the oldest part of Iceland. The region is heavily eroded and therefore there are many interesting minerals and semi-precious stones to be found there.

The Eastern Fjords are renowned for the history of brave French, Belgian and Spanish fishermen who who hunted whales and fished for cod in the seas off the coast of the eastern shores from the beginning of the 17th century. An Icelandic farmer compiled the world’s first dictionary of the Basque language in the 17th century in order to be able to communicate with some of them.

Take route no. 92 to Reyðarfjörður, which is the largest of the Eastern Fjords. It served as one of the largest Allied bases during World War II. In the village at the base of the fjord there is a small museum of war memorabilia called the Icelandic Wartime Museum. It is open from mid May until mid September from 10:00-18:00, tel. 470 9063.

From Reyðarfjörður continue your journey, either the long way or through the tunnel, to Fáskrúðsfjörður. On the way to Fáskrúðsfjörður you should see seabirds and possibly also seals.

Fáskrúðsfjörður used to be the base for French fishermen. The French built a hospital and a chapel there and 49 French and Belgian fishermen lie buried in the cemetery at Kros-
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sarah, situated on the seashore on the northern outskirts of the town.

From Fáskrúðsfjörður you follow road no. 96 southward. You drive to Stöðvarfjörður, where you can visit the famous Rock Collection of Petra Sveinsdóttir tel. 475-8834. Over 90% of the stones in her collection were found in Stöðvarfjörður and the surroundings.

You will continue your journey through Breiðdalsvík town to Berufjörður fjord, which is known for its zeolite crystals. At the southern opening of Berufjörður you will find the beautifully situated, picturesque fishing town Djúpivogur. If you can, take a walk around this beautiful area, please ask for a hiking map of the area in the shops. Djúpivogur might be an interesting choice for birdwatchers because there you can experience unspoiled nature where you can see the majority of Icelandic birds in their natural environment without having to walk or travel long distances. Mammals such as seals and reindeer can be seen hereabouts frequently. In Djúpivogur are two birdwatching shelters open to the public. You can get more information at the Information Centre in Langabúð.

You now continue through the Lón area on your way to Höfn. Many consider the Lón area to be one of the most beautiful in Iceland. The last part of the road to Höfn passes through Almannaskarð. If the weather is good one option is to drive to a viewing point on the east side of the tunnel, before you go through. There enjoy the beautiful scenery towards the west. You see the glacial tongues crawling down from the main icecap to the lowlands.

When you emerge from the tunnel you will immediately find a road to the left marked “Stokksnes”. At the end of that road, down at the shore, you will find seabirds, arctic terns and possibly seals out on the rocks. Continue to Höfn.

Fun things to do

Boat Tour to Papey from Djúpivogur
Duration: 4 hours, boat leaves at 1 pm every day.
Papeyjarferðir at 478 8119 or 862 4399.
Day 7:
Jökulsárlón, Skaftafell, Kirkjubæjarklaustur

Europe's Largest Glacier and National Park, Glacial Lagoon with Icebergs

**Approximate driving distance:**
220 km / 137 miles

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**Höfn** is a bustling fishing and fish processing port, as well as a commercial centre, with considerable farming in the neighbouring area.

**Brunnhóll farm** and guesthouse makes a delicious stop on the way to the Glacial Lagoon, since the farm is known for its own production of ice-cream.

At the travel service in **Hólmur**, before leaving Höfn, you can visit a café and **Mini-Zoo** with all the common Icelandic farm animals, horses, sheep, dogs, cats and more. Open daily, 09:00-17:00, tel. 478 2063.

You will drive road no. 1 to **Jökulsárlón** where it is possible to take a breathtaking cruise amongst floating icebergs on the fantastic 180 m (590 ft) deep glacial lagoon. The icebergs break off enormous ice lobes, advancing down deep valleys from the Vatnajökull icecap. The ice from the glacier is over 1000 years old, but the lagoon has largely been formed over the last century, as the glacier has retreated in the warmer climate. Sometimes you can see seals by the coastline of the lagoon.

From Jökulsárlón you will drive to **Skaftafell National Park**. Skaftafell National Park is a masterpiece of seemingly impossible contrasts of nature. On the one hand you have the Skeiðarársandur plains, vast stretches of black sandy wasteland and volcanic debris borne from volcanic eruptions from underneath the icecap of **Vatnajökull**. On the other hand you have the enormous icecap of Vatnajökull with its valley glaciers descending like fingers in all directions. In the middle lies Skaftafell plateau, like a verdant oasis, where you can see gorges with clear brooks and beautiful waterfalls, birch woods, a wealth of wild flowers and lush vegetation. A walk on the marked paths along the gorges for a look at the waterfalls is a must for all visitors. There is an alternative for those who have difficulty walking up to the **Skaftafellsjökull** glacier (wheelchair accessible). For further information please ask at the information centre in Skaftafell.

The most majestic waterfall is **Svartifoss**, "Black Waterfall" plunging over a wall of symmetrical basalt columns that resemble organ pipes.

From Skaftafell you will drive through the great natural barrier **Skeiðarársandur**, a
vast, black and sandy desert, washed down by torrential glacial rivers. Following a volcanic eruption in Vatnajökull glacier in October 1996, millions of tons of water and ice flooded over Skeiðarársandur. The flood washed away large parts of the road and destroyed two bridges. Preliminary repairs were made and the road opened again in December, only two months after the eruption. Some of the icebergs that the flood carried with it were as large as three storey houses.

You will pass Lómagnúpur, an impressive 688 m (2,257 ft) high precipice, a towering outpost west of the sandy desert of Skeiðarársandur and Núpsstaður, an old farm surrounded by magnificent cliffs, where you will find one of the oldest churches in Iceland with a turf-covered roof.

You will keep driving to reach Kirkjubæjarklaustur, an area of great natural beauty, a growing resort with a number of historical spots.

Kirkjubæjarklaustur was the site of a convent in earlier times, a fact reflected in place name like Systrastapi, Systrafoss and Systravatn, meaning Sisters’ Rock, Sisters’ Fall and Sisters’ Lake, respectively. You can have a look at the famous Kirkjugólf or church floor, at the northern part of Kirkjubæjarklaustur, although it was never a floor in a church. It is the surface of huge basalt columns. It is worth a closer look. Near Kirkjubæjarklaustur you will see numerous hills, Landbrotsbólár, which comprise the largest area of pseudo craters in Iceland.

The area has a lot to offer the visitor; hiking, swimming in the local swimming pool or sightseeing are some of the options. There are also possibilities of trout fishing. The Tourist Information Centre in Kirkjubæjarklaustur, tel. 487-4620 can give further information on what to do in Kirkjubæjarklaustur.

**Fun things to do**

**4wd Quad Biking in Hoffell**  
*Duration: 1.5 hours*  
Vatnajökull Travel, tel. 894 1616

**Boat Tour on the Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon**  
*Duration: 30-40 min*  
Jökulsárlón, tel. 478 2222 or 899 5920.

**Jeep Tour or Snow Scooter Tour on Vatnajökull Glacier**  
*Duration: 3 hours and 15 minutes*  
Jöklajeppar (Glacier Jeeps), tel. 478 1000 or 894 3133

**Glacial Walk in Skaftafell**  
*Duration: 2.5 hours*  
Icelandic Mountain Guides, tel. 587 9999 or 899 9982

**Trout Fishing,** close to Kirkjubæjarklaustur  
*Duration: Variable*  
Efri-Vík farm, tel. 487 4694
Day 8:
Landmannalaugar, Reykjavík

Multicoloured Mountains of the Highlands, Lava Fields, Hot Springs with Bathing, Hekla Volcano

Approximate driving distance:
240 km / 149 miles

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

Drive road no. 1 westwards. You will drive across the impressive Skáftafelshraun lava field, which was formed in the 1783 volcanic eruption at Laki Craters, supposedly the biggest lava field on earth coming from a single eruption and which is now covered with moss. You are now heading for the highland pearl Landmannalaugar.

Please note!

- The road to Landmannalaugar and Eldgjá is usually open from mid-June till the end of August.
- The road to Landmannalaugar is not suitable for small cars, a 4wd SUV is needed.
- Please make sure that your petrol tank is full and that you have packed a picnic lunch before taking this road.

Please ask locally for information on road conditions before leaving Kirkjubæjarklaustur. Drive west on road no. 1 until you come to road no. 208, which becomes F208 leading to Eldgjá. Eldgjá is a 40 km (25 miles) long volcanic rift reaching from the Mýrdalsjökull glacier to the Mountain Gjáin. It is most impressive at the northern end where it is 600 m (1968 ft) wide and 200 m (656 ft) deep. Extensive lava fields have come from Eldgjá and spread over the lowlands of Mýrdalssandur, Landbrot and Álftaver. The lava at Álftaver is the oldest.

Continue north on F208 to Landmannalaugar, one of Iceland’s natural jewels. Streams of geothermal and spring water come from under a high wall of lava and mix to make streams and pools of just the right temperature for bathing. Though the altitude is over 600 m (1968 ft), the river banks are covered in grass and flowers. The very colourful rhyolite mountains surrounding make this area quite unique. In Landmannalaugar you can go hiking on the various trails in the region and afterwards bathe in the natural geothermal pool and rest one’s weary bones.

After the stop in Landmannalaugar you should change to road F225 until you reach road no. 26 and go down that road to road no. 1. Just after Landmannalaugar you could drive right up to the side Ljótipollur, which is an impressive explosion crater with a lake inside. When driving on road F225 you will be passing through dramatic scenery as you are in the proximity of the volcano Hekla (to your left). The lunar-like landscape is in most parts covered with thick layers of ash and lava (more on Hekla here below). Please be aware when driving here as there are some blind hills en route.

There is an interesting Hekla exhibition at Leirubakki on road no. 26 where you can learn about volcanism in general and the history of Mount Hekla. Open daily from 10:00-22:00, tel. 487 8700.

On the way you will have frequent views of mountains, including the majestic Mt. Hekla. Mt. Hekla is without a doubt Iceland’s most famous volcano. It is still very active and the last eruption started on 26th February in 2000 and lasted for 12 days; the lava from this eruption covers approximately 18 km2 (47 mi2). Instead of a classic volcanic cone, Hekla is part of a rather squat series of ridges, although this is usually hidden behind a thick bank of clouds that earned Hekla its menacing name, which means the hooded one. Soon after the settlement period, in 1104, Hekla showed that it was a presence to be feared as it erupted without warning and devastated 20 farms in the Þjórsárdalur Valley. Indeed the volcano was so infamous that in Medieval times Europeans believed it to be the very gateway to hell. The volcanic eruptions from Hekla are spectacular as the mountain is 1,493 m (4897 ft) high and towers over the lowlands of the south.

Drive road no. 1 to Selfoss and continue you trip to Hveragerði, the “Flower Town”. This small town nestles under the slopes of
mountains and is built right in the middle of a geothermal field. It is the country’s most productive greenhouse area, producing a variety of flowers and vegetables.

Continue over the mountain pass Hell‐isheiði, which offers a magnificent view of the southern lowlands, green and fertile, and on to Reykjavík.

For those that have some time to spare in Reykjavik we suggest that you visit Laugardalslaug swimming pool or one of the many swimming pools in Reykjavik. There is also a botanical garden and family park in the Laugardalur area you might enjoy visiting. You can also stroll around the old city centre of Reykjavik, with its many shops, galleries, museums, cafés and restaurants. Recommended sites to visit if walking are: Hallgrímskirkja Church, the City Hall, Tjörnin Lake, the harbour area, Harpa conference and music hall, and the sculpture Sun Voyager. Just outside the city centre you can visit the Höfði House.

If you have not planned any extra activities in Reykjavik and would like to add an experience to your stay there, be sure to take a look at our day tours selection on our web www.icelandtravel.is.

Day 9:
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 two 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 ensure you’ll have ample time at the lagoon.

The rental car should be returned to the airport service area which is located only 2 minutes from the airport terminal. 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 great to hear how your holiday went when you get back home! You can either log on to our website’s comment section at www.icelandtravel.is/comment/ or visit our TripAdvisor profile.