

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide<sup>®</sup>



Immersion in Iceland: Selfoss to Reykjavik

2026

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world on one of Overseas Adventure Travel's (O.A.T.'s) NEW **Immersions** itineraries.

As you may already be aware, **Immersions** itineraries are shorter versions of some of our most popular O.A.T. adventures. For our more active travelers who wish to make the most of their limited time abroad, these itineraries have been carefully crafted to include all the iconic must-sees of a destination along with O.A.T.'s signature people-to-people interactions that connect you to local culture and create the most treasured travel memories.

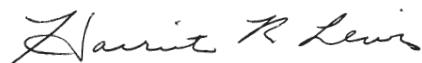
Like all our adventures, **Immersions** itineraries provide you with an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You may find yourself spending **A Day in the Life** of a local community, sharing a meal during a **Home-Hosted Visit**, or discussing **Controversial Topics** that impact everyday life. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of one of our local Trip Experience Leaders. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to arrive a few days early\* to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis  
Chair  
Overseas Adventure Travel

\*Early arrival option unavailable on **Immersion in Iceland: Selfoss to Reykjavik**

# CONTENTS

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## ***IMMERSION IN ICELAND: SELFOSS TO REYKJAVIK***

Your Adventure at a Glance:

Where You're Going, What it Costs,  
and What's Included ..... **4**

Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary ..... **6**

## **ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION**

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements... **11**

Rigors, Vaccines & General Health ..... **13**

Money Matters: Local Currency &  
Tipping Guidelines..... **16**

Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch ..... **19**

Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits... **22**

Climate & Average Temperatures..... **29**

## **ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE**

Icelandic Culture ..... **31**

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs,  
Shipping & More ..... **34**

## **DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY**

Iceland ..... **36**

## **RESOURCES**

Suggested Reading ..... **39**

Suggested Films & Videos ..... **39**

Useful Websites ..... **40**

Useful Apps ..... **41**





Seljalandsfoss Waterfall

## New! Immersion in Iceland: Selfoss to Reykjavik small Group Adventure

**Iceland:** Selfoss, Vik, Hofn, Egilsstadir, Akureyri, Reykjavik

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**9 days starting from \$5,995**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/ikl2026pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/ikl2026pricing)

Icelandic culture and traditions, together with the power of nature, combine for an unforgettable adventure in an unspoiled land of stark beauty. Meet hardy locals who carve a living from both the land and sea in farming communities and fishing villages. Watch for whales, journey near the Arctic Circle at Akureyri, and feel small against the thunderous falls and dramatic vistas that await.

### IT'S INCLUDED

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- 7 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements (please note due to government actions taxes may change)
- All land transportation and 1 internal flight
- 19 meals—7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 6 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 12 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*

**Immersion in Iceland: Selfoss to Reykjavik**



## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Reykjavik, Iceland • Selfoss
2-3	Selfoss, Iceland
4	Vik
5	Hofn
6	Egilsstaðir
7	Akureyri
8	Reykjavik
9	Fly to U.S.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Strenuous

**Pacing:** 6 locations in 8 days with five 1-night stays

**Physical requirements:** Travel over bumpy, gravelly, and sometimes icy roads, and walk over rugged and slippery paths.

**Flight Time:** Travel time will be 5-18 hours and will most likely have one connection

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/ikl](http://www.oattravel.com/ikl)

## ICELAND: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

**Unbeatable Value:** Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

**People-to-People Experiences:** Enjoy our *Day in the Life* of a family-run farm to discover the inner workings of the property and the farmer's small businesses.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** Enjoy a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a local family in Akureyri, where you'll feast together on homecooked regional specialties and gain insight into Icelandic culture.

# Immersion in Iceland: Selfoss to Reykjavik

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

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### Day 1 Depart U.S.

**Afternoon/Evening:** You'll fly overnight from the U.S. to Keflavik, Iceland.

### Day 2 Arrive in Keflavik, Iceland • Overland to Selfoss

- Destination: Selfoss
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Selfoss or similar

**Morning:** Arrive in Keflavik, where an O.A.T. representative will assist you with the transfer to your hotel in Selfoss.

Upon arrival, we'll check in and meet up with our Trip Experience Leader and our fellow travelers, including those who arrived early in Selfoss before the main adventure.

Selfoss is the largest town in South Iceland and the gateway to all that this area of rich farmland and natural wonders has to offer. Located on the banks of the Olfusa River, it is home to around 8,500 inhabitants. You'll get your first glimpse at life here when your Trip Experience Leader guides your group on an orientation walk around the vicinity of our hotel.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions on where to dine.

**Afternoon:** The afternoon is free to relax and settle in after your overnight flight. Later, our group will gather for a Welcome Briefing at the hotel.

**Dinner:** At the hotel. Our Welcome Dinner will be a great opportunity to get to know your fellow travelers and toast to the journey ahead.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries—check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas. Perhaps you'd like to stroll along the Olfusa River or explore the neighborhoods of Selfoss for a truly local experience.

### Day 3 Visit wool studio • Explore the Golden Circle

- Destination: Selfoss
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Selfoss or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll start the day with a drive to a local wool studio for an interactive session on wool dying, spinning, and knitting. Because of our small group size, we'll be able to help craft wool products using traditional techniques and speak openly with the studio owner about the Icelandic wool industry. We'll learn how natural ingredients are utilized throughout the production process, as well as why Icelanders have become so dependent on wool products over the centuries.

Then, we'll take a bus ride to discover more of Iceland's marvels as we circumnavigate the Golden Circle, a ring of natural highlights: Gullfoss waterfall, Geysir hot spring area, and Thingvellir National Park.



Our first stop will be Gullfoss waterfall, which features two tiers of rushing white water that flow into a hundred-foot-deep crevice. Each day, thousands of gallons of water plummet here, and on sunny days, it's a particularly beautiful sight to see the rainbows which form in the mist.

We'll see the falls, then drive to Geysir, the geyser from which all others take their name. Geysir is silent these days, but we'll witness the columns of water that shoot into the air from nearby Strokkur geyser. In this area of intense geothermal activity, puddles of water on the ground literally boil.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in the vicinity of the Geysir hot spring.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue our Golden Circle tour as we drive to Thingvellir National Park. The park sits in a major rift between two tectonic plates—the Eurasian and North American. This rift creates a valley in the land, ringed by rocky cliffs and fault lines. The mountains surrounding this plain, dotted with canyons, caves, streams and springs, form a natural amphitheater. It's not surprising that the world's oldest Parliament was formed here.

After our explorations in Thingvellir National Park, we'll head back to our hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own this evening. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'd like to spend your evening relaxing in the local Selfoss swimming pools, which feature both hot and cold pools.

## **Day 4 Discover Seljalandsfoss Waterfall • Super Jeep tour**

- Destination: Vik
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Near Vik or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After checking out of our hotel, we'll drive to Seljalandsfoss Waterfall, situated along Iceland's Ring Road. Melting glacier water pours over a rocky cliff, creating a 180-foot waterfall shrouded in great clouds of mist. On a walking tour of the falls, we'll witness the raw, roaring power of this natural site (which truly must be seen—and heard—to understand). Seeing this waterfall will show our small group the effects of climate change firsthand and the dangers of an ice-less Iceland.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Following our meal, we'll drive to Vik Village, where we'll get a true taste of the rugged Icelandic landscape with a Super Jeep Tour, an off-road driving experience led by a local guide. Depending on the weather, we may drive to the dormant glacier of Kotlujokull, or alternatively, we'll head to Hofdabrekku Heidi Mountain. Our excursion will last about 3 hours and will include a light hike.

Later, we'll check in to our hotel in Vik, where you will have the remainder of your day free to explore on your own.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries. Your Trip Experience Leader is happy to provide suggestions.

## Day 5 Cruise Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon

- Destination: Höfn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Near Höfn or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel this morning and make our way eastward toward the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon. Located at the head of Breiðamerkurjökull glacier, the lagoon was formed at the turn of the 19th century as the glacier began receding. Today, it is the deepest lake in Iceland—as well as the most famous. Jökulsárlón has been featured in several Hollywood blockbusters, including *Batman Begins* and the James Bond hit, *Die Another Day*. Today, it will have a starring role in your discoveries when you embark on a cruise along its placid waters. During your voyage, you'll get an up-close look at the massive sky-blue icebergs that have broken off the glacier and now pepper the lagoon.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant near the lagoon.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll continue our journey eastward toward the cozy fishing village of Höfn, where we'll spend the night.

**Dinner:** At our hotel in Höfn.

**Evening:** On your own. Perhaps you'll choose to take a stroll along the city's scenic harbor—one of the few natural harbors along Iceland's southern coast.

## Day 6 *A Day in the Life* of an Icelandic horse farm

- Destination: Egilsstaðir
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Near Egilsstaðir or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll check out of our hotel in Höfn and make our way to a family-run farm in northern Iceland for our *A Day in the Life* experience, where we'll meet the owner and his or her family. During our visit, we'll get an intimate look into everyday life on the farm and learn what it's like to live in such a remote area. We'll also learn about Icelandic horses, what makes them unique and how they are bred.

The Icelandic horse is a breed of horse developed in Iceland by Norse settlers in the ninth and tenth centuries. These settlers venerated the horses in North Germanic mythology, as they were crucial to the survival and advancement of their civilization. As most horses would not thrive in Iceland's harsh climate, the Icelandic Horse developed unique characteristics that make it suitable for the often severe environment through centuries of selective breeding. Historically, they were intended to assist local farmers with sheepherding; however, today, they are also used for leisure, showing, and racing. These horses were bred from ponies, so they tend to be small in stature. Despite their size, they are known to be hardy and long-lived, and the government aims to maintain their good health by outlawing the import and export of horses, minimizing the risk of disease.

**Lunch:** We'll enjoy an included lunch as part of our *A Day in the Life* experience.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll bid our hosts farewell and depart for Egilsstaðir.

**Dinner:** At the hotel upon our arrival.

**Evening:** Settle into your accommodations after dinner. The rest of the evening is free to explore.



## **Day 7 Visit Namafjall • Walking tour of Dimmuborgir • Godafoss Waterfall • Home-Hosted Dinner**

- Destination: Akureyri
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Berjaya Akureyri Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Drive to the Lake Myvatn area, sculpted throughout the ages by volcanic eruptions and renowned for its diverse bird population, with ducks, gyrfalcons, plovers, ptarmigans, and more. Our first stop is Namafjall, where we'll witness the bubbling, hot mud pools native to this area. After, we'll continue on toward the whimsical "black castle" lava formations of Dimmuborgir, where a lonely troll is said to have lived. We'll explore this mythical landscape up close on a walking tour.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** We'll drive to Godafoss ("waterfall of the gods"), where the current carries rushing water along a glacial river and over the rocks, falling 40 feet into the pool below. It is said to have gained its name when one of the leaders of the country's parliament disposed of his statues of Norse gods at this waterfall upon the adoption of Christianity as the official religion in the year 1000.

Then, we'll drive to our hotel in Akureyri, where we'll have a couple of hours to rest or discover the area on our own. Later, we'll break into smaller groups and depart for the home of a local family for a **Home-Hosted Dinner**.

**Dinner:** We'll be welcomed into the home of a local family, where we'll join them at their dinner table and see how they go through their daily lives—where they live, what they cook, how they eat, and how they feel about their

hometown. For our **Home-Hosted Dinner**, we'll share a homecooked meal featuring traditional Icelandic foods, such as lamb soup or fried fish and potatoes.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'd like to discuss what you learned and enjoyed today with your fellow travelers.

## **Day 8 Fly to Reykjavik • Visit the Blue Lagoon**

- Destination: Reykjavik
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Berjaya Reykjavik Marina Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We rise early this morning to check out of our hotel and drive to Akureyri airport for our flight to Reykjavik.

Upon arrival in Iceland's capital, we'll embark on a walking tour. Despite its small size (a population of a little over 120,000), Reykjavik feels remarkably cosmopolitan. From hip bars to extensive art galleries and a rich culinary scene, there's much to see, do, and discover. Reykjavik is believed to be the first permanent settlement of Iceland, presumably established by Ingolfr Arnarson in AD 874—though it wasn't until the late 18th century that it was officially declared a trading town and eventually modernized in the 19th century. Today, Reykjavik is regarded as one of the cleanest, safest, and most environmentally friendly cities in the world.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Reykjavik.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we drive to our hotel. Later, we'll make our way to the Blue Lagoon, one of Iceland's most famous natural wonders. The water in the lagoon—comprised of 70% sea water, 30% fresh water and maintained at a steady 100°F—is rich in

blue-green algae, mineral salts and silica mud, all of which exfoliate the skin and leave it feeling smooth. For those who prefer an alternative to soaking, this massive complex also features restaurants, a hotel, spa and a gift shop, hot-pots, steam rooms, a sauna, a bar, and even a waterfall that provides a hydraulic massage.

**Dinner:** Upon our return to Reykjavik, we'll toast to our Icelandic discoveries during a Farewell Dinner.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries. Consult with your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### **Day 9 Return to U.S.**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your flight home to the U.S.

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.

## Visa Required

**We’ll provide you information with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure.** In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Iceland):** U.S. citizens will require an online visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no set timeline for when this requirement will start – we will contact all impacted travelers before their departure once the start date is confirmed.

## Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.



## **Traveling With a Minor?**

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

## **Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents**

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

## **Overseas Taxes & Fees**

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### Is This Adventure Right for You?

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

#### PACING

- 6 locations in 8 days; five 1-night stays
- One 45-minute internal flight

#### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk at least 3 miles unassisted over the course of each day, participating in 6–8 hours of daily physical activities and standing unassisted for 30 minutes at a time
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

#### CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures in Reykjavik range from 44–57°F in the warmer summer months to 35–50°F in the fall
- Evenings can be chilly, even in summer
- Iceland is sometimes subject to harsh weather, but the summer months are quite mild

#### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel over some rugged paths, as well as bumpy, gravelly, slippery, and sometimes icy roads by motorcoach and on foot
- Travel by 19-passenger and 32-passenger motorcoaches, as well as a boat for a lagoon cruise

#### ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotels feature a variety of Western-style amenities and personal services

## Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

### Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location

### Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **[travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.



- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

### **Allergies**

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

### **Water**

- Tap water is safe to drink in Iceland
- Bottled water is also readily available, but tap water complies with all health safety criteria.

### **Food**

- Food should not cause any health problems—salads, fruit, and dairy products are all fine—but try to vary your diet.
- Be careful with food that has been cooked and left to go cold, which might happen in some self-service places.

### **Electricity Supply**

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available as it is in the U.S. Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) may wish to bring a rechargeable battery as a backup.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Iceland:** Icelandic *krona* ( Íkr)

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2014) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

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## Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1–2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** Tipping at restaurants is not common in Iceland. Locals might round up the bill to the next 500–1000 ISK and tell the waiter to keep the change, but it is not expected. Tipping is not necessary—and may not be possible—when paying by credit card.
- **Taxis:** Taxi drivers do not expect a tip either. There is usually a service charge included in the cost of your ride, so do not feel obligated.



*Please Note:* Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

### Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)

## Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

## What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## Communicating with Home from Abroad

To ensure you are available during your trip, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.



## Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

## Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

## Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

## Internet

Nearly all hotels in Iceland have complimentary wireless Internet service (WiFi). Most hotels will also offer a limited number of computers in the lobby or business center for guests to use. So you can either bring your own device during the trip and use WiFi where it is available, or leave your device at home and rely on hotel computers.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**Iceland:** +354

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Checked luggage is limited to <b>44 lbs total</b> . Carry-ons are limited to <b>13 lbs total</b> .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth). Carry-ons should not exceed 43 linear inches
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase.

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<p><b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p> <p><b>Weight Limits in Iceland vs International Flights:</b> The flight from Akureyri to Reykjavik has a luggage limit of 44 lbs for checked luggage. If you prefer to bring the standard 50 lbs of luggage for your international flights, you will have the option to pack an overnight bag and send your excess luggage with the motorcoach, which will meet the group at the airport upon arrival in Reykjavik the following day. If you choose this option, any remaining luggage that you do bring on the flight must be under the 44 lb limit.</p>

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

## Your Luggage

### Checked Luggage

One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (clamshell) suitcase.

### Carry-on Bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.

### Small Additional Bag

- **Optional for the main trip (flight between Akureyri and Reykjavik):** You have the option to pack an overnight bag for this part of the trip and you will be able to send your excess luggage with the motorcoach, which will meet the group at the airport upon arrival in Reykjavik the following day.

### Locks

For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction. Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes with arch support are suggested.
- **Everyone should bring layers,** even in summer, so you can adjust as the temperature varies.
- **Wind + rain = Bring good rain gear.** Because Iceland is so windy, the rain often comes in sideways. A waterproof layer over your clothing (such as a raincoat/windbreaker and waterproof pants) is more effective than just an umbrella.

## Style Hints

Dress on our trip is functional and casual. You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at nicer restaurants, or for the Welcome and Farewell Dinners, but that is totally up to you.

## Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using **www.weather.com** and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

## Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: Mainly long-sleeved shirts but also short-sleeved shirts.
- ☐ Trousers: Comfortable and loose-fitting so you can easily hike, enjoy a boat ride, or be active.
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Comfortable, sturdy, highly supportive walking shoes—lightweight hiking boots are recommended. There will be hiking on rocky paths so sturdy walking shoes are essentials. Also recommended is a pair of water-tolerant footwear in case of heavy rain.
- ☐ Light cotton or wool sweater. During colder times of year, this is useful for layering.
- ☐ Hat, gloves, and warm socks.
- ☐ **Rain gear that protects you from top to toe.** Because Iceland is so windy, the rain often comes in sideways. Some combination of a raincoat, waterproof windbreaker, waterproof pants, and a hat/hood is in order.
- ☐ For Icelandic weather, layers (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.) are key. Thermal underwear is recommended for all seasons, even summer so you can adjust to the varied weather. Although the summers are in general rather mild cold spells are common especially in the north of Iceland.
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear.
- ☐ Lined windbreaker.
- ☐ A folding or collapsible walking stick for hiking.
- ☐ A swimsuit is recommended for Icelandic-style thermal swimming pools.

## Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

You can expect summer daytime highs in Iceland to be in the 50s and 60s °F and only occasionally reach or exceed 70 °F. September and October will be significantly cooler, with some days like early winter in the northern U.S. Wind is likely and rain is possible during any of our outdoor activities.

### For spring and fall (May, September–October)

- ☐ You'll want long, warm trousers, and not shorts.
- ☐ You'll mostly want long-sleeved shirts.
- ☐ Warm outer gear is a must. This means a warm wind and waterproof jacket, hat, and gloves.
- ☐ Bring clothing you can layer (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.); thermal or long underwear adds warmth without bulk and doesn't take up much room in your luggage. Layers are key for this season, so you can adjust to the varied weather.
- ☐ Snow can occur as late as May and as early September, so factor that into your clothing and footwear choice. *Our staff in Iceland also recommend crampons (spikes) for these months, but those are completely optional—do not feel the need to purchase them if you don't want to.*

### For summer (June–September)

- ☐ Summer is often quite cool, so the best choices are long trousers. Early June and late August can be closer to spring/fall weather.
- ☐ There are often periods during summer that are quite rainy; so good rain gear is useful.
- ☐ Blindfolds (eye shades) are recommended because it is very bright in Iceland through the summer nights.

## Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo/conditioner, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses. If you wear eyeglasses, consider a string or band to keep them from falling into the water during the whale watch.
- ☐ Sunglasses, 100% UV block
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger



- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Cold-water hand-wash laundry soap such as Woolite and plastic hang-up clothespins
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Packets of pocket-size tissues or small roll of toilet paper
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Water bottle (narrow-mouth)
- ☐ Electrical converter & plug adapters

### Medicines & First Aid Gear

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes
- ☐ Optional: Motion sickness medication for the boating activities (if you are prone to motion sickness)
- ☐ Optional: Allergy medication. If you suffer from allergies, keep in mind that we’ll spend a lot of time outdoors on this adventure.

**Hairdryers:** Hairdryers are provided at most hotels in Iceland.

### Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts’ generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the

local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim communities because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

## **Electricity Abroad**

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### **Voltage**

Electricity in Iceland is 220 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

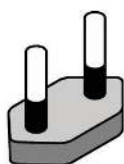
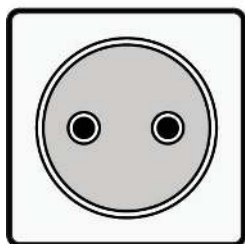
### **Plugs**

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

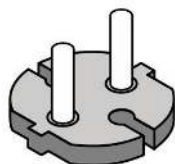
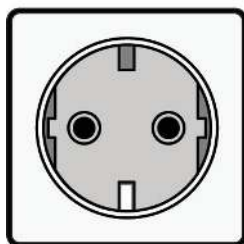
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

**Iceland:** C and F

**Type C**



**Type F**



**Availability:** Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S. Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) may wish to bring a rechargeable battery as a backup.

## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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The summers are short and cool in Selfoss while the winters are long, snowy, and windy. It is mostly cloudy year round with temperatures that vary from 27°F to 57°F. The temperature in Selfoss is rarely below 14°F or above 62°F.

**Iceland:** Though Iceland's climate is cool, warm ocean currents keep it more temperate than you might expect for its northerly location. Highs in Reykjavik during the summer months, with their long hours of daylight, average in the 50s but can easily reach the 60s or low 70s—like fall days in the northeastern U.S. Humidity can be low at summer's outset (May), when the air has exceptional clarity on sunny days. September and October in Iceland are cooler and you'll want to have a warm jacket, warm hat, and gloves available. The winter months bring below-freezing weather and shorter daylight hours, offering a unique opportunity to go in search of the Northern Lights, but you'll need warm winter gear.

**It's often windy, so bring a good windbreaker. The weather can change rapidly, so be prepared to add or remove outer layers during the course of a day's tour.**

Also, know that **when conditions are windy, the temperature will feel several degrees cooler than it really is, a phenomenon known as "the wind chill effect"**. Locals are used to it, but it often catches visitors by surprise—anything a local describes as a "light breeze" probably requires an extra layer, like a windbreaker or jacket. In winter, this may mean wearing three layers (a top, a fleece/sweater, and a jacket/coat).

**NOTE:** If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- [www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)
- [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)
- [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	SELFOSS, ICELAND			AKUREYRI, ICELAND		
	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	37 to 26	82	13	33 to 24	80	5.1
FEB	37 to 27	78	13	34 to 25	80	6.5
MAR	39 to 28	78	13	35 to 26	80	5.6
APR	44 to 32	75	12	40 to 30	80	3.5
MAY	50 to 38	73	11	48 to 37	75	2.3
JUN	55 to 45	77	11	54 to 44	75	4.4
JUL	58 to 48	80	12	57 to 47	80	3.3
AUG	57 to 47	82	11	56 to 46	80	5.1
SEP	52 to 42	83	14	48 to 39	80	6.5
OCT	45 to 35	83	12	42 to 33	85	5.2
NOV	40 to 30	81	12	36 to 27	85	5.0
DEC	37 to 27	81	13	33 to 24	80	4.6

MONTH	REYKJAVIK, ICELAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	35 to 27	78 to 79	3.4
FEB	37 to 29	79 to 77	2.9
MAR	37 to 29	79 to 74	3.0
APR	41 to 33	81 to 72	2.2
MAY	47 to 39	83 to 69	1.7
JUN	52 to 44	85 to 73	1.8
JUL	55 to 47	86 to 75	2.0
AUG	54 to 46	88 to 75	2.4
SEP	49 to 41	83 to 72	2.8
OCT	44 to 36	81 to 75	3.5
NOV	38 to 31	80 to 78	3.3
DEC	36 to 28	78 to 77	3.3



## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

### Icelandic Culture

Iceland is about the size of New York state, but with only 360,000 people, its population is far lower. That hasn't kept them from impressive social achievements. There's a running joke that Icelanders like to boast "*Ísland, best í heimi*" (Iceland is the best in the world) and back it up with "per capita" statistics. For instance, Iceland has a 99.9% literacy rate and more published authors than any other nation, per capita (1 in 10 people will publish a book). Iceland has more Grand Master chess players per capita than any other nation. More musicians per capita. And the highest internet usage per capita. Given the small population, some of these boasts must be delivered with tongue in cheek, for instance, Iceland has more Nobel Prize winners per capita. (There was only one—but one in 360,000 is still the world's best ratio.)

Facetiousness aside, Icelanders have a lot to be proud of. Theirs is an open, tolerant, and prosperous society, with virtually no crime, a strong safety net of social welfare programs, a stellar environmental record, and one of the lowest poverty rates in the world. It is a nearly classless society, and almost everyone is called by their first name.

On the other hand, something visitors find odd is the fact that last names are almost meaningless here. People do not have surnames, but take the first name of their father and append a "-son" (son) or "-dóttir" (daughter) to it. So a woman named Helga whose father's name is Ólaf would be called "Helga Ólafsdóttir" while her brother Lars would be "Lars Ólafsson". Women do not take the name of their husband upon marriage. Until recently the patronymic naming convention was traditional, but nowadays people can also choose to take their mother's name. This is not surprising in a nation that ranks first in the world for gender equality. For instance, more than 30 of the country's 62 parliamentary seats are held by women.

Education is valued and considered a basic right, with university education available to all and free (save for the minimal registration fees). Iceland has a very high literacy rate, and on Christmas Eve it is traditional for family members to exchange books as gifts. During this seasons, so many new books are published they've invented a word for the Christmas book flood: *Jólabókaflóðið*. Because the Icelandic language has not changed much since medieval times, most people can (and do) read the traditional, 10th- and 11th-century Icelandic Eddas and sagas with ease. These tales are still widely loved, and the sources for a lot of Icelandic folklore.

Much has been made of Iceland's supposed widespread belief in elves (called *huldufolk*). Some surveys have asserted that up to 62% of the people believe that the existence of elves is "likely." There are also stories about construction projects being diverted lest they interfere with purported elfin dwellings. If you are in Iceland over the holidays, you can be the judge because between Christmas and New Year's is when the elves and trolls supposedly come out to shake things up!

Some of Iceland's strength may come from the fact that its culture has had to thrive in a pretty harsh physical environment. Self-sufficiency, independence, and a strong work ethic are valued. In fact, many people have more than one job—not for economic reasons, but to keep busy during the long, dark winters. Those winters may also account for the nation's high rate of social cohesion: people stay in contact with friends, family, and neighbors. Friendship and social supports are very important, and even people who are not related may refer to each other using kinship terms. People trust their neighbors. In fact, you might be taken aback to see unattended baby strollers and carriages left outside cafes and shops—with sleeping infants inside them. This is very common. Though you may find Icelanders to be reserved or matter-of-fact at first, you will very quickly discover their helpfulness and love of fun.

## Religion and Religious Observance

Irish monks inhabited Iceland as early as the 8th century, even before the Vikings arrived. But the Vikings themselves also adopted Christianity around 999, and since then, Christianity has been the main religion in Iceland. With the Reformation sweeping Norway and Denmark in the 16th century, Iceland soon followed suit. Today, the official state religion is Lutheranism. When people are born, they are automatically registered as members of the (Lutheran) Church of Iceland. About 67.2% of Icelanders say they are Lutheran, but in name only because only about 11% of the people attend church.

A small percentage of people identify as Catholic or other Christian denominations, and there is also some representation of Bahai, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist believers. But the fastest-growing religion in Iceland is a surprising one: *Ásatrú*, the old Norse pagan religion. The contemporary iteration of this pantheistic belief system is closely tied to ecological awareness, and the warlike aspects of the old gods like Odin and Thor have been replaced with an emphasis on caring for the earth and spreading peace.

## Language

The official language is Icelandic, a Germanic language that is closely related to Norwegian and Faroese, but separate and distinct from them. Icelandic also has Gaelic and Celtic influences. Though everyone in Iceland speaks Icelandic, nearly all Icelanders also speak English—and speak it quite fluently. The study of English is mandatory in Icelandic schools. Many people also speak Danish or German.

## Useful Phrases

Since everyone speaks English so well, you probably won't need to use these popular idioms and slang terms—unless you want to impress your Icelandic hosts!

- Two things that go together are *borgari* (burgers) and *bjór* (beer.) If you eat too much of the former, you might get *feitt* (which means “fat,” but also means “cool”). If you drink too much of the latter, you might get *sauðrukkinn* (drunk as a sheep), in which case someone may tell you “*ról-ex*.” This has nothing to do with your watch, it’s a cognate of the Icelandic *rólegur* (calm down) and the English “relax.”
- If someone tells you “*áfram með smjörið*” they are literally saying “on with the butter.” It’s equivalent to “carry on” or just keep on doing what you’re supposed to be doing.
- *Ég kem alveg af fjöllum* means “I come completely from the mountains,” but it’s not meant to describe your origins. It means “I have no idea what you are talking about.”
- Just as Brooklyn has been taken over by hipsters, so, too, has Reykjavik 101, the center of town. So if you are acting a little too trendy, an Icelandic might say *Þú ert nú meiri latteþjandi lopatrefillinn*. (“You are such a latte-drinking, wool scarf.”)

## Meals in Flight

Flights to Iceland are shorter than to the rest of Europe, so airlines **rarely provide** meals during the international flight. You might want to have something to eat before boarding the plane (we will provide breakfast on your first day after you arrive at the hotel).

## Meal Prices

Iceland is an expensive country in general, but especially when it comes to food—which makes sense given that many ingredients need to be imported or are grown in special greenhouses. To give you a sense of what to budget, here’s some sample prices in USD. Please keep in mind that these are guidelines only and are subject to change.

- Light takeaway lunch (sandwich, soup): \$11–\$17 per person
- Lunch in a cafe: \$20–\$30 per person
- Dinner entrée in a high-end restaurant: \$40–\$70 per person

Previous travelers have suggested lowering costs by hitting up local grocery stores; choosing dishes with ingredients from Iceland (i.e. fish, lamb); looking for happy hour deals in local pubs; and trying one of Iceland’s Thai restaurants (which is kind of like their version of a Chinese takeout place).

## Taking Photographs

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. Do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

## Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

## Icelandic Cuisine

Most visitors are surprised by the freshness, variety, and overall quality of Icelandic cuisine. For a small island whose arable land is limited by climate and geography, ecology-minded Iceland has developed ingenious techniques for raising and preparing produce, fish, and livestock that is organic, non-GMO and free of chemicals. In Reykjavik you'll find innovative chefs experimenting with New Nordic and other cutting-edge cuisines, plus plenty of ethnic eateries. But here are some traditional specialties to try.

- **Reykjavik Hot Dogs:** A hot dog usually consisting of a blend of beef, pork, and sometimes lamb.
- **Kjötsupa:** *Traditional Icelandic lamb served with roasted herbs such as **blóðberg** (Arctic thyme).*
- **Skyr:** A creamy Icelandic yogurt similar to Greek yogurt in taste and served with berries.
- **Plokkfiskur:** Mashed fish stew made with potatoes, onions and cod or haddock, mashed up with herbs (such as dill or parsley), and white pepper.
- **Hardfiskur:** Fish jerky that is often served with Icelandic butter and **rúgbraud**, a dark rye bread baked in an earthen pot buried next to a hot spring
- **Hákarl:** Shark meat that has been fermented underground till nearly (but not quite) rotten, then hung to dry for four to six weeks.

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

## Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

## Crafts & Souvenirs

### Iceland

Hand-knit Icelandic sweaters and other woolens, including hats, mittens, and jackets, are widely available. Icelanders enjoy contemporary Scandinavian-style housewares and accessories so you'll find a good selection of these, many with Icelandic themes. The Laugavegur and Skolavordustigur shopping streets in the heart of Reykjavik have contemporary boutiques and shops offering European fashions and accessories, plus unique Icelandic designs and jewelry.

**VAT:** Although prices are inflated by a hefty Value-Added Tax (between 11-24%), non-European Union citizens can receive a refund. For more details and a list of all tax-free shops, ask at the tourist office for a copy of the Tax-Free Shopping Guide.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **[www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.



## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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### Iceland

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 39,769 square miles
- **Capital:** Reykjavik
- **Languages:** Icelandic is the official language; English, Scandinavian languages, and German are also spoken.
- **Ethnicity:** Norse/Celtic descent 82%, foreign-born 18%
- **Location:** Iceland is an island bordered by the North Atlantic Ocean.
- **Geography:** Poised atop the geologically active mid-Atlantic Ridge, where tectonic plates are separating as Europe drifts away from North America, Iceland is one of only two places in the world where an undersea mid-ocean ridge rises above sea level. Iceland's 3,088 miles of coastline are punctuated by numerous rugged fjords, while some 63 percent of the mountainous interior is treeless tundra.
- **Population:** 376,248 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Lutheran Church of Iceland 73.8%, Roman Catholic 3.6%, Reykjavik Free Church 2.9%, Hafnarfjordur Free Church 2%, The Independent Congregation 1%, other 3.9%, none 5.6%, and unspecified 7.2%
- **Time Zone:** Iceland is on UTC ("Greenwich Mean Time"), five hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 11am in Reykjavik.

## National Holidays: Iceland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Iceland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

Late April First Day of Summer (moves each year)

05/01 Labor Day

Late May Ascension Day (moves each year)

06/17 Icelandic Republic Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Second Day of Christmas

12/31 New Year's Eve

## Iceland: A Brief History

Geologically speaking, Iceland is one of the youngest places on earth, and thanks to its ongoing volcanic and glacial activity, you can still see it being born. The first known human to take note of this roiling mass of fire and ice was the Greek explorer Pytheas, who wrote of an island he called "Ultima Thule." He described it as a realm of ferocious storms and even more ferocious, dog-headed people. That did not stop Irish monks (called *papars*) from settling here around 700 AD. They left after Norse settlers began arriving in the ninth century. Many were fierce Vikings, as you would imagine, but just as many were Scandinavian farmers, herders, and traders looking for better opportunities. It was one of these Norwegian farmers, Flóki Vilgerdason, who gave the island its current name, Ísland or Iceland.

By 930 AD, there were many settlements, all connected through commerce, intermarriage, and various agreements over land and resources. Realizing that they needed some sort of government to define and uphold laws, they wrote a constitution and created the Althing (*Alþing* in Icelandic), which exists today as the oldest active legislative assembly in the world. The Althing met at the natural amphitheater of Thingvellir, where local chieftains gathered annually to elect leaders. Among the decision made there was the adoption of Christianity by Iceland in 1000 AD, notable for the fact that it took place peacefully. The 11th and 12th centuries were a peaceful Golden Age when the literary tradition of the Icelandic saga developed. But by the early thirteenth century, Iceland descended into clan warfare.

That internal strife left an opening for Norwegian King Haakon to claim Iceland in 1262—a claim superseded in 1397 by Denmark, who held the island for the next 600 years. It was an era beset by trade restrictions, pirates, kidnappings, plagues, crop failures, and a series of devastating volcanic eruptions that caused about 20% of the population to die of starvation. By the 19th century, Icelandic nationalism was on the rise. Between 1855 and 1918, Iceland won increasing degrees of autonomy, with Iceland becoming a sovereign nation under the Danish Crown in 1918. In 1944, following a referendum in which 97% of Icelanders voted to sever ties with the Danish Crown, the establishment of the free Republic of Iceland took place in a ceremony symbolically located at Thingvellir, site of the ancient Althing.

During World War II, Iceland's vulnerability as a potential Nazi target led the British to occupy the defenseless island. The Icelandic government allowed US troops to move in in 1941. When the US military left in 1946, it retained the right to re-establish a base at Keflavík should war threaten again. In the postwar years, Iceland only reluctantly became a member of NATO, with the provision that its citizens would not participate in any offensive action, and that no foreign troops would be based there during peacetime. That proviso fell apart with the Cold War. The US only relinquished its base at Keflavik in 2006. Today Iceland is a multi-party parliamentary democracy and a member of NATO.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Iceland enjoyed one of the highest standards of living in the world, but it was severely affected by the global economic downturn. In 2008, the government took over all three of Iceland's failing major banks, but weeks later had to apply to the International Monetary Fund for emergency aid. The coalition government was forced to resign, and the new Prime Minister formally applied for EU membership in 2009.

The ensuing years saw a series of banking scandals and controversies around the repayment of loans to the IMF and the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Perhaps because of this, most Icelanders do not wish to pursue EU membership. Meanwhile, the Icelandic economy has been making a tremendous comeback, thanks to a surge in tourism.

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### Iceland

***Woman at 1,000 Degrees*** by Hallgrímur Helgason (2018, Fiction) Octogenarian Herra makes an appointment for her own cremation, then waits out her time in her garage. Here she occupies herself with a hand grenade, a Facebook account, anonymous digital attacks on her family, and a head full of memories that take us to World War II Europe, the Westmann Islands, Argentina, Reykjavik and back. A roller coaster of a ride that is at once bawdy, outlandish, gleeful and tragic.

***The Little Book of the Icelanders*** by Alda Sigmundsdóttir (2018, Nonfiction) Here are 50 lively essays on the quirks, habits, and inscrutable customs of Iceland.

***Seawomen of Iceland: Survival on the Edge*** by Margaret Willson (2016, Nonfiction). Margaret Willson, an anthropologist and former seawoman, dives into the maritime culture of seawomen in Iceland, who have been fishing in Iceland for centuries, a job deemed a predominantly male profession by most of Iceland and the rest of the world.

***Butterflies in November*** by Audur Ava Olafsdóttir (2014, Fiction) Things are going badly for our unnamed narrator, a young woman who gets dumped twice in one day and also finds herself the reluctant caregiver of her friend's four-year old deaf-mute son. But when the boy helps her choose a winning lottery number, the two set out on a picaresque adventure along Iceland's Ring Road.

***Burial Rites*** by Hannah Kent (2013, Fiction) A novel based on the true story of Agnes Magnúsdóttir, an Icelandic woman waiting to be executed for murder in 1829. Since there are no prisons for women she is sent to wait out her execution on a remote farm. Previous travelers highly recommended it, but also mentioned there are a few tough scenes.

### Suggested Films & Videos

#### Iceland

***Under an Arctic Sky*** (2017, Documentary) Can you imagine surfing the frigid waters of northern Iceland during the biggest storm in decades, along a beach ringed by frozen white mountains and illuminated by the shimmering green curtains of the Northern Lights? You will, after watching this crew of daredevil surfers go in search of the perfect wave.

***Of Horses and Men*** (2013, Drama) This cult classic examines the intense, funny, and almost spiritual relationships between men, women, and horses. Set amidst the colossal landscapes of rural Iceland, the story reveals how the horses enjoy more honest, intimate and unselfconscious connections than their neurotic human masters.

***The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*** (2013, Comedy) Ben Stiller plays James Thurber's famous daydreamer in this updated story of a meek functionary in the photo department at *Life* magazine. Mitty withstands the abuse of his boss, and lets his feelings for a co-worker go unspoken—until some valuable negatives go missing and he sets out in search of them. Greenland and Iceland are the spectacular backdrops where Walter's real adventures finally surpass the ones he had previously only imagined.

***Journey to the Center of the Earth*** (2008, Adventure) This latest version of the Jules Verne sci-fi classic stars Brendan Fraser, and was shot in and around Snaefellsjökull National Park.

***Jar City*** (2006, Drama) In this tangled bit of Nordic noir, a Reykjavik detective tries to piece together the connections between a cold case from 1974 and a recent death. A good choice if you like gritty TV police procedurals like "Prime Suspect." In Icelandic with subtitles.

## Useful Websites

### Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### Foreign Exchange Rates

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### ATM Locators

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### World Weather

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### Packing Tips

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### U.S. Customs & Border Protection

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### National Passport Information Center

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### Holidays Worldwide

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps or Maps.me**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber or Bolt or Grab**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App or Skype or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo or FLuentU or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **TripWhistle**

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

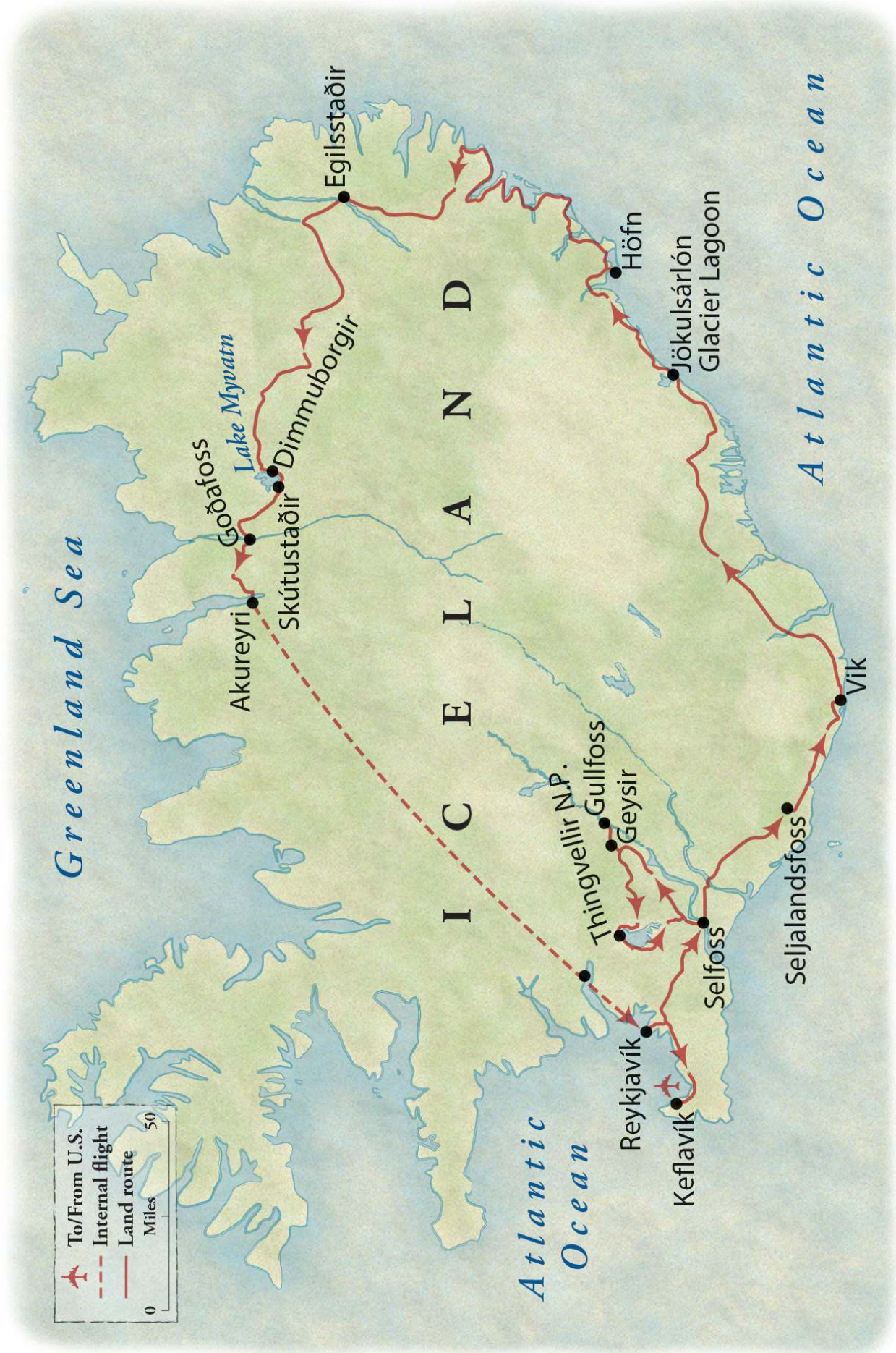
### **GeoSure**

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

### **Chirpey**

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more







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23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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