

**PHOTO
GUIDE
TO
ICELAND**

PHOTO GUIDE TO ICELAND

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COVER IMAGE

Lava by Leirhnjúkur in North Iceland.

📷 Photo by Hawk

📷 Canon 5D Mk III

🕒 September 19, 2014, 17:33 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 100mm

🔍 f25, 3.2

☀️ ISO 200

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

FINNUR P. FRÓÐASON – FINN

Finnur Parelíus Fróðason was born in Denmark but moved to Iceland in 1967 after getting his degree in Interior Architecture. He has worked as an Interior Architect ever since. Finn first visited Iceland in 1966 and it was love at first sight – a love that has been returned.

His interest in photography started in the early teens when he got an old 6X9 film camera from his father. From that time on, Finn has been taking photographs. On his first trip to Iceland, he took 400 photos on a Rolleiflex 6x6. Unfortunately, most of the photos were out of focus due to a fault in the camera.

Soon after moving to Iceland in 1967, Finn started to travel and hike with Ferðafélag Íslands (The Iceland Touring Association) and joined the Air Ground Rescue Team – all due to his great interest in Iceland, especially its untamed hinterlands. It was an interest that quickly changed into a real love affair with the land and nature. This love affair led to the University of Iceland where Finn obtained qualifications as a certified tour guide. He is also a founding member and on the board of a geological society, Hamarinn.

Finn has been guiding for years and today he is lucky to be working with his son Haukur Parelíus, owner of Nature Explorer – a super jeep tour company in Iceland.

In the book co-authored with his son, Finn says, “Photography and an interest in nature go like hand in glove and photography teaches us to see – not just to look. The changing of light and shadow, patterns and colours is what makes nature so fascinating. This, along



with an interest in geology, is a good mixture as both teach us to ‘read’ the land. When nature – big or small – is bathed in the special Icelandic light, a climax is reached and you can wish for no more. It is a privilege to be able to watch the sunrise through the volcanic mist or stand by a pond at Skaftafell and watch the sun’s last rays fall on Iceland’s highest peak. I am grateful for being an Icelander.”

Photography Exhibitions:

- Arbaer Museum Reykjavik 1970
- Kjarvalsstadir: 1980 – with Emil Thor Sigurdsson
- The Frozen Image: Walker Art Center 1982 – group exhibition
- Lightscapes – Reykjavik Town Hall 2011
- Lightscapes – Gallery Uglá, Montréal 2014

Books:

- Lightscapes – Iceland’s Nature Explored – with Haukur Parelíus

HAUKUR PARELIUS FINNSSON – HAWK

Hawk runs his own tour operating company in Iceland, Nature Explorer, which specializes in tours on modified 4x4s ('Super-Jeeps'). Through his work as a driver/photo-guide he enjoys being out in the field photographing with his customers.

Hawk is a certified International 4-Wheel Drive Trainer and member of the International 4-Wheel Drive Trainer's Association. He has trained military forces and worked for ISAF, driving super-jeeps in Afghanistan, as well as had years of experience driving in the Icelandic wilderness and highlands.

At the age of 14, Hawk was the first to bicycle from Reykjavík to Þórsmörk (Thorsmork) and started guiding for The Iceland Touring Association at the age of 17. He has guided for them and Útivist Travel Association occasionally through the years, both on hikes and jeep safaris, as well as been a member of a voluntary Mountain Search & Rescue team. However, Hawk now only guides with his own company.

Hawk has a Business degree from the University of Iceland and a Master's degree in International Marketing and Management from Copenhagen Business School. He is also a certified Wilderness First Responder and regularly freshens up on his first aid skills.

Past adventures include having successfully climbed 5 of the world's 7 summits and climbing in the Alps



and the Himalayas. One of his proudest adventures is a rafting adventure/documentary film expedition with his mountain friends group through the Dark Canyon (Dimmugljúfur) in Northeast Iceland. Hawk and his son learned to dive together on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia; they rafted the Nile in Uganda and visited the mountain gorillas in Rwanda.

Hawk is a keen amateur photographer with a passion for the Icelandic wilderness and enjoys sharing it with his clients, and capturing its beauty through the lenses of his Canon 5D.

Books:

- Lightscapes - Iceland's Nature Explored, co-authored with his father, Finn
- Fun Facts and Photos (coming in spring 2015)

INTRODUCTION

One August day a few years ago I was on a Belizean island sitting by the beach lamenting the fact that within a few days I'd be landing in Keflavik, Iceland to spend a week photographing the southern part of the island. After passing 50 I've come to love warm places, especially those by the sea. I was unsure how an island snuggled up to the Arctic Circle would be appealing to me, but I'd made the commitment to be there and was resigned to go and suffer through.

After landing and passing into the jet bridge, chilly air swirled around my sun tanned limbs confirming the worst of my preconceived impressions. This was going to be a cold, miserable week that just had to be endured and then I'd never have to return. Unexpectedly, upon entering the terminal and the warmth it provided my attitude shifted, somewhat, it was nice to be somewhere totally different. How different, try to imagine a smiling, friendly face on an official checking your passport, weird right. Hey, where are the customs forms? I don't need them. Hmm, this is different. Ok, the walk across the parking lot to the rental car agency was chilly. I wasn't pleased, but perhaps I was not wearing the appropriate clothing.

The 45 minute drive from the airport into Reykjavík was enlightening. I'd certainly never been in a place like this before. It was spectacularly treeless, as far as the eye could see were rolling hills and mountains vibrantly colored with green mosses and small plants, and clouds, beautiful stormy clouds with sunlight dancing and swirling, wow this place is kind of cool.

Well, as each day of the week passed I became a bit more infatuated with the place. Yes, learning to wear appropriate clothing made a huge difference. It was easy to stay warm by donning the layers packed in my suit case and I'm forever grateful that our guides insisted we have rain proof outer layers always within reach. It turned out to be the 2nd rainiest September in more than one hundred years.

Iceland is the most civilized, remote place on the planet. Imagine an island the size of Ohio with barely more than three hundred thousand inhabitants, two thirds of which live clustered in the south west corner of the island. Now, do you expect the entire island to be covered in cell service? It is. Imagine you're hours from anywhere, I mean anywhere. Your hotel is a mundane looking building, out of place in the wilderness. Do you expect to find Wi-Fi offered here? You should. How about the food? Well, prepare to be astonished. It's as if the people of the island have had scarce resources for centuries and lots of time to kill in the winter with nothing better to do than constantly improve recipes, making the absolute best meals from what was available. They've learned to create some of the most delicious food imaginable. France has some competition. It does not matter where you are the food will please.

Photography, I went there for photography. How is it to photograph? Are you kidding? It's paradise. The landscape of Iceland is amazing and varies greatly from region to region. It will take annual visits for the rest of my life to finish scratching the surface of what is available to photograph. There is a mood in Iceland that can be captured by the camera and it is pure magic.

Yes, I've been back to the island since my first visit, and each time I leave, I'm sad and even more eager to return. I think it's love.

One can tackle the exploration of Iceland alone and I expect the reader will find this guide of use in doing so. If, on the other hand, you want to access remote locations in rugged, super jeeps, travel the country with locals who will entertain the hours away and have excellent contingency plans when things go wrong, they always do. Then, I highly recommend contacting Haukur (Hawk), the author of this guide. His super jeep adventure company "Nature Explorer" will surely provide the experience of a lifetime.

Andy Cook

Rocky Mountain Reflections Photography, Inc.

HELICOPTER TOURS

Nordurflug took us on a trip that was almost a photographer- customized-flight, full of opportunities for all passengers to enjoy the fantastic sights and to take pictures in good conditions. DO NOT HESITATE, yes this is worth it.



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“LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION”

Although this famous quote is used to describe the three most important factors in determining the desirability of a property, it transfers easily into photography. A famous quote within photography that conveys a similar message is “F11 and be there”.

A bit of planning and study of locations affords more precious time in the field, photographing, and increases the chances of actually being there at the right time with the right gear. Knowing which places to visit, what to expect, how to get there and having an idea or two on how to photograph them not only saves time, but also hopefully makes both the planning of the trip and the trip itself more fun. That said, one of the best things about visiting a place that you have not photographed before is that you have no preconceived ideas about the various viewpoints and your mind is entirely open to new impressions, in terms of both motifs and the ever-changing light. Most likely, the best image on your trip to Iceland will not be at any of the locations in this e-book but somewhere in between, on the journey, capturing a special moment – perhaps not even with your camera, just a mental image.

Most sights and locations have a time of day when the light is best suited for photography and this differs between seasons. Select the time of year for your trip that best corresponds to the desired feel and atmosphere of the photos you want to shoot. Each season has its pros and cons.

Summer: 24-hour daylight and everything in bloom but also the highest number of tourists - although Iceland can never be considered crowded.

Autumn: Autumn colours with the contrast of the first snow in the mountains and the crisp air. The number of tourists drops, but so does the temperature and the hours of daylight. Winter: Short days with limited daylight provide plenty of challenges but there are still plenty of great photos to pursue; the Icelandic horses out in snowstorm, the Northern Lights and frozen waterfalls.

Spring: Over 75 different bird species migrate to Iceland in the spring and nest. Here you can find some of the largest bird cliffs in Europe, including the largest puffin colonies. The highlands are however inaccessible in the spring and most highland roads don't open until after mid-June.

This e-book is intended to help your photo-trip to Iceland generate many great photographs, by giving ideas and useful tips. On the next page is a map of Iceland with each location marked, going clockwise from Reykjavík. We have categorized the locations into different subjects: waterfalls, glaciers, beaches, mountains and geothermal/geology.

Each location section has the following information:

- Subject (waterfall, glacier, beach, mountains or geothermal)
- Area of Iceland (west, north, east, south)
- Nearest town (which makes it easier to find the location on a map and on sat.nav)
- Accessibility (car versus 4x4 and if there is any hiking involved)
- GPS coordinates, generally to the nearest parking
- Description, both general and from a photographer's perspective
- Driving directions, generally from more than one direction
- Sample photographs with metadata
- Seasonal information (when the location is accessible)

On some locations we have added some information on geology, our recommendations, a fun fact or a useful tip.

We have purposely avoided rating each location or making claims whether one location is better or worse than another. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

Enjoy planning a fun photo trip to Iceland.



Rainbow over Mt Mælifell at sunset.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 July 23, 2008, 22:04 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 40mm
🔍 f22, 1/3
⚙️ ISO 100



**Sun breaking through the clouds
in southern Iceland.**

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 August 8, 2010, 09:27 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L USM @ 90mm
🔍 f14, 1/60
⚙️ ISO 400



Dynjandi

Hvítserkur

Kirkjufell & Kirkjufellsfoss

Djúpalón

Arnarstapi
Hellnar

Barnafoss
Hraunfossar

Gýgjarfoss
Kerli

Pingvellir
Brúarfoss

Gullfoss
Geysir / Strokkur
Háifoss & Grann

Sigalda Canyon

Gjáin
Hjalparfoss

Blue Lagoon
Gunnhver

Seltún / Krýsuvík

Lan

Gluggafoss
Seljalandsfoss

Skógafoss

Dyrhólaey
Re



BARNAFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

West Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Borgarnes

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°42'092"
W020°58'697"

Barnafoss means “Children’s Waterfall” and the name comes from a sad story that tells of two children who vanished attempting to cross the river. One Christmas day the household at the nearby farm Hraunsás went to mass at the local church, whilst the two children were to stay at home. When the people returned, the children had disappeared but their tracks in the snow led down to the river and to a natural stone arch that once bridged the river. There the trail ended so it was clear that the children had fallen into the river and drowned. Their mother then had the stone arch destroyed to prevent such a tragedy being repeated.

This waterfall is more like fierce rapids where the river thrusts through a very narrow canyon and through an arch that’s usually underwater – unless the water level is very low. The average flow is around 80 m³/s but can get as high as 500 m³/s in spring floods when the snow is melting.

Barnafoss is just a couple of hundred metres upstream from Hraunfossar (“Lava Waterfalls”). There are good paths and viewing platforms. The only way to photograph the falls is from above, shooting downwards.

DIRECTIONS*

There are a number of routes to take to Hraunfossar and Barnafoss. Coming from Reykjavík, head north on the Ring Road, through the tunnel under Hvalfjörður and towards Borgarnes. Just before crossing the bridge into Borgarnes, turn right onto road 50 (south) and follow the sign to Reykholt. Note that there are other places called Reykholt in other parts of the country – so, if the GPS says something meaningless, look at the map. It’s about half an hour’s drive, less than 40 km.

At Reykholt, turn onto road 518 and drive towards Húsafell for another 24 km, then turn left at the sign for Hraunfossar.

* same as for Hraunfossar

Coming from the north along the Ring Road, drive past Bifröst and turn left at Baula onto road 50 (north) to Deildartunga / Deildartunguhver. Then turn left to Reykholt and drive towards Húsafell on road 518 for another 24 km, and turn left at the sign for Hraunfossar.

SEASONS

All year

OUR RECOMMENDATION

The canyon is very narrow so deep shadows form quickly if there is any sun – therefore, soft light on a cloudy day is best.

TIP

Sunny days give too much contrast so aim for cloudy skies with soft light.



Barnafoss in autumn.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 20, 2014, 18:43 GMT

👁️ EF24-700mm f/2.8L II USM @ 42mm
🔍 f8, 1/25
⚙️ ISO 400



Barnafoss in autumn.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 20, 2014, 18:24 GMT

👁️ EF24-700mm f/2.8L II USM @ 41mm
🔍 f8, 1/5
⚙️ ISO 100



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HRAUNFOSSAR

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

West Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Borgarnes

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°42'092"

W20°58'697"

Hraunfossar ("Lava Waterfalls") get their name from the countless streams of clear water which emerge from under the edge of the lava field Hallmundarhraun and cascade into the river Hvítá ("White River"). Hvítá actually has a very nice turquoise colour. The lava is quite porous so rain seeps through until it meets a more dense rock layer, then runs between the lava layers, eventually emerging to form almost a kilometre long series of falls. Some birch trees and heather grow on the moss covered lava, framing the waterfall nicely with colourful foliage, especially in the autumn.

There is a viewing platform on the top of the bank across from the waterfall which is very easy access but the angle is a bit downwards. There are no paths down to the bottom of the canyon but some brave-hearted and surefooted manage to make their way down to the river, to get the river in the foreground and enable shooting more level against the falls. It's a great place to practice your panoramic skills.

There are ropes to mark where to go and where not to go and if you do decide to go off the marked trails, please respect the sensitive flora.

Hraunfossar and Barnafoss ("Children's Waterfall") were declared a natural monument in 1987.

DIRECTIONS*

There are a number of routes to take to Hraunfossar and Barnafoss. Coming from Reykjavík, head north on the Ring Road, through the tunnel under Hvalfjörður and towards Borgarnes. Just before crossing the bridge into Borgarnes, turn right onto road 50 (south) and follow the sign to Reykholt. Note that there are other places called Reykholt in other parts of the country – so, if the GPS says something meaningless, look at the map. It's about half an hour's drive, less than 40 km.

At Reykholt, turn onto road 518 and drive towards Húsafell for another 24 km, then turn left at the sign for Hraunfossar.

Coming from the north along the Ring Road, drive past Bifröst and turn left at Baula onto road 50 (north) to Deildartunga / Deildartunguhver. Then turn left to Reykholt

and drive towards Húsafell on road 518 for another 24 km, then turn left at the sign for Hraunfossar.

SEASONS

All year.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Wide angle lens for the whole scene – or use a normal lens and stitch together images into a panorama. A telephoto lens also gives many great compositions, isolating individual falls and foliage. Notice also the reddish streaks in the rock itself.

Hraunfossar is a great sunset location.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

Hraunfossar has some amazing autumn colours so late September is a great time to visit.

* same as for Barnafoss

TIP

Take off the polarizer and shoot in manual mode when stitching images.



Hraunfossar in summer.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark ii
🕒 July 2, 2009, 15:51 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM
🔍 f22, 1/8
☀️ ISO 100



Close up Hraunfossar in autumn.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 20, 2014, 17:58 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 173mm
🔍 f20, 0.8
☀️ ISO 100

ARNARSTAPI

SUBJECT

Beach

AREA

West Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Hellissandur

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°46'206"
W023°37'251"

Arnarstapi looks like a small fishing village but it is more a collection of summer cottages near the tip of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. The small harbour is very picturesque, with sea stacks rising from the ocean brimming with birdlife and Snæfellsjökull glacier as the backdrop. Behind the harbour, the sea cliffs provide a lot of wave action and interesting rock formations. There are numerous arches in the lava cliffs and narrows where the waves push the ocean through with big splashes. The birds and guano add life and colour to the lava cliffs. In the opposite direction, away from the ocean, inland, there is the pyramid shaped mountain Stapafell and the glacier Snæfellsjökull. Both Hellnar and Djúpalón are nearby.

Snæfellsnes Peninsula is sometimes described as “Iceland in a nutshell” as it has so much variety in landscape: glacier, lava, cliffs, volcanoes, beaches and mountains - so there is plenty to photograph there.

DIRECTIONS

From Reykjavík, drive north along the Ring Road, through the tunnel to Borgarnes. After passing through the town of Borgarnes, take the last exit on the roundabout to road 54.

Near Búðir, turn off road 54 onto road 574 to Arnarstapi and drive for approximately 20 km. From Borgarnes to Arnarstapi is a bit over an hour, around 120 km.

On the way, consider photographing the Eldborg crater (the turnoff from road 54

is 35 km from Borgarnes) and Gerðuberg hexagonal basalt columns (the turnoff from road 54 is 46 km from Borgarnes).

SEASONS

All year but the road can close in mid winter due to snow.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Combine a visit to Arnarstapi with a trip to Hellnar, Djúpalón and Kirkjufell.

Want to learn more?

Read this article on Snæfellsjökull glacier:

<http://www.icelandontheweb.com/articles-on-iceland/nature/national-parks/snaefellsjokull>



Arnarstapi with Stapafell mountain and Snæfellsjökull glacier in the background.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 May 3, 2012, 12:01 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 34mm
🔍 f11, 1/50
☀️ ISO 100



Gatklettur by Arnarstapi.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk II
🕒 October 3, 2010, 12:08 GMT

👁️ TS-E24 mm f/3.5L II @ 24mm
🔍 f24, 1/20
☀️ ISO 800

HELLNAR

SUBJECT

Beach

AREA

West Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Hellissandur

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°45'068"

W023°53'750"

Hellnar is a small cove a few kilometres further west from Arnarstapi on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. The visitor centre for Snæfellsjökull National Park is located above the cove, and down in the cove there is a very nice little café.

The cove itself is very scenic, especially the rock formations which surround it. The ocean has carved out holes, narrows and arches where the waves crash through on high tide. The rocks vary, from the sea-rounded ocean rocks to layers of sharp lava tiles, so there are plenty of interesting forms and shapes for abstract photography. One can also play with colour: from the blue of the ocean to the white of the guano rocks topped with green grass and low-growing flowers.

DIRECTIONS

From Reykjavík drive north along the Ring Road, through the tunnel to Borgarnes. After passing through the town of Borgarnes, take the last exit on the roundabout to road 54.

Near Búðir, turn off road 54 onto road 574 to Arnarstapi and drive for approximately 20 km.

From Arnarstapi, continue on road 574 a few km further, then turn left at the sign for Hellnar. The location is a couple of km from the main road. From the parking lot, walk down the path to the little café in the cove.

SEASONS

All year but the road can close in mid winter due to snow.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Enjoy Icelandic waffles with rhubarb jam at the charming café down in the cove.

Combine a visit to Hellnar with a trip to Arnarstapi, Djúpalón and Kirkjufell.

FUN FACT

Snæfellsjökull is the setting for the novel *Under the Glacier* by Halldór Laxness, Iceland's only Nobel Laureate. Iceland has the largest number of Nobel prize winners per capita in the world: 1.



Hole in the wall at Hellnar

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk II
🕒 July 13, 2010, 14:46 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 16mm
🔍 f11, 1/50
☀️ ISO 100



Rock formations at Hellnar.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 June 2 2013, 12:35 GMT

👁️ EF600mm f/4.5L IS II USM
🔍 f13, 1/125
☀️ ISO 640

DJÚPALÓN

SUBJECT

Beach

AREA

West Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Hellissandur

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N 64° 45' 218"

W 023° 53' 700"

Djúpalón is a small cove surrounded by extraordinary lava formations and known by Icelanders for its black pebbles, called “Djúpalón-pearls”. The black rounded pebbles create a strong contrast against the ocean. Lava rocks frame the cove beautifully, and there are sea stacks jutting out into the ocean, which provide interesting foreground and leading lines.

Looking inland, there is a great view to Snæfellsjökull glacier, which you can frame nicely through a hole in the lava wall.

The iron wreckage on the beach mostly belongs to the British trawler Epine GY-7 that stranded there on the evening of March 13th 1948.

DIRECTIONS

From Reykjavík drive north along the Ring Road, through the tunnel to Borgarnes. After passing through the town of Borgarnes, take the last exit on the roundabout to road 54.

Near Búðir, turn off road 54 onto road 574 to Arnarstapi and drive approximately 20 km.

From Borgarnes to Arnarstapi is about 120 km.

From Arnarstapi, continue a few km further out towards the tip of the peninsula on road

574. Djúpalón is signposted on the left, road 572 and goes 3 km from the main road to the parking lot. There is a public toilet (only open in summer) and marked trails.

SEASONS

All year but the road can close due to snow in mid winter.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Combine a visit to Djúpalón with a trip to Arnarstapi, Hellnar and Kirkjufell.

FUN FACT

Snæfellsjökull serves as the entrance to the subterranean journey in Jules Verne's novel Journey to the Center of the Earth.



DRESS CODE ICELAND



Djúpalón sea stacks in a winter sunset.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D MIII
🕒 February 25, 2014, 17:02 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 27mm
🔍 f11, 53 sec through grad filters
☀️ ISO 100



Djúpalón sea stacks in summer.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 July 13, 2010, 15:59 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 25mm
🔍 f11, 1/125
☀️ ISO 100

KIRKJUFELL & KIRKJUFELLSFOSS

SUBJECT

Mountains &
Waterfall

AREA

West Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Grundarfjörður

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°55'52"
W023°18'65"

Mt Kirkjufell is an iconic mountain which has gained popularity among photographers over the past few years. It has even appeared on some lists of the most beautiful mountains in the world – which we won't judge but, as Icelanders, we have to brag about it and support its listing.

There is a tiny little waterfall, Kirkjufellsfoss, which is very popular to use as a foreground, but the mountain is also great as foreground, especially under the auroras. There are often reflections in the water, when photographing from the west side of the town.

On the photo of Kirkjufellsfoss, taken in February in the late afternoon, the sun was behind the waterfall. This angle might have the best light in the mornings when the light is on the waterfall. Kirkjufellsfoss is smaller than one would think but since it's at the edge of a wide angle lens, it seems bigger.

Note: For this angle in winter, you need crampons or spikes to be able to walk on the ice.

DIRECTIONS

Mt. Kirkjufell is just outside the town of Grundarfjörður on the north shore of Snæfellsnes Peninsula in the western part of Iceland. Grundarfjörður is on all maps and in the Sat Nav systems. From Reykjavik the distance is 177 km; about 2,5 hours.

Take the Ring Road northbound out of Reykjavik, through the tunnel in Hvalfjörður and continue to Borgarnes (about 70 km). After passing through Borgarnes, at the small roundabout, drive $\frac{3}{4}$ and take the last exit to road 54. Continue for about 60 km to the next intersection at Vegamót, then turn right onto road 56 and drive through a mountain pass to the north side of the peninsula. Once across the mountain pass, about 15 km, at the T-intersection turn left onto road 54 for the last 25 km or so to Grundarfjörður.

Photographing Mt. Kirkjufell is fine but the most popular place to photograph it is just west of the town. From Grundarfjörður, continue on road 54 just a couple of miles and then Kirkjufellsfoss is on the left and Mt. Kirkjufell on the right hand side.

Note: It can get very windy on roads 54 and 56, near the mountains. Check the weather forecast and the road conditions, especially in winter.

SEASONS

Kirkjufell can be photographed in any season. Some might favour the bright nights in summer, others the first snow in autumn and yet others prefer the winter, with or without the northern lights.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Allow for a few days in Snæfellsnes and drive around the peninsula. It gives you an amazing variety in landscape and subjects.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

At certain times of the year, whales can be spotted from the bridge over Kolgrafarfjörður (just a few km east of Grundarfjörður), when they follow the herring into the fjord or lagoon. The season for the whales in fjord is usually from November to April.

TIP

In winter, bring crampons or spikes to be able to walk on icy slopes by the waterfall.



Kirkjufellsfoss in winter.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 February 25, 2014, 18:44 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 f/2.8L IS USM @ 17mm
🔍 f14, 30 sec
⚙️ ISO 100



Kirkjufell reflecting in calm waters.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 March 23, 2014, 17:20 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 35mm
🔍 f22, 1/90
⚙️ ISO 400

DYNJANDI

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

West Iceland
(Westfjords)

NEAREST TOWN

Þingeyri / Bíldudalur

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N65° 44' 203"
W023° 12' 525"

Dynjandi is the iconic waterfall of the Westfjords. Although it is always referred to as “a waterfall”, it is actually a series of waterfalls with a cumulative height of 100 metres. The largest waterfall is at the top, 30 m wide where it plunges off the edge of the mountain and spreads out to 60 m wide, like a bridal veil, before cascading down the mountainside in a set of waterfalls, falling off one step after another and ending in the bottom of the fjord Arnarfjörður. The waterfalls are a total of six. Some claim the names are Fjallfoss, Hundafoss, Strokkur, Göngumannafoss, Hrísvaðsfoss and Sjóarfoss. Others claim the names are Hæstahjallafoss, Strompgljúrafoss, Göngumannafoss, Hrísvaðsfoss, Hundafoss and Bæjarfoss.

No need to argue as everybody refers to the waterfall series as Dynjandi (which is actually the name of the river and the abandoned farm) and means “thundering”.

There is a trail along the south side of the river, from the parking area at the bottom up to the base of the highest waterfall. Dynjandi faces west so it has the best light in the afternoon to sunset, depending on the time of year.

DIRECTIONS

Dynjandi is half way between the towns of Bíldudalur and Þingeyri, at the bottom of the fjord Arnarfjörður.

Coming from Þingeyri (Thingeyri), drive south 40 km on road 60 towards Brjánslækur.

Approaching from the opposite direction, from Brjánslækur, drive 37 km on road 60 towards Þingeyri.

The roads are mostly gravel, going over some high passes and heaths, with many hairpin turns so allow for a bit more time.

SEASONS

Spring to autumn. In winter, the road is very often closed due to snow.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Normal to wide lens to capture the whole scene and the fjord. Telephoto for close up and abstracts. A polarizer is always good to have when photographing water and waterfalls.

Allow for plenty of time at Dynjandi, explore and detour to find new and less obvious angles.

Consider visiting Látrabjarg and Rauðisandur together with a trip to Dynjandi.

FUN FACT

The Westfjords are geologically the oldest part of Iceland.

Want to learn more?

Read this article on the Westfjords:

<http://www.icelandontheweb.com/articles-on-iceland/iceland-regions/westfjords>



The top series of the waterfalls in Dynjandi.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 May 5, 2012, 19:58 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm f/2.8L USM @ 32mm
🔍 f22, 0.6
⚙️ ISO 100



Close up of Dynjandi.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 May 5, 2012, 19:37 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm + 1.4 ext., f/2.8L USM @ 225mm
🔍 45, 1/6
⚙️ ISO 250

HVÍTSERKUR

SUBJECT

Beach & Geology

AREA

North Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Hvammstangi

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N65°36'216"

W020°38'372"

Hvítserkur is a basalt rock rising about 15 m just off the coast of Vatnsnes Peninsula in the north of Iceland. The birds, which rest and nest on the rock have deposited quite a few droppings, colouring the rock largely white, hence the name Hvít-serkur which means "white- shirt".

The sea erosion has carved out two holes in the rock's foundation, giving it the distinct features resembling a petrified monster, an animal of some sort or a troll. An old tale says Hvítserkur was a troll from the Westfjords planning to break a church bell in a fjord a little further east but was caught by the sun and turned to stone.

The coastal cliffs are a bit higher than Hvítserkur so the rock is not visible until one is at the shore edge. There is a viewing platform, which is slightly higher than the rock so many have climbed down to the shore below to get a better angle. It's not an official trail but it's clearly visible. However, the path is loose and slippery so use your own judgement. On low tide, it's almost possible to walk to Hvítserkur, or at least get quite close, but on high tide it's 30-50 metres from the shore to the rock.

DIRECTIONS

Hvítserkur is on the eastern shore of Vatnsnes peninsula in the north of Iceland. Approaching from the south/west, drive along the Ring Road about 5-7 km east of the turnoff to Hvammstangi, then take the exit onto road 711 signposted on the left. Drive along road 711 for approximately 30 km, just a bit further than Ósar farm & hostel, to Hvítserkur parking area, clearly marked on the right. From the parking lot it's a 2 min walk to the viewing platform.

Approaching along the Ring Road from the north/east, turn onto road 716 which then connects to road 711.

SEASONS

All year, but in winter always check the road conditions and weather.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

The rock faces southwest so you are mostly shooting northeast. At sunrise, the rock is mostly backlit while at sunset it is front-lit. A normal lens works fine.

Try to photograph Hvítserkur near sunset and on low tide. It could also be great as foreground for the northern lights.

TIP

In winter, bring crampons or spikes to be able to walk on icy slopes by the waterfall.



Hvítserkur.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 June 14, 2013, 20:37 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L IS II USM @ 58mm
🔍 f22, 1.3
⚙️ ISO 100



Hvítserkur.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark III
🕒 July 14, 2014, 16:55 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L IS II USM @ 45mm
🔍 f22, 1/30
⚙️ ISO 200

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GOÐAFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

North Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Akureyri and
Húsavík

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N65°41'159"
W017°32'364"

Goðafoss means “Waterfall of the Gods” and the waterfall got its name in the year 1000 when Iceland converted from the old Ásatrú-religion (Norse Heathenry) to Christianity. According to the Book of Icelanders, the local chieftain and lawspeaker, Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði, was given the authority to decide whether Christianity was to be adopted in Iceland. After the decision was made, it is said, he threw his statues of the old Viking gods into the waterfall, as a symbol that the old religion had been discarded. The story is longer and more complex, but rather interesting. If you're interested in history, we recommend you ask your guide for more details.

It's possible to photograph Goðafoss from both the east and west side of the river – and head on, so there are plenty of angles and compositions. Goðafoss faces north, so it doesn't get direct sunlight to the front of the falls. At midday, the sun is behind the waterfall and you're shooting mostly south, against the sun. Even if it's not sunny, there is a big difference in light between the falls and the sky. Therefore, it's best to photograph Goðafoss in the twilight hours. The river, Skjálfandafliót, is muddy brown colour in summer due to the sand and silt, but bluer and clearer in winter.

DIRECTIONS

Goðafoss is by the Ring Road in the north, about 50 km east of Akureyri (about half an hour's drive), midway to Lake Mývatn (see page 34). There is an iconic yellow building on the east side of the river, Fosshóll, but the main parking lot is on the west side, marked “Goðafoss”. It's very easy to find.

There is a footbridge across the river and parking on both sides, although it's a considerably shorter walk from the west side parking area.

SEASONS

All year, but in winter please check the road conditions and weather forecast.

Goðafoss is so close to the Arctic Circle that the sun just barely sets around the summer solstice – but, unfortunately, there are hills and low mountains that block the sun from reaching the falls when the sun is at its lowest angle. Nights are probably the

best time to photograph Goðafoss on clear summer days. If it's overcast, the clouds soften the light like a large softbox so you don't get the problems with high contrast and big shadows. Sunrise and sunset hours are always a good time to photograph most things, but this is particularly true of Goðafoss.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

On the west side of the falls, the surefooted and brave-hearted can go a bit into the slow running stream to get some different angles. Just don't fall in! There are also some cliffs and big rocks on that side that offer different perspectives. Use caution when clambering over the rocks, as they can be slippery.

On the east side, a trail leads down to the water surface, which gives a more level angle to the falls, whereas the angles from the top are shooting downwards to the falls.

This trail is quite rough and can be treacherous in winter.

TIP

Wide angle lens, a polarizer and split neutral density filters.



Goðafoss in winter.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 anuary 25, 2011, 11:01 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 16mm
🔍 f9, 1/6
☀️ ISO 100



Goðafoss in autumn.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 17, 2014, 07:58 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 16mm
🔍 f22, 1/6
☀️ ISO 100

NÁMASKARÐ

SUBJECT
Geothermal

AREA
North Iceland

NEAREST TOWN
Reykjahlíð at Lake
Mývatn

ACCESS
Car

GPS COORDINATES
N65°38'480"
W016°48'438"

Námaskarð ("Mine Pass") is a geothermal area just east of Lake Mývatn, near Krafla. The name derives from the sulphur mining which occurred there from 15th – 19th century.

The sulphurous boiling mud springs, solfataras, the blowing steam vents and fumaroles, along with the multi coloured clay, provide an excellent playing field for photographing colours, tones and shapes. Surface water seeps into the ground, heats up and is brought back to the surface together with dissolved minerals, hence the fascinating colours.

The acidic clay is completely devoid of life so there is no vegetation in the geothermal area.

The pyramid shaped steam vents can work both as foreground when capturing a large scene or for abstract close ups. The cracked mud can provide interesting foreground and leading lines.

DIRECTIONS

Námaskarð is just a few kilometres from Reykjavík, the village at Lake Mývatn. Drive from Reykjavík east along the Ring Road, past the blue water on the left and the Nature Baths on the right, up the S-curved hill through the mountain pass. Once through the pass and down the hill on the other side, the hot spring area is visible on the right hand side. The sign says Hverir, which means "hot springs".

There are paths and platforms; ropes to mark where it's safe to go and where it's not.

SEASONS

All year

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Try to be there early, as Námaskarð has the best light at sunrise.

Námaskarð is ideal to visit together with Krafla, Leirhnjúkur, Dettifoss and Selfoss, each a stunning photographic location, so stay a few nights at Lake Mývatn.

TIP

Your shoes will get very muddy, and so will the legs on your tripod. Bring a brush to clean them, or an extra pair of shoes and a plastic bag for the shoes you wore in the mud.

Want to learn more?

Read this article on Lake Mývatn:

<http://www.icelandontheweb.com/articles-on-iceland/iceland-regions/north-iceland/myvatn-lake>



Blowing steam vent in Námaskaró.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk II
🕒 July 16. 2010, 16:35 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 140mm
📷 f18, 1/100
☀️ ISO 100



Boiling mud pits in Námaskaró.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark III
🕒 eptember 18, 2014, 08:01 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 35mm
📷 f22, 0,5
☀️ ISO 100

KRAFLA & LEIRHJÚKUR

SUBJECT

Geothermal

AREA

North Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Reykjahlið by Lake
Mývatn

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N65°38'480"
W016°48'438"

Krafla and Leirhnjúkur are volcanoes east of Lake Mývatn. There are boiling mud pits against the light and colourful clay. A bit further the steam rises from the very black lava offering Mordor-like atmosphere. Leirhnjúkur ("Clay Peak") is a rhyolite formation, rising about 50 m above the surrounding lava field. The lava is very porous so rain easily seeps down into the ground where the geothermal warmth heats up the water to and above boiling point, dissolving some minerals that float with the steam and water up to the surface.

Mt. Krafla is a central volcano with a caldera which is largely filled with younger formations, and underneath Leirhnjúkur there is a magma chamber at a depth of only 3 km.

The black steaming lava originates from the Krafla fires, a series of fissure eruptions and magma movements that lasted almost 9 years, from December 1975 to September 1984. The length of the fissure zone is about 11 km and the lava field covers some 35 km².

This is relevant to explain how interesting this place is, not just for geologists but also for landscape photographers. It offers endless opportunities for capturing shapes and tones, abstract close ups and large wide scenes without any man made distractions.

DIRECTIONS

Krafla is just a few kilometres away from Reykjahlið, the village at Lake Mývatn. Drive from Reykjahlið east along the Ring Road, past the blue water on the left and the Nature Baths on the right, up the S-curved hill through the mountain pass. Once through the pass and down the hill on the other side, the hot spring area marked "Hverir" is on the right hand side, but on the left there is a sign for Krafla.

Drive past the power plant, under the pipelines (this will become clear upon sighting) and up another S-curved hill

where the parking lot can be found, on the left hand side. From the parking lot there is a flat and easy walk to the first mud pools with some wooden stairs and a viewing platform. After that, the paths into the dark lava get a bit more rugged and slightly uphill.

SEASONS

Spring, summer and autumn but in winter you can only get as far the geothermal power station as the last hill is not cleared for snow.

TIP

Bring a headlight if you plan to photograph at sunset.



Crater in the dark rugged lava by Krafla.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 19, 2014, 17:33 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 100mm
🔍 f25, 3.2
☀️ ISO 200



Geothermal area by Leirhnjúkur.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 19, 2014, 18:20 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 24mm
🔍 f22, 2.0
☀️ ISO 100

DETTIFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

North Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Reykjahlíð by Lake Mývatn

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

West side:

N65°48'75"
W016°24'034"

East side:

N65°49'155"
W016°22'765"

FUN FACT

Dettifoss waterfall was used in the opening scene of Ridley Scott's sci-fi film Prometheus.

TIP

Bring a small umbrella to avoid getting the spray from the waterfall on your lens.

Dettifoss is the most powerful waterfall in Europe. It's 45 m tall and 100 m wide and it's in one of the largest glacier rivers in Iceland, Jökulsá á Fjöllum. In summer, the water is so muddy brown from the sand and silt the river carries that the waterfall looks almost like it's pouring down wet cement. In winter, there is much less water in the river and very little sand and silt so the river takes on a much bluer colour.

A few hundred metres upstream, there is a smaller waterfall, Selfoss (not to be confused with the town Selfoss in the south of Iceland), while another waterfall, Hafragilsfoss, is a little further downstream. There are hiking trails to both these waterfalls from Dettifoss.

It's possible to photograph Dettifoss both from the east and the west bank of Jökulsárgljúfur canyon. The waterfall faces north so you are generally photographing southeast or southwest, depending on which side you're on. The east side is better in the morning where the sun would be behind you, while the west side is better in the afternoon and until sunset.

DIRECTIONS

Coming from Reykjavík by Mývatn, drive east along the Ring Road. There are two roads to Dettifoss, both of which branch off the Ring Road, one on each side of the river.

Road 862 along the west riverbank is closer, 26 km east of Mývatn, and from the Ring Road it's 24 km to the parking area on the west side of Dettifoss. From the parking lot it's a 5 min easy walk to the waterfall.

Road 864 along the east riverbank is further, 40 km east of Mývatn. Just after the bridge across the river Jökulsá á Fjöllum, turn left and drive 28 km north from the Ring Road on a gravel road. From the parking lot, there is a well-marked trail to both waterfalls, Dettifoss and Selfoss.

Road 862, from road 1 north to Dettifoss along the west riverbank, is a new, paved

road which is passable for all vehicles. The road is cleared for snow a couple of times a week in winter but not every day, so please check the road conditions. In summer time, it's possible to continue on road 862 to Vesturdalur, Hljóðaklettur and Ásbyrgi on a gravel road.

The road on the east side, number 864, is not cleared in the wintertime.

SEASONS

Almost all year, but in winter access depends on snow conditions and how frequently the road administration clears the west road 862 for snow.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Bring food and drinks for the day, since there are no shops or cafés nearby.



Dettifoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 September 18 2014, 18:24 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm f/2.8L USM @ 23mm
🔍 f11, 0,5
⚙️ ISO 400



Dettifoss.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 November 11, 2006, 14:40 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 24mm
🔍 f5.6, 1/125
⚙️ ISO 100

SELFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

North Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Reykjahlíð by Lake Mývatn

ACCESS

Car + short hike

GPS COORDINATES

West side:

N65°48'75"

W016°24'034"

East side:

N65°49'155"

W016°22'765"

Selfoss waterfall (not to be confused with the town Selfoss in the south of Iceland) is a few hundred metres upstream from Dettifoss falls. Whereas Dettifoss is one very large and powerful waterfall, Selfoss is more a series of not so powerful cascades where the river falls off the cliffs in many different sized streams. There is a main stream which generates a lot of spray at the bottom of the canyon, which can be a bit of a challenge for photographers, as it's difficult to get texture in the spray and it just looks like water on the lens. On the west side, there are series of waterfalls with less powerful streams, so there is less spray and it's easier to get them with long exposures without losing too much texture.

It's possible to photograph Selfoss both from the east and the west bank of Jökulsárgljúfur canyon. The falls face north and northeast so you are generally photographing southeast or southwest, depending on which side you're on. The east side is better in the morning where the sun would be behind you, while the west side is better in the afternoon and until sunset.

To access Selfoss, there are hiking trails on both sides of the river, from Dettifoss waterfall.

DIRECTIONS

Coming from Reykjhlið by Mývatn, drive east along the Ring Road. There are two roads to Dettifoss, both of which branch off the Ring Road, one on each side of the river.

Road 862 along the west riverbank is closer, 26 km east of Mývatn, and from the Ring Road it's 24 km to the parking area on the west side of Dettifoss. From the parking lot it's a 5 min easy walk to the Dettifoss waterfall, then the trail splits and it's about 700m walk from Dettifoss to Selfoss.

Road 864 along the east riverbank is further, 40 km east of Mývatn. Just after the bridge across the river Jökulsá á Fjöllum, turn left and drive 28 km north from the Ring Road on a gravel road. From the parking lot, there is a well-marked trail to both waterfalls, Dettifoss and Selfoss.

Road 862, from road 1 north to Dettifoss along the west riverbank, is a new, paved road which is passable for all vehicles. The road is cleared for snow a couple of times a week in winter but not every day, so please check the road conditions. In summer time, it's possible to continue on road 862 to Vesturdalur, Hljóðaklettur and Ásbyrgi on a gravel road.

The road on the east side, number 864, is not cleared in the wintertime.

SEASONS

Almost all year, but in winter access depends on snow conditions and how frequently the road administration clears the west road 862 for snow.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Bring food and drinks for the day, as there are no shops or cafés nearby.



The sun sets early in January at Selfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 January 26, 2011, 15:08 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm f/2.8L USM @ 16mm
🔍 f22, 0.6
☀️ ISO 100



Selfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 September 19, 2014, 11:11 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm f/2.8L USM @ 23mm
🔍 f22, 1/6
☀️ ISO 100

HLJÓÐAKLETTAR

SUBJECT

Mountains

AREA

North East Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Reykjahlíð by
Mývatn / Húsavík /
Kópasker

ACCESS

Car + hiking

GPS COORDINATES

N65°55'871"
W016° 32'830"

Hljóðaklettar (“Echo Rocks”) are the remains of ancient volcanoes which have been heavily eroded by the Jökulsá river, leaving only the volcanic plugs behind. It’s an extraordinary site where you can listen to the cliff acoustic near the river and walk amid the unique geological phenomena. Basalt columns in various shapes abound; cliffs, honeycomb weathering and caves. One of the first rocks visible as you walk down from the parking lot is the giant Trölllið (“The Troll”).

This area has many photographic possibilities. You can photograph the grand vista, the flow of the powerful river among the rock formations, or you can survey the honeycomb patterns for abstracts - the options are endless. The plant and bird life is also quite rich, depending on the season.

Explore the cave Kirkjan (“The Church”) and take the trail to Rauðhólar (“Red Hills”), a row of scoria cones that are red in colour, as the name suggests. You can experience a great variety of geological phenomena during this fascinating walk. The views to the canyon in the north and Hljóðaklettar in the south are outstanding.

DIRECTIONS

Hljóðaklettar is only a short distance from Ásbyrgi. In summer, it is also accessible from the west side of Dettifoss, so it’s ideal to visit Dettifoss, Hljóðaklettar and Ásbyrgi together.

From the petrol station at Ásbyrgi, drive about 1 km on road 85, towards Húsavík, then turn south (left) onto road 862. Follow road 862 for about 10 km, then turn left where a sign points to Vesturdalur.

Coming from the west side of Dettifoss, there is a gravel road continuing north at a hairpin turn, about 1 km above the parking lot. That’s road 862; and from there, it’s about 25 km to the turn to Vesturdalur.

Drive down the hill into Vesturdalur, then turn left and follow the road to the last parking lot. From there, walk the largest path, in a northeasterly direction. The trails are marked and there are information signs. Road 862 is a gravel road but it is passable for normal 2WD cars.

SEASONS

June to October.

Please note: Road 862, between road 85 (Ásbyrgi) and Dettifoss, is closed during winter time, due to snow or wet, muddy road conditions and does not open until early June.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

From the parking lot, there are hiking trails suitable for everybody. The “Hljóðaklettar Circle” is about an hour’s hike, plus time for photography. Bring a telephoto lens to capture the abstracts in the rock formations.

GEOLOGY

Hljóðaklettar in the canyon Jökulsárgljúfur is located in the palagonite belt of northern Iceland. The surrounding area is geologically recent, with the oldest surface strata dating from the last interglacial, grey basalt lavas that flowed from shield volcanoes such as Grjótháls. During the last Ice Age, subglacial eruptions formed isolated palagonite mountains. Several impressive waterfalls, including Selfoss, Dettifoss, Hafragilsfoss and Réttarfoss are part of the river Jökulsá á Fjöllum, which runs through the canyon.

It is thought that Jökulsárgljúfur canyon and its surroundings have been carved into the bedrock through a sequence of catastrophic glacial floods, or jökulhlaups, after the end of the last glaciation. The last such flood occurred probably around 2000 years ago, but the canyon topography still clearly shows its erosive force.



Honeycomb weathering at Hljóðaklettur.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark ii
🕒 September 19, 2009, 15:41 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm /f2.8L USM @ 70mm
🔍 f4,5, 1/60
⚙️ ISO 200



Hexagon formations in Hljóðaklettur.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 July 1, 2014, 12:03 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm + 1.4 ext., f/2.8L USM @ 280mm
🔍 f7.1, 1/50
⚙️ ISO 200

HENGIFOSS & LITLANEFSFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

East Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Egilsstaðir

ACCESS

Car + hiking uphill

GPS COORDINATES

N65°04'403"

W014°52'832"

Hengifoss is Iceland's third highest waterfall, 128 m high. It drops off a plateau into a horseshoe-shaped gorge, which is like a geological layer cake: different lava layers and sediment are very obvious and highlighted with a few very red layers. Hengifoss faces almost due south, so on a sunny day the light is best shortly after noon. The waterfall falls off U-shaped cliffs, so on sunny days there are strong shadows mornings and afternoons but the sun also brings out the red colour in the layers.

From the parking lot at the bottom, it's an uphill walk of less than an hour but you are likely to spend more time as there are many motifs following the river and the gorge. The river drops down a gentle slope with a few smaller waterfalls and rapids.

Litlanefsfoss is midway down, surrounded by different hexagonal basalt columns. There is a rather obvious point on the path along the gorge where it's easy to take a photo of Litlanefsfoss but photographers often want to get even closer. Please note that extreme caution is needed here: the edges are not to be trusted; the scree is loose and it's very easy to fall.

FUN FACT

There are fossilized trunks of coniferous trees in rock layers from the latter part of the Tertiary age, which is evidence of warmer climate.

TIP

Look also for motifs other than the waterfalls.

At the end of the path, where most people photograph Hengifoss, there are very nice rock formations on the east side for abstract photography.

For the brave-hearted and surefooted, there are good angles off the path: down by the river or up in the scree.

DIRECTIONS

Coming from Egilsstaðir, drive to the other end of Lake Lagarfljót: first along the Ring Road, then along road 931 to Hallormsstaður for about 15 minutes, until the road turns around the lake, crosses the bridge and the waterfall can be sighted in the hillside. At the T-intersection after the bridge, turn left to reach the parking lot. Hengifoss is about 35 km from Egilsstaðir.

SEASONS

The road to Hengifoss and Litlanefsfoss is accessible all year, with a few exceptions in winter, but the hiking path up along the river can be a challenge when there is a lot of snow and ice. Many prefer photographing waterfalls on overcast days but for direct sunlight on the falls, the best time would be shortly after lunch until mid afternoon.

Want to learn more?

Read this article on East Iceland:

<http://www.icelandontheweb.com/articles-on-iceland/iceland-regions/east-iceland>



Hengifoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 July 21, 2014, 16:43 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 24mm
🔍 f22, 0,5
☀️ ISO 100



Litlanefsfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 July 20, 2014, 15:32 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L USM @ 16mm
🔍 f8, 1/10
☀️ ISO 250

KLIFBREKKUFOSSAR

SUBJECT

Waterfalls

AREA

East Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Egilsstaðir

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N65°10'494"

W014°04'427"

TIP

Go for a coffee or ice cream at the little village on the northern (left) side of the fjord.

Klifbrekkufossar is a series of waterfalls in the River Fjarðará cascading in multiple steps down into the fjord called Mjóifjörður. The dark murky cliffs against the green grassy slopes create a dramatic frame for the waterfalls.

Apart from the obvious comprehensive photograph capturing the whole scene, there are lots of possibilities to isolate individual falls or create abstracts with a telephoto lens.

DIRECTIONS

Coming from Egilsstaðir, drive along road 92 towards Reyðarfjörður for about 9 km, then turn left onto road 953 to Mjóifjörður and follow it for another 20 km. First, the road goes into a valley then up a heath, before descending quite sharply in a series of hairpin turns down a steep mountain side. The waterfalls will be visible on the right hand side, just before reaching the foothills at the bottom of the fjord. Park at the signpost, then walk towards the waterfalls along an easy path.

SEASONS

The road to Mjóifjörður is not cleared in winter and the snowfalls determine when it opens up in the spring and when it closes in the autumn. After a snow-heavy winter, the road can open as late as June and it can close with the first big snowfall in the autumn.



Klifbrekkufossar.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 July 22, 2014, 11:38 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L II USM @ 59mm
🔍 f11, 1/6
☀️ ISO 100

Want to come along?



info@extremeiceland.is phone: + 354 588 1300

MJÓIFJÖRÐUR

SUBJECT

Beach & Mountains

AREA

East Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Egilsstaðir

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N65°19'440"

W013°78'690"

Mjóifjörður is a very narrow fjord – which is exactly what the name means – in East Iceland. The photographic attraction of Mjóifjörður is that it is so narrow, surrounded by steep mountains and the water is often mirror flat. There are only a few people who live in the fjord so it's mostly free from man-made distractions, apart from the old rusted ship stranded at the bottom of the fjord. The marooned ship can serve as interesting foreground for a spooky photo, especially when the east fog creeps in.

Farther out in the fjord, past the little village, there are nice waterfalls, magma intrusions and other interesting landscape features on the route towards the lighthouse at Dalatangi.

The fjord is 18 km long but only a few hundred metres across.

DIRECTIONS

Coming from Egilsstaðir, drive along road 92 towards Reyðarfjörður for about 9 km, then turn left onto road 953 to Mjóifjörður and follow it for another 20 km. First, the road goes into a valley then up a heath, before descending quite sharply in a series of hairpin turns down a steep mountain side. Klifbrekkufossar waterfalls will be visible on the right hand side, just before reaching the foothills at the bottom of the fjord. When at the bottom, drive the road on the left, past the stranded ship and out the fjord on the north side.

From Egilsstaðir to the village in Mjóifjörður is only 41,3 km but it's a slow road so

allow almost 1,5 hours for the drive each way.

Note: There is another Mjóifjörður in the Westfjords, literally on the other side of Iceland – so don't trust your GPS or Google blindly.

SEASONS

The road to Mjóifjörður is not cleared in winter and the snowfalls determine when it opens up in the spring and when it closes in the autumn. After a snow-heavy winter, the road can open as late as June and it can close with the first big snowfall in the autumn.

FUN FACT

Dalatangi is the easternmost inhabited place in Iceland.

TIP

Go for a coffee or ice cream at the little village on the northern (left) side of the fjord.



Panorama of Mjóifjörður.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 July 22, 2014, 12:09 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L II USM @ 47mm
🔍 f11, 1/100
☀️ ISO 100



Waterfalls in Mjóifjörður.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 July 22, 2014, 14:14 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L II USM @ 24mm
🔍 f11, 1/25
☀️ ISO 100

STOKKSNES

SUBJECT

Beach & Mountains

AREA

East Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Höfn

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°14'394"
W014°57'847"

Stokksnes is a small peninsula a few miles (16 km) east of the town Höfn in Hornafjörður and very easy to find. The attractions of this location are the stunning beach and the colourful steep slopes of Mt Vestrahorn ("West-Horn") that are often half-covered in clouds, giving them a mysterious feel.

In the foreground, you can have the black sand beach curving a leading line towards the mountain or the reflections in the wet black sand inlet. The coastline with the mountainous backdrop gives endless photo opportunities so we encourage you to take your time exploring the landscape.

The area is rich with birdlife, including the Arctic terns, which can be a bit aggressive when nesting in summer.

Please note that the landowner may charge an admission fee to his land. He has opened a small café, which will most likely only be open during the summer months.

DIRECTIONS

From Höfn, head north on road 99 for about 5 km, then turn right onto the Ring Road and continue for about 6 km. Just before reaching the tunnel *Almannaskarðsgöng* on the Ring Road, take the very last turnoff to the right, to Stokksnes. The large radar station is easy to spot. Follow the gravel road to the café and parking area.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Mt Vestrahorn is to the east, so you are mostly photographing from the west, facing east or northeast. Afternoon or evening is our favourite time to photograph Vestrahorn from Stokksnes, as then the soft light brings out the colours and reflections. However, this is also a great location on dark cloudy days for dramatic long exposures.

SEASONS

This is a great location for all seasons, never crowded although it's estimated that around 40,000 people visit Stokksnes, mostly in summer.

FUN FACT

The Arctic tern does the longest migration flight of any bird, traversing from the Arctic in the North to the Antarctic in the South – and back, every year.

TIP

Enjoy a tasty langoustine in Höfn in one of the local restaurants.



Mt Vestrahorn reflecting from Stokksnes.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 July 17. 2014, 17:37 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 24mm
🔍 f22, 1/3
⚙️ ISO 100



Mt Vestrahorn.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 July 17. 2014, 17:00 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 41mm
🔍 f22, 1/6
⚙️ ISO 100

JÖKULSÁRLÓN

SUBJECT

Glacier

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Höfn

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°02'899"

W016°10'807"

Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon is a world class destination for landscape photographers and certainly one of the most popular places to visit in Iceland, both by photographers and tourists. In a magnificent setting, ice breaks off the glacier edge into a big lagoon that fills up with luminous icebergs in a myriad of shapes. The glacier and the mountains in the background add to the drama of the landscape.

The icebergs provide a great foreground for northern lights photos and, on calm days when the lagoon is mirror flat, the reflections can be quite spectacular.

The glaciers were at their largest around 1890 and the edge of the Breiðamerkurjökull glacier bordering the lagoon is believed to have been only about 1km away from the coast. A warm period starting around 1920 caused dramatic changes to the glacier and shortly after a small lagoon began to form as the glacier retreated. The glacier lagoon has been getting bigger ever since, by up to 200 m every year, as the glacier melts and retreats. Jökulsárlón is now the deepest lake in Iceland, nearly 300 m deep.

DIRECTIONS

Approaching from the west, Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon is about 56 km further east from Skaftafell on road 1 (the Ring Road).

Approaching from the east, Jökulsárlón is about 80 km further west from Höfn on road 1.

Jökulsárlón is easily spotted, as big icebergs are visible by the road north of the big bridge.

SEASONS

All year.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Consider taking a boat tour on the lagoon, either on the amphibian (“duck”) boats or the zodiacs.

Use a normal lens or 24-70mm lens to capture the whole scene and a telephoto for abstracts and close-ups of the ice. For auroras, use a wide-angle lens to capture as much of the sky as possible.

FUN FACT

Parts of two James Bond movies were filmed at Jökulsárlón.

TIP

The camera measures light as if it were coming off an 18% gray object but snow and ice are much whiter than the 18% gray, so consider over-exposing a bit.

Want to learn more?

Read this article on Jokulsarlon:

<http://www.icelandontheweb.com/articles-on-iceland/see-do/wonders-of-iceland/jokulsarlon-glacier-lagoon/>



Seals sunbathing in Jökulsárlón.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk II
🕒 February 23, 2010, 11:50 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 70mm
🔍 f11, 1/160
☀️ ISO 100



Iceberg in Jökulsárlón.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 August 25, 2012, 10:06 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 105mm
🔍 f10, 1/100 sec
☀️ ISO 100

ICY BEACH

SUBJECT

Beach & Glacier

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Höfn

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°02'650"
W016°10'652"

The location is on the other side of the road from Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon, where the smaller icebergs strand on the black sand beach after being washed down the shortest glacier river in Iceland. Whether there is more ice on the west side or the east side of the river depends on the wind direction, so it's impossible to say which side is better.

The blue ice against the black sand beach and the seawater trickling past the stranded ice provide hours of fun photography.

DIRECTIONS

Driving from the west, Jökulsárlón is about 56 km further east from Skaftafell on road 1.

Driving from the east, Jökulsárlón is about 80 km further west from Höfn on road 1.

The turnoff to the beach and a place to park are on either side of the tall single lane bridge. Do exercise caution driving across it. Please do not attempt to drive further, as you will get stuck in the soft sand – and it's illegal.

SEASONS

All year.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

No surprise that sunrise and sunset hours provide the best light. At other times, there is usually too much light, so consider bringing filters to slow down the shutter speed.

TIP

Wash the tripod legs after each session; the salty sea and the fine sand are tough on tripod joints.



DRESS CODE ICELAND



Ice on the black sand beach.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 September 3, 2014, 10:06 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 30mm
🔍 f22, 1,5sec
⚙️ ISO 50



Ice in the water.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 January 28, 2011, 10:34 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 85mm
🔍 f22, 1/4
⚙️ ISO 100

FJALLSÁRLÓN

SUBJECT

Glacier

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Höfn

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°00'662"
W016°23'325"

Fjallsárlón is a glacial lagoon, much lesser known than the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon but in many ways it is more photogenic. Fjallsárlón is smaller and the viewer is therefore only a short distance away from the glacier, which crumbles down the steep mountainside setting amazing icebergs adrift in the lagoon. The backdrop is much closer and more dramatic.

Unlike Jökulsárlón, there is no tide into Fjallsárlón, so the icebergs melt more slowly, don't turn as often and, in winter, the lagoon is more likely to freeze over.

DIRECTIONS

Fjallsárlón is about 10 km west of Jökulsárlón. (Jökulsárlón is about 56 km east of Skaftafell; or, about 80 km west of Höfn.)

Approaching from the west, e.g. from Skaftafell, drive eastwards along road 1 (the Ring Road) for approximately 46 km, then turn left at the sign marked Fjallsárlón, about 10 km before reaching Jökulsárlón.

Approaching from the east, e.g. from Höfn, drive westwards along road 1 for about 80 km to Jökulsárlón, then continue on road 1 for another 10 km or so, until you reach a sign marked Fjallsárlón north of the road that leads to a small hill with an overview to Fjallsárlón.

SEASONS

All year

OUR LITTLE SECRET

It's possible to get a lot closer to Fjallsárlón than the marked parking area. About 1 km further west from the marked turnoff, between the bridge across Fjallsá glacier river and the bridge across the smaller Hrutá river, there is an unmarked turnoff. Drive along the gravel road about 2 km and, where the road splits, turn left and continue until you reach a small parking lot. There is a track, blocked by stones, leading towards the glacier. Walk to the top of the hill and you will have a much closer and better vantage point to the glacial lagoon and the crumbling ice.



The big picture of Fjallsárlón.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 February 23, 2010, 13:48 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm, f/2.8L IS USM @ 195mm
🔍 f16, 1/80
⚙️ ISO 200



Iceberg in Fjallsárlón reflecting in calm waters.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 July 5, 2009, 10:06 GMT

📷 EF70-200 mm, f/2.8L IS USM @ 105mm
📷 f32, 1/13
📷 ISO 100

SVÍNAFELLSJÖKULL

SUBJECT

Glacier

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Kirkjubæjarklaustur

ACCESS

Car + short hike

GPS COORDINATES

N64°00'506"

W016°52'774"

Svínafellsjökull is a glacier tongue crumbling down the mountain side into a narrow valley surrounded by steep mountain ridges. The creviced glacier with its blue ice and sandy streaks provides strong tonal patterns and the steep mountains create dramatic framing.

You can play with all your lenses at Svínafellsjökull; from the wide-angle to capture the whole scene, to a telephoto lens where you zoom in on the textures and shapes in the ice.

Svínafellsjökull is one of several glaciers located in Skaftafell National Park, which has become part of Vatnajökull National Park, and it is quite close to the Skaftafell Visitor Centre.

DIRECTIONS

Driving from the west, it's about 70 km from Kirkjubæjarklaustur to Skaftafell Visitor Centre. Driving from the east, Skaftafell is about 136 km from Höfn, or 56 km from Jökulsárlón.

Approaching along the Ring Road (road 1) from either direction, the turnoff to Svínafellsjökull is clearly signposted, between Skaftafell and Shell Freysnes (fuel station). Drive the gravel road to the end, about 2km from Ring Road. Walk the path through the gate, along the mountain side on the left, a few hundred metres and slightly upwards, until you see into the glacier filled valley and the mountains.

SEASONS

All year (but the last 2km along the gravel road is not cleared for snow in winter)

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Consider buying a guided glacier hike tour. Information is available at the Skaftafell Visitor Centre. Road 998 leads up to the visitor centre, 2 km from road 1.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

Just after turning off the main road and onto the gravel road towards Svínafellsjökull, there is often a small pond on the right hand side of the road which can give a nice reflection of Iceland's highest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur.

FUN FACT

The scene in *Batman Begins*, which is supposed to take place at high altitude in the Himalayas, was filmed here, 50 m above sea level in Iceland. Parts of *Game of Thrones* were also filmed at Svínafellsjökull.

Want to learn more?

Read this article on Vatnajökull:

<http://www.icelandontheweb.com/articles-on-iceland/nature/glaciers/vatnajokull/>



Svínafellsjökull.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 September 11, 2011, 08:48 GMT

👁️ EF600 mm, f/4L IS II USM @ 600mm
🔍 f27, 1/60
☀️ ISO 200



Iceland's highest peak reflecting in the pond by Svínafellsjökull.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 September 11, 2011, 09:00 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm, f/2.8L IS USM @ 55mm
🔍 f22, 1/6
☀️ ISO 100

FJAÐRÁRGLJÚFUR

SUBJECT

Mountains

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Kirkjubæjarklaustur

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N63° 46' 275"

W018° 10' 338"

(Lower parking)

N63° 46' 766"

W018° 10' 104"

(Upper parking)

Fjaðrárgljúfur is about a 2 km long, steep and narrow canyon, not far from Kirkjubæjarklaustur. The sheer vertical walls are up to 100 m high, with interesting shapes and spires.

There is a path along the eastern side of the canyon with viewpoints down into the gorge, where a small S-curved river guides the eye further into the ravine. The edge of the canyon is also curved rather than straight in many places, so for a photographer it's an interesting walk searching for new angles and compositions. The grassy slopes against the brown rock faces also offer opportunities for experimenting with colours and tones. The canyon faces south and the sun is at its highest position around 1 pm (because Iceland is not quite in the right time zone).

DIRECTIONS

From the southwest, e.g. Vík, drive along Route 1 for approximately 65 km eastwards, towards the town of Kirkjubæjarklaustur. About 9 km before reaching Kirkjubæjarklaustur, turn left onto road 206, which becomes mountain road F206, marked Fjaðrárgljúfur and Laki. Don't get confused by the Fjaðrárgljúfur sign visible in the big lava field, well before the Route 1 and road 206 / F206 intersection. Although from there it's possible to see the opening of the canyon in the distance, to get to the canyon itself, continue further east along Route 1.

From the southeast, e.g. Kirkjubæjarklaustur, drive along Route 1 for approximately 5-6 km westwards, then turn right onto road 206 / F206 towards Fjaðrárgljúfur and Laki.

After driving for 2 km on road F206, there is a sharp turn to the right – and two options:

a) Continuing straight ahead leads to the lower parking area on the right hand side a few hundred metres down the hill, just before the bridge. It's clearly marked and there is a WC.

b) Turning right and driving approximately 1 km up the hill leads to a sign for Fjaðrárgljúfur, a small parking area and a path leading westwards to the canyon, and then down along the canyon to the lower parking area.

Further north, road F206 leads to Laki and Lakagígar, the Laki Craters (see page 141), some 50 km inland but, as all F-roads, it's only suitable for 4x4 vehicles.

SEASONS

All year.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

If you have a driver, it's easier to have the driver drop you off at the upper parking area and walk down the hill to the lower parking area. It's only a 10-15 min easy downhill walk, but that's not counting the time spent photographing - which will probably be considerably longer.

Take all the little detours to different viewpoints to find a favourite angle and composition.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

There are no trails or paths down from the top of the canyon to the bottom and the river keeps curving from one side to the other, so it's not possible to keep one's feet dry inside the canyon. However, if you bring waders, or extra shoes / "tevas", you can walk quite far into the canyon, which is both fun and can result in many great images. The river is usually not deep, nor with a strong current. However, further inward, the canyon narrows with falls and current that is more powerful. The water level depends on the weather of course, so please use good judgement.

TIP

There is a lot of green, which is brightest in colour on overcast days.



Fjaðrárgljúfur.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 October 4, 2014, 09:33 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 90mm
🔍 f32, 13
☀️ ISO 100

GEOLOGY

Fjaðrárgljúfur was most likely formed at the end of the last Ice Age, about 9000 years ago, when a glacier retreated and a lake formed above the canyon, behind hard resistant rock.

The runoff from the lake flowed where the top of the canyon is now. However, when the glacier rivers filled up the lake with sand and silt, there was no lake to slow down the force of the river which then dug out the canyon. Water always seeks the path of least resistance but it's also a powerful force of erosion.



Fjaðrárgljúfur.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 October 4, 2014, 10:01 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L II USM @ 24mm
🔍 f22, 1.3
☀️ ISO 100

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REYNISDRANGAR

SUBJECT

Beach

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Vík

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N63°24'251"

W019°02'707"

(Reynisfjara, west of
Reynisdrangar)

N63°24'857"

W019°00'868"

(Vík beach, east of
Reynisdrangar)

Reynisdrangar are sea stacks rising from the ocean just off the south shore near Vík. The highest one rises to 66 m. According to legend, two trolls were trying to pull a three-sailed ship to shore but were hit by the sun and turned to stone before they could reach the safety of the mountain Reynisfjall. The sea stacks can be photographed from both the east and the west side of the mountain.

The town of Vík is on the east side of the mountain so you're shooting west: at sunrise with Reynisdrangar front lit and at sunset backlit. In winter, when the days are short and the sun low in the sky, it's possible to get the sun setting between the sea stacks.

At Reynisfjara beach, on the west side you can get much closer to the sea stacks. At the southwest corner of Reynisfjall there are beautiful hexagonal basalt columns along the shoreline and on low to mid tide it's possible to go eastwards along the cliffs into the cavern Hálsanefshellir. Aside from the basalt columns there are other rock patterns and in summer a few puffins reside in the cliffs. The basalt columns and rock patterns can make for a nice foreground to the sea stacks and/or for abstract photos. The black sand provides a great contrast to the foaming white water and the patterns of incoming and outgoing waves.

DIRECTIONS

The town of Vík is easy to find on the south shore and the sea stacks are visible from the town. You can walk from the petrol station to the black sand beach or drive into the town through Víkurbraut to the parking lot a bit further west which is closer to the stacks.

Reynisfjara is on the west side of the mountain. Drive approximately 5 km west

along the Ring Road to road 215 and follow it to the end, about 6 km, where there is a parking lot.

Both places are very easy to find.

SEASONS

All year.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Be very careful of the waves and the tide.

TIP

Rinse your tripod afterwards with fresh water as the salt and sand is tough on all gear.



Reynisdrangar on a windy day from Vík.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
📅 February 22, 2014

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 200mm
🔍 f19, 1/45
☀️ ISO 200



Reynisdrangar from the shore at Reynisfjara.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
📅 February 22, 2014

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L II USM @ 50mm
🔍 f19, 1/250
☀️ ISO 200

DYRHÓLAEY

SUBJECT

Beach

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Vík

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N63°24'214"

W019°06'214"

(Lower parking)

N63°24'246"

W019°07'757"

(Upper parking)

Dyrhólaey is a peninsula or promontory, over a 100 m high, with steep cliffs extending to the sea. Three arches or “doors” pass through the rock at water level, one appearing significantly larger and more prominent when viewing Dyrhólaey from afar. Off the shore there are sea stacks, many of which also have holes through them.

Dyrhólaey was formed in an underwater eruption about 80 thousand years ago. The waves of the Atlantic Ocean have since then been constantly hammering the cliffs, eroding and reshaping. In the more erosive layers the ocean has carved out holes or “doors” in the bedrock which account for the name of Dyrhólaey – which means: “Door-hill-island”. Another interesting geological feature on Dyrhólaey are the basalt columns on the east side of the beach, at Kirkjufjara.

There are two parking places: on top of the mountain and below the mountain on the east side. The upper parking lot gives a high view to the west along the black sand beach and a high view of the main arch. The lower parking area at Kirkjufjara is more popular and offers a greater variety. The waves bashing against the rock, arches and sea stacks against the black sand beach give ample motifs and compositions.

DIRECTIONS

Dyrhólaey is only a few kilometres west from Reynisdrangar and about 12 km west of Vík. It can be seen from the western side at Reynisfjara volcanic beach. Drive west along the Ring Road just a few km up an over a hill, then turn left onto road 218, marked Dyrhólaey.

Coming from the west, the turnoff is about a 25 km drive from Skógafoss. Drive on road 218 to the end and, when at the promontory, take either the right hand turn

that leads up to the top or continue to the lower parking area. The road to the top of the cliff is rather narrow and the best places to meet an oncoming car are usually at the turns.

SEASONS

All year.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Take time to study this location as there are so many motives and possible angles.

NOTE

Dyrhólaey is closed in spring, usually from the end of April until mid May.

FUN FACT

Dyrhólaey is the most southern point in Iceland.



The big arch in Dyrhólaey from above.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5DMiii
🕒 January 19, 2011, 08:58 GMT

👁️ 24-70mm @ 70mm
🔍 f20, 1/60
☀️ ISO 100



Wave action off the shore at Dyrhólaey.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5DMiii
🕒 April 25, 2011, 12:42 GMT

👁️ 70-200 @ 200mm
🔍 f16, 1/200
☀️ ISO 200

SKÓGAFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Vík

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N63°31'770"

W019°30'790"

This uniform, almost square but elegant waterfall on the south shore is as popular as it is easy to photograph. Skógafoss faces south and the sun is directly on the waterfall shortly after noon. The spray from the waterfall gets trapped in the bowl surrounding the waterfall, giving excellent chances of rainbows, even double rainbows. Mornings and evenings there are shadows on the cliffs on either side on sunny days, but you can still get rainbows if you align yourself between the sun and the waterfall.

There is a path up the hill on the east side leading to the top of the waterfall, but it doesn't give good angles to photograph the waterfall. It's a bit like photographing a mountain from the summit. However, half way up there is a little nose off the path that could give the surefooted and brave-hearted some different angles.

Another way to get a different angle is to get wet feet. The river is generally rather easy flowing, not very deep, with a relatively flat bottom – but it is cold. The river can make a nice leading line to the waterfall and you probably get fewer people in the frame.

DIRECTIONS

Skógar is marked on all maps and therefore very easy to find.

Driving along the Ring Road from the west, whether from Reykjavik or Hvalsöllur, drive past Seljalandsfoss and continue for another 20 min or so further east, then turn left to Skógar. Skógafoss is well signposted, and easy to spot on the left hand side. On a clear day, there are some nice views of Eyjafjallajökull, for example at Þorvaldseyri.

Coming from Vík in the east, the waterfall is less than half an hour's drive and very obvious on the right hand side. Shortly before Skógar, just next to the one lane bridge, there is a turnoff to Sólheimajökull, which could also be worth visiting. On the

other side of the bridge, in June there are fields of Alaskan Lupines, which make a very colourful foreground to the glacier in the back.

SEASONS

This is an easy location for all seasons. The only problem will be the number of people; more in summer than in winter, but there are tour buses every day all year.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

You will be photographing mostly from the southwest, facing northeast. Just before noon, the sun shines onto the falls. However, this is also a great location on dark cloudy days for dramatic long exposures.

TIP

Use a polarizer to increase the rainbow.



Double rainbow in Skógafoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 August 28, 2010, 17:19 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 35mm
🔍 f9, 1/100
⚙️ ISO 100



Skógafoss in winter.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark II
🕒 February 24.2010, 12:49 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 42mm
🔍 f16, 1/160
⚙️ ISO 100

SELJALANDSFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Hvolsvöllur

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N63°36'951"

W019°59'553"

The main attraction of Seljalandsfoss is that it's possible to walk behind the waterfall. You can photograph it from almost every angle: the classic front – or from behind; shooting against the light through the water falling down – or from the sides.

The waterfall is just next to the Ring Road, at the base of Eyjafjallajökull. It's therefore quite busy and it can be fairly difficult to get photographs without a few people in the frame.

The waterfall faces west, so there is no sun on the falls until the afternoon.

The best time to photograph the waterfall is probably around 11 pm in the evening in mid or late June. Then you get the waterfall bathed in the soft sunset light, and the rock wall behind it becomes golden or orange. In winter, sunset is of course much earlier, but after sunset there is artificial light on the waterfall.

DIRECTIONS

Seljalandsfoss is about 130 km east of Reykjavík, close to the main highway (Ring Road or Route 1) that circles Iceland. Driving from the west, e.g. from Reykjavík, take Route 1 towards the town of Hvolsvöllur, then follow it for about 30 km further east. Seljalandsfoss can easily be spotted, well beforehand. The turnoff leading to the waterfall is on road 249, just north of its junction with Route 1.

Driving along Route 1 from the east, e.g. from Vík or Skógar, the base of Eyjafjallajökull is on the right hand side. When the mountain is no longer visible on the right, there is a turnoff to road 249 to Þórsmörk. Take that right turn and drive just a few hundred metres to the parking area at the foot of the waterfall.

SEASONS

In summer, the best time to visit is late evening. The sun is then at the best angle

and there are fewer people. On the summer solstice, the sun sets in the northeast and it's also higher in the sky so it reaches the waterfall a bit earlier than in winter. It can be light from mid afternoon until late evening.

During the shortest winter months, the sun is almost down when it reaches the waterfall - and then it's at an angle, so the window of opportunity is much shorter if you want sunlight on the waterfall. Because of Iceland's northerly latitude, the changes in daylight are much greater than in most countries, so it's sensible to check the sunrise and sunset times (please see Useful info).

OUR LITTLE SECRET

Just a little bit further along the same road is the waterfall Gjúfrabúi ("Canyon Dweller"). The best way to photograph it is by getting wet feet, wading into the canyon. The spray is a problem, though.

FUN FACT

Rainbows only form when the sun is at a lower angle than 42°.

TIP

Bring a good cloth or a Kleenex to wipe the spray off the lens. Most cloths only spread the moisture so a Kleenex (without chemicals) is better in absorbing water.



Seljalandsfoss in the midnight sun.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 June 11, 2008, 22:56 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 16mm
🔍 f22, 1.6
☀️ ISO 100



Seljalandsfoss in winter.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mrk II
🕒 February 22, 2010, 09:43 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 38mm
🔍 f4.5, 1/80
☀️ ISO 100



Seljalandsfoss from behind.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 July 5, 2012, 20:10 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 27mm
🔍 f22, 1/30
☀️ ISO 100

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GLUGGAFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Hvolsvöllur

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N63°43'177"

W019°53'566"

Series of waterfalls of different height of which the most outstanding is called Gluggafoss (“Windows Falls”). The river, Merkjá, has dug grooves and tunnels through the softer rock layers which look like windows. At the top of the falls, there is a stone arch which the stream flows under. The upper half of the cliff is tuff rock but the lower ledge is basalt. As the tuff rock is rather soft, over time the waterfall has changed its form faster than most waterfalls. Before the eruption of the volcano Hekla in 1947, the upper part of the waterfall was mostly hidden because the river flowed into tunnels which were largely covered by the tuff-rock. The rock face, however, had three openings, or “windows”, one above the other. The Hekla eruption deposited about a 20 cm thick layer of pumice that speeded up the erosion. The “windows” almost disappeared but the waterfall is now regaining its previous form. Gluggafoss is a natural monument.

This waterfall is fun and gives lots of opportunities for different compositions: from wide angles to telephoto close-ups. There is a path up to the first ledge which leads to a viewing area, quite close to the tallest part of the waterfall.

The waterfall faces south so it has direct sunlight around noon. Mornings and evenings there are shadows, unless it's cloudy.

DIRECTIONS

If driving from the west, take the Ring Road to Hvolsvöllur, then, at the big mast in Hvolsvöllur, turn left onto road 261 towards Fjótshlíð and follow it for about 15-20 minutes. The waterfall is clearly signposted on the left hand side.

If driving from the east (e.g., from Seljalandsfoss), about 3km after crossing the big bridge across Markarfljót river, turn right onto gravel road 250 towards Múlakot and drive to the end of that road (about 10 km), then turn left onto road 261 at the T-intersection. The waterfall is on the right hand side.

SEASONS

All year

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Bring wellingtons or sandals so you can go into the stream to photograph.

In winter, there can be a lot of ice in and around the falls so it's a good idea to bring spikes or crampons for your footwear.

Gluggafoss is ideal to visit on the way to or from Seljalandsfoss (page 70).



Gluggafoss in summer.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 26, 2014, 14:20 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM
🔍 f13, 1/60
⚙️ ISO 200



Close up of Gluggafoss in winter.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 January 3, 2010, 14:51 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 73mm
🔍 f22, 1/13
⚙️ ISO 100

HJÁLPARFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Selfoss

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64°06'860"
W019°51'186"

Hjálparfoss is a waterfall in Fossá where the river splits around a rock and flows over the lava edge forming two beautiful waterfalls which then join again in the lagoon below.

This waterfall is only a short distance from Gjáin falls and it is probably the most popular stop in the Þjórsá valley. In the lava wall, there are some very nice hexagonal basalt columns.

DIRECTIONS

Hjálparfoss is near the Búrfellsstöð power plant and the ancient farm Stöng in Þjórsárdalur valley.

Approaching from the southwest, drive east on Route 1 about 15 km further than Selfoss, before turning left onto road 30. Continue for about 20 km, then turn right onto road 32 and drive for another 30 km or so. Shortly before Búrfellsstöð/Búrfell and approximately 100 m before the bridge over the river Fossá, turn right onto a gravel road which leads to the parking lot – about 800 m away.

SEASONS

All year

OUR RECOMMENDATION

You will be photographing mostly from the south/southeast, facing north/northwest, so from around noon the sun shines into the falls. There is often a lot of angelica in front of the falls, which creates a good foreground.

TIP

Hjálparfoss is ideal to visit together with Gjáin and Háifoss waterfalls

Want to learn more?

Read this article on South Iceland:

<http://www.icelandontheweb.com/articles-on-iceland/iceland-regions/south-iceland>



Hjálparfoss in autumn.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 October 2, 2010, 10:52 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 45mm
🔍 f8, 1/100
☀️ ISO 200



Hjálparfoss in winter.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 March 29, 2009, 16:57 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 70mm
🔍 f22, 1/50
☀️ ISO 100

GJÁIN

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Selfoss

ACCESS

Car + hiking

GPS COORDINATES

N64°08'943"
W019°40'173"

Gjáin is an oasis in an otherwise barren and rough landscape. There is nothing to indicate it's there until you look down into the little valley or gorge. Rauðá ("Red River") drops in two waterfalls into the narrow valley. Here you have clear spring water, beautiful rock formations and lush vegetation such as mosses, grasses, willow, heather, angelica and birch. In the summertime, there is also quite a rich birdlife. Gjáin is an amazing verdant ravine in the contrasting black landscape and a great playing field for the few photographers who know of it.

DIRECTIONS

Access is from road 32 approximately 300 m after the bridge across the Fossá and 200 m before the turnoff to the Búrfell power station. Coming from the south, turn left onto road 327 at the sign marked Stöng. It's a reasonable gravel road most of the way but shortly before reaching the parking area, there is a small stream and the road is quite rocky so a higher clearance vehicle may be needed. The drive is around 10 km from road 32.

Another access point is from the route to Háifoss waterfall (see page 104), some 10 km further north on road 32. From road 32, turn left onto road 332 marked Hólaskógur, then very shortly turn left again to a track that leads towards road 327 soon after leaving the tarmac, instead of taking the road to the cabin. There is no stream to cross on this route, and Gjáin is ideal to visit together with Háifoss.

SEASONS

Accessible from late spring to early autumn, depending on snow

OUR RECOMMENDATION

You will be photographing mostly from the south/southeast, facing north/northwest – so, from around noon, you may get the sun shining into the falls. Don't be afraid to get your feet wet. You will get the best shots if you go into the shallow water.

GEOLOGY

The rift was formed thousands of years ago by the water from the predecessor of the river Þjórsá. Four lava flows have passed over the area (the so-called Tungnaá streams coming from the Veiðivötn region). The youngest, called Þjórsárdalur lava, rushed down approximately four thousand years ago.

The Slag hills (pseudo craters) were formed when lava flowed into a lake or wetlands and steam explosions generated the pseudo craters.

TIP

Bring sandals or Wellingtons so you can go into the streams and cross the river



Gjáin.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 August 20, 2009, 15:05 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm, f/2.8L IS USM @ 16mm
🔍 f22, 1/20
☀️ ISO 200



Photographers in Gjáin.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 August 20, 2011, 15:07 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm, f/2.8L IS USM @ 35mm
🔍 f9, 1/100
☀️ ISO 200

GULLFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Selfoss

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

Upper parking:
N64° 19'539"/
W020° 07'809"

Lower parking:
N64° 19'507"/
W020° 07'510"

Gullfoss ("Golden Waterfall") is a waterfall 10 km away from Geysir on road 35 and it's part of the most popular day tour in Iceland, called the Golden Circle. In fact, "Golden Circle" draws its name from the waterfall. As with so many waterfalls, there is always some spray above it and when the sun hits the spray it often creates a rainbow. Everybody knows there is gold at the end of a rainbow – hence the name: Gullfoss ('gull' means gold; 'foss' means waterfall). Another possible explanation is the golden colour the river gets in the sunlight.

The waterfall is about 32 m (100ft) high and in two distinct steps, of approximately 12 and 20 metres. It faces almost due south so the best chance of getting a rainbow above the waterfall is around 13:30. Iceland is in the wrong time zone so the sun is not at its highest angle at noon, but closer to 13:20. However, the sun never goes high enough to shine onto the lowest part of the waterfall because of the deep gorge it's in. Therefore, on sunny days there is a very high contrast between the upper part of the waterfall that is sunlit and the lower part, which is in a deep shadow. Many favour photographing waterfalls on cloudy days as it reduces or eliminates this high contrast and gives a softer light – but then, of course, you don't get the rainbow.

DIRECTIONS

The shortest route from Reykjavik is through Pingvellir via route 36 and then onwards on road 365 to Laugarvatn to connect with road 37 which goes straight to Geysir and then another 10 km to Gullfoss, although the road number is then 35. Gullfoss is about 2 hours drive from Reykjavik.

Another route is from the Ring Road just west of the town Selfoss in the south. Turn on onto road 35 and follow it for about 60 km to Geysir and then another 10 km to Gullfoss.

SEASONS

There is traffic at the waterfall every day all year, peaking between noon and teatime.

More people visit in summer than in winter. In winter, it's busier on weekends than weekdays. However, you can usually get a photo without too many people in the frame.

There is less water in the river in winter and the colour is bluer (it's a glacial river and glaciers melt more in summer). In mid-winter, the falls are often half-frozen

which can be very nice. In summer, there is obviously more water and it's darker and more of a gray/brownish colour due to the sand and silt from the glacier.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

99,9% of all photographs of Gullfoss are from the west side and it might seem like this is the only access point to it – but, you can get to it from the east side. It's a few minutes' drive down river, towards Geysir. Then turn left onto road 30, drive across the bridge, and then another left onto gravel road 349 and follow it for a few miles. There is a little sign "Gullfoss" where you park but there are no facilities. From there, a simple 1-2 km (about 1 mi) long path leads to the waterfall. Bring sensible shoes and rain gear, and please note that there are no safety railings or any infrastructure on that side.

The angle to the waterfall is not better, just different. If you get there in the morning, you have the sun in your back and, almost guaranteed, a rainbow and often a double rainbow – that is, IF it's a sunny morning.

FUN FACT

Rainbows only form when the sun is at a lower angle than 42°

TIP

Bring a Kleenex (without scent to avoid chemicals) to dry the lens. Most cloths are not as moisture absorbent.



Gullfoss.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark III
🕒 March 10, 2013, 13:09 GMT

👁️ EF100-400 mm f/4,5 IS USM @ 350mm
🔍 f38, 1/10
☀️ ISO 100



Gullfoss from the east side with a double rainbow.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark I
🕒 July 16, 2012, 09:33 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 35mm
🔍 f20, 1/50
☀️ ISO 200

GEYSIR/STROKKUR

SUBJECT

Geothermal

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Selfoss

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64° 18'592"

W020° 18'075"

Geysir and Strokkur are the two most famous geysers in Iceland, located right next to each other in the geothermal area of Haukadalur. The original Geysir, the one which all geysers and the phenomenon itself are named after, is in a dormant period and doesn't erupt as it used to. However, its "little brother", Strokkur, erupts every few minutes.

Geysir is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Iceland, which for a photographer creates some challenges. Throughout the day, there will always be people in your frame.

Another challenge is photographing steam. On grey days, there is no contrast between the erupting column of water and steam and the sky. Again, a possible solution is to go close and photograph the big blue bubble the geyser forms just before it erupts. Although seeing Strokkur and the fabled Geysir is almost a must for first time visitors to Iceland, it's not likely to become a favourite spot for landscape photographers.

DIRECTIONS

The shortest route from Reykjavik is through Þingvellir via route 36 and then onwards on road 365 to Laugarvatn to connect with road 37 which goes straight to Geysir although the road number is then 35. Geysir is just under 2 hours drive from Reykjavik.

Another route is from the Ring Road just west of the town Selfoss in the south. Turn on onto road 35 and follow it for about 60 km.

Gullfoss is just 10 km further on road 35 and Brúarfoss is also close to Geysir.

SEASONS

There is traffic at Geysir every single day, all year, peaking between noon and teatime.

More people visit in summer than in winter. In winter, it's busier at weekends than on weekdays.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Not surprisingly, the best time to photograph Strokkur is at sunrise and at sunset – which in summer are very close together, as well as in the middle of the night, when there are fewer or no tourists in the frame. Therefore, your best chance of getting a good photograph is to stay overnight at Hotel Geysir which is literally a 3 min walk from the geysers. The area doesn't close; you can simply walk over whenever the light is good and the tourists are gone. Geysir is only a 10 min drive from Gullfoss waterfall so it's a good location for both sights.

FUN FACT

The word geyser is the name for this phenomenon in almost every language in the world – except Icelandic, even though it's an Icelandic word.

A geyser in Icelandic is goshver ('erupting hot spring') and Geysir is the name of the largest one.

TIP

Don't stand downwind from the geyser, you'll get wet



The geyser Strokkur.

👤 Photo by Finn
📷 Hasselblad Xpan
🕒 January 19 2006, 10:30 GMT

👁️ 45 mm lens with Ektachrome film
⚙️ ISO 100

The geyser Strokkur.

👤 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 August 20. 2010, 06:52 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm f/2.8L USM @ 16mm
📷 f11, 1/50
⚙️ ISO 250



The geyser Strokkur.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 August 20. 2010, 06:21 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 27mm
🔍 f9, 1/80
☀️ ISO 320



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BRÚÁRFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Laugarvatn /
Selfoss

ACCESS

Car + hiking

GPS COORDINATES

N64°05'847"
W021°55'063"
(Gravel road near
Brúárfoss, no
parking lot)

Brúárfoss is a little gem on the Golden Circle tour which we were hesitant to include, as the area is environmentally quite fragile and won't handle much traffic. It is well hidden away in a summer house district but, for photographers, it's well worth looking for. The waterfall is not tall and it is not one waterfall but, rather, dozens of small cascades running down a step of about 3 metres high. In the middle of the river, there is a deep cut where the water flows rapidly. Inside the cut, the water is a fantastic blue colour.

DIRECTIONS

Brúárfoss is about halfway between Laugarvatn and Geysir. Approaching from Þingvellir (Thingvellir), take road 36, then road 365 to Laugarvatn, and then turn left onto road 37 towards Geysir. Stay on road 37 for about 13 km or so, and drive 2-3 km past the intersection of road 37 and road 355, until a large summerhouse area (Brekuskógur) becomes visible on the left. At Brekkuskógur, take the first available road left (not the exit closed with a road bar) into this area and keep to the left. After a few minutes drive through the forest, the road is parallel to a fence, then the forest opens up a bit and there is a cattle guard which is where you stop. There is no parking lot or any obvious place to park.

On the other side of the fence, there is a little path, often wet and very muddy. Follow the path for a few minutes, then cross the footbridge to where the path continues on the other side. Walk for another 10 min and you will hear the waterfall before it becomes

visible. A wooden bridge crosses the river right in front of the waterfall.

Note: It's difficult to find and the obscure path is often very muddy.

SEASONS

This is a great location for photographers for all seasons, if willing to wade through a bit of mud, wet trails or snow. It's not a destination for tourists and we hope it never will be. It's so difficult to find that it's never crowded, although increasingly more photographers have heard of this hidden jewel. Please leave nothing behind and take only photographs.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

You will be mostly photographing from the southwest, facing northeast. Just before noon, the sun shines into the falls. However, this is also a great location on dark cloudy days for impressive long exposures.

TIP

If you have Wellingtons, do bring them, as the path can be muddy after rain



Brúarfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D MIII
🕒 September 8, 2013, 17:24 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 34mm
🔍 f22, 0.6
☀️ ISO 100



Brúarfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D MIII
🕒 September 15, 2014, 11:31 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L USM @ 98mm
🔍 f45, 0.6
☀️ ISO 100

PINGVELLIR

SUBJECT

Geology & Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Reykjavík

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N64° 15' 897"
W021° 06' 836" *

*The GPS point is at the parking lot closest to the waterfall, but there are many other parking areas within the Þingvellir National Park

At Þingvellir – literally, “Parliament Plains” – the Alþing, or parliament, was established around 930 AD and continued to assemble there until 1798. So many major events in the history of Iceland have taken place at Þingvellir, hence the place is held in high esteem by all Icelanders. Today Þingvellir is a protected national shrine. According to the law passed in 1928, establishing Þingvellir (Thingvellir) as the first national park in Iceland, the protected area shall always be the property of the Icelandic nation. It is also one of the two places in Iceland inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. No single place represents the history of Iceland and the Icelandic nation better than Þingvellir by the river Öxará.

Þingvellir is also a place of outstanding scenic beauty. From a photographic perspective, the main features to photograph are the tectonic rifts and Öxarárfoss waterfall, which drops off the edge of the North American tectonic plate. All over the park, there are rifts and shallow canyons formed by the drift of the tectonic plates. The North American plate and the Eurasian plate meet in Iceland and Þingvellir is one of the best places to see such tectonic plate boundaries.

Þingvellir has beautiful autumn colours in late September and early October.

It's also a popular spot for northern lights photography.

DIRECTIONS

Drive out of Reykjavík heading north along the Ring Road, then, after passing through the town Mosfellsbær, turn onto road 36 signposted Þingvellir 33 km.

The first parking area is by the visitor centre on the edge of the North American plate. From the viewing platform, there is a good overview of the park, the lake and different crevices, as well as of the other parking areas.

SEASONS

All year.

GEOLOGY

The Þingvellir area is a part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge system. It can be described as an area of sea-floor spreading, displaying the close association of crustal rifting and volcanism. Þingvellir and the Great Rift Valley of Eastern Africa are the only sites on Earth where the effects of two

major tectonic plates drifting apart can be observed on dry land and in shallow waters.

The rift zone constitutes of a graben that is bordered by major faults. The rift valley narrows from about 20-25 km in the NE to about 10 km in the SW. To the eye, the rifts appear as nearly parallel fissures running along the length of the valley. On the west (North American) side of the valley, the rift slopes down toward the east, while on the east (European) side, it's the reverse. Thus, the valley floor sinks little by little as the valley walls are pulled apart by plate activity. The valley walls are moving apart and during the past 9000 years, the estimated horizontal expansion has been about 70 m. The floor is sinking at about 1 mm per year, which has amounted to 40 m over the past 9000 years. Rifting is not constant but episodic, with the last major earthquake activity occurring in 1789. During the 1789 earthquakes, the valley floor sank 1-2 m.

FUN FACT

Iceland is growing by an inch every year.

TIP

Þingvellir is generally most crowded between 10 and 11 in the morning as most Golden Circle tours start from Reykjavík at 9 am and head straight to Þingvellir



Öxarárfoss.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk II
🕒 October 11, 2009, 13:09 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 f/2.8L IS USM @ 16mm
🔍 f32, 1/13
☀️ ISO 100



Tectonic plate boundaries at Þingvellir.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 September 20, 2014, 12:08 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 24mm
🔍 f19, 1/6
☀️ ISO 100

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SELTÚN / KRÝSUVÍK

SUBJECT
Geothermal

AREA
Reykjanes

NEAREST TOWN
Grindavík /
Hafnarfjörður

ACCESS
Car

GPS COORDINATES
N63°08'15.40"
W022°06'48.00"

While exploring the Blue Lagoon and Reykjanes, do not skip Krýsuvík - Seltún geothermal area. The official name is Seltún but even many Icelanders call the place Krýsuvík, after the nearby farm. On your way either to or from Krýsuvík (Seltún), you will pass the lake Kleifarvatn. Several good photo opportunities are along the route. At Krýsuvík, you will find a cluster of hot springs where you can capture the surreal beauty of the steaming vents, mud pots and solfataras shimmering with rainbow colours from the strange minerals in the earth. The place will leave a lasting impression, not just because of the sulphurous smell. There are postcard photos to be had, abstracts of colourful rocks, macro shots of the fumaroles, whilst the many colours in the hillsides give endless tonal combinations. It is a great playing field. Nearby is the lake Grænavatn, an old explosion crater filled with emerald tinted water due to a combination of minerals and warmth-loving algae.

DIRECTIONS

From Reykjavík drive towards Keflavík airport through Hafnarfjörður, following the signs. Then, just before the big aluminium factory, turn left onto road 42, at the sign marked Krýsuvík. Lake Kleifarvatn is along this route - don't forget to stop and take in the vista.

Return to Reykjavík along the same route; or, alternatively, continue towards Grindavík, Reykjanes and Gunnhver. (See page 96.)

SEASONS

Accessible most of the year, but the road does close due to snow in mid winter.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Prepare to spend a whole day on the Reykjanes Peninsula. There is so much to see: The Blue Lagoon, Gunnhver, the cliffs at the lighthouse, as well as Seltún / Krýsuvík. With southerly winds, the sea and the waves can become quite impressive. The birdlife is also rich during the summer season.

HOT SPRING GEOLOGY

Cool ground water seeps down to where it is heated up by magma or a magmatic intrusion. On the way back to the surface,

the hot water dissolves various substances in the rock. As it nears surface level, the water begins to boil and releases hot spring gases, above all carbon dioxide, hydrogen and hydrogen sulphide - the source of a typical hot spring smell. The acidic water and the constant heat dissolve the rock, resulting in the clay and the characteristically coloured mud pools. Besides sulphur and clay minerals various salts, generally white or yellowish in colour, are deposited by stream vents.

HOT SPRING BIRDS

Icelanders used to believe in hot spring birds; these waders were supposed to dive into a bubble of the boiling water when anybody came close. The scholars Eggert Ólafsson and Bjarni Pálsson attempted to find such birds while on their 18th century research expedition, but found none and thus entered in their journal:

Few Icelanders believe that these are actual birds, although some feel that they are purely imaginary or deception due to the accidental appearances of the steam over water. Others think such birds are ghosts. Finally, a few people, mostly elderly, consider these birds to be the souls of dead people that take on this appearance.



Seltún in Krýsuvík.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark I
🕒 June 6 2012 11:55 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 32mm
🔍 f11, 1/80
⚙️ ISO 100



Seltún in Krýsuvík.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark III
🕒 July 17.2013, 14:24 GMT

👁️ EF100-400 mm f/4.5L IS USM @ 220mm
🔍 f32, 1/15
⚙️ ISO 50

BLUE LAGOON

SUBJECT

Geothermal

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Grindavík

ACCESS

Car

GPS COORDINATES

N63°52'185"

W022°27'185"

Although the Blue Lagoon is to some extent man-made, it is now part of Icelandic nature and one of the best known wonders of Iceland. Even if you don't pay the entrance fee to soak in the geothermal spa, it is very much worth exploring the lava field and viewing the famous blue water flowing all over the area.

When you get to the entrance, take the path to your left and start discovering. Inside the spa, there are crowds of people, as it's the most popular tourist spot in Iceland, but there are very few people outside. Play around composing your photos with the black lava and the whitish blue water. Even the steam from the nearby power plant providing the lagoon's water can be very photogenic.

DIRECTIONS

The Blue Lagoon is only about 45 min from Reykjavík. From Reykjavík, drive through Hafnarfjörður along road 41 towards Keflavík airport. Turn left onto road 43 towards Grindavík / Bláa Lónið, then, after approximately 8 km, take the right turn at the sign marked Bláa Lónið and continue 2, 5 km.

SEASONS

Accessible by normal car all year. There are regular bus tours from Reykjavík and from Keflavík airport, about 20 min away.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

This area is mostly suitable for a wide angle or a short telephoto lens. Do not forget your polarizer.

GEOLOGY

The geothermal water originates from 2000 metres below the surface, where freshwater and seawater combine at extreme temperatures. It is then harnessed via

drilling holes at a nearby geothermal power plant, Svartsengi, to create electricity and hot water for the neighbouring communities. The Blue Lagoon was initially an accidental by-product of the operation of the power plant. On its way to the surface, the water picks up silica and minerals, before emerging at a soothing 38°C (100°F), perfect for a relaxing and re-energising bathe.

WHY IS IT BLUE?

The geothermal water has a unique composition, featuring three active ingredients: silica, algae and minerals. The blue colour comes from the silica and the way it reflects sunlight. During summer, there can also be a hint of green in the water. This is the result of the algae, which multiply quickly when exposed to direct sunlight. However, the water is actually white. If you pour it into a transparent cup, it will always have a milky white colour. The sun simply makes it look blue.

TIP

After your visit to the Blue Lagoon, don't forget to explore Gunnhver at the tip of the Reykjanes Peninsula.



Blue Lagoon.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 June 25, 2012, 12:49 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 25mm
🔍 f11, 1/125
☀️ ISO 100



Blue Lagoon.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark II
🕒 August 8, 2009, 12:22 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 70mm
🔍 f10, 1/800
☀️ ISO 100

GUNNUHVER

SUBJECT
Geothermal

AREA
Reykjanes

NEAREST TOWN
Grindavík / Keflavík

ACCESS
Car

GPS COORDINATES
N63°49'109"
W022°41'219"

While exploring the Blue Lagoon and Reykjanes Peninsula, do not skip Gunnuhver geothermal area. It is only a little more than a kilometre away from Reykjanesviti, the Reykjanes lighthouse.

Iceland was formed on the boundary between two tectonic plates and as the plates shift apart, new hot ground rises from the Earth. Gunnuhver is one of the best places to observe land being born. It is located where the Reykjanes ridge surfaces from the Atlantic Ocean and becomes the Reykjanes Peninsula. The name Gunnuhver originates from an old story about a ghost called Gunna who was lured into one of the fumaroles by a sorcerer.

Like other geothermal areas in Iceland, Gunnuhver has a variety of mud pools, steam vents, and some cracked mud. The cracked mud is dependent on precipitation. Iceland's largest mud pool at present is prominent among the hot springs, located highest up in the Gunnuhver group. It is 20 m across, boiling vigorously along its mud rim.

DIRECTIONS

There are several routes to Gunnuhver. From Reykjavík, head towards Keflavík airport along road 41; then, take the turnoff onto road 43 towards Grindavík / Blue Lagoon. Next, turn right onto road 425, on the outskirts of Grindavík. Continue on road 425 towards Reykjanesviti (Reykjanes lighthouse). Closer to the lighthouse, a small sign marked Gunnuhver is on the left hand side. (Further along, there is another turnoff signposted Gunnuhver.)

Coming from the south, e.g. Hveragerði, head towards Grindavík along road 38, then road 427. Follow the signs to Grindavík, eventually turning right onto road 43. Just before exiting Grindavík, turn left onto road 425, towards Reykjanesviti. Gunnuhver is signposted on the left.

SEASONS

Accessible all year, but in winter check road conditions as the road is not always cleared for snow.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Prepare to spend a whole day at the Reykjanes Peninsula. There is so much to see: The Blue Lagoon, Gunnuhver, the cliffs at the lighthouse and Seltún – often called Krýsuvík. With southerly winds, the sea and the waves can be remarkable. The birdlife is also quite rich during the summer season. Do not forget to go the lighthouse and out to the cliff.

Bring a wide-angle lens for the overall shots and a dramatic sky and short telephoto lenses for close ups of the colourful mud pools or cracked mud. Depending on the wind, there can be some steam so, as always, have a cloth ready in your bag to wipe the lens. Also, be prepared for the smell of sulphur.



Gunnhver.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark III
🕒 October 26, 2014, 15:48 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 165mm
🔍 f11, 1/15
☀️ ISO 100



Gunnhver.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark III
🕒 October 26, 2014, 15:50 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 165mm
🔍 f11, 1/15
☀️ ISO 100

THE INTERIOR HIGHLANDS

Looking at a map of Iceland one quickly sees that all the towns are along the coast and there is “nothing” in the middle. However, this “nothing” is the most fascinating part of Iceland.

Iceland is 25% larger than Ireland and almost 2/3 of Iceland is mountain wilderness and largely untouched. Glaciers cover over 10% of the landmass and the largest one, Vatnajökull, is 3 times the size of Luxembourg or Rhode Island. Iceland has had two of the largest lava flows that have flowed on Earth in historical times, which is no wonder given that Iceland is one of the most volcanically active places in the world. This combination of volcanic activity, geothermal heat and glaciers is fascinating, especially for landscape photographers.

We have included just a few places in the interior highlands, just to give readers a small sample and a few ideas of what there is to see and photograph.

More or less all the roads in the interior are gravel roads with unbridged rivers and only suitable for 4x4 vehicles. These roads are marked with an “F” in front of the road number, e.g. the road to Landmannalaugar is F208. Fords in unbridged rivers are marked on maps with a “V” inside a circle. Some rivers are small streams which are usually easily passable even by a small 4x4, while others are large glacial rivers which after a heavy rain can be completely impassable, even for the largest 4x4 vehicles. Weather always plays a big role in Iceland, more so in the highlands, so please read the later chapters on roads, weather and safety.

NOTE

To our knowledge, the following rules apply at all Icelandic car rentals:

- No insurance covers damages occurring when crossing unbridged rivers and streams.
- No insurance covers the undercarriage of the vehicle.

Basically, it means that if you lose or damage the rental car in a river, you’re liable.

If you damage the undercarriage, you are liable.

If you plan to visit places like Thorsmork Nature Reserve where you need to cross about 20 glacial rivers and streams, you might be saving money by going on a guided tour rather than by driving yourself and risking having to pay for a new rental car.



Reykjadalir in Fjallabak.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 June 30, 2012, 10:51 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 24mm
🔍 f22, 1/3
☀️ ISO 100



First snow of the autumn in the highlands.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 September 25, 2014, 16:17 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 165mm
🔍 f25, 1/6
☀️ ISO 200

ALDEYJARFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

North Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Akureyri and
Húsavík

ACCESS

4x4 + short hike

GPS COORDINATES

N65°21'866"
W017°20'462"

Aldeyjarfoss is on the Skjálfandafljót River, the same river as Goðafoss Waterfall, about a 45 km drive upstream, at the northern start of Sprengisandur route (F26). Since it's slightly away from the main roads, it doesn't get a lot of visitors which makes it easier and more enjoyable to photograph.

The river falls in a rather narrow but powerful current into a large round basin. The force of the water is such that it creates a round uplift or turbulence as it plunges into the pool, giving many opportunities to play with the water patterns. Hexagonal basalt columns frame the waterfall superbly. Further downstream, there is an impressive row of hexagonal basalt columns, which are also interesting to photograph.

DIRECTIONS

Just west of Goðafoss (page 32), take the turnoff south marked "Sprengisandur" and "Mýri 38 km". Note that the road to Mýri farm is number 842 but at the farm there is a turn to the left marked "Sprengisandur" where the road number changes to F26. Mýri is the last farm in the valley and from there it's only about 5 km to Aldeyjarfoss. There is a gate on the road, to keep sheep on one side. If the gate is closed, please close it again after you've gone through.

The road to Mýri is a decent gravel road but, after Mýri, it gets a bit rougher. Don't get discouraged by the sign for unbridged rivers – that's not until after Aldeyjarfoss.

The parking area is easily spotted and there are a couple of A-shaped outhouses (use the WC at Goðafoss, before leaving). From the parking area, it's a short walk downhill on a rather rough and muddy path which can be slippery. It leads to a little plateau or flat rocks south-west of the falls. Walk along the cliffs to find your compositions,

but be cautious, as there are no guardrails.

SEASONS

The Sprengisandur route is not cleared of snow in winter. It's a mountain road which is only open during the summer (see table of when the highland roads open, on page 98). Aldeyjarfoss is easily accessible in July, August and into September, but for how long into the autumn depends on the first snow and weather conditions. It's often accessible well into October and sometimes November, but always check the weather forecast beforehand.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

For the surefooted and adventurous, there are ways to get a bit lower, climbing down the cliffs downstream from the waterfall. This provides a lower vantage point, more level with the middle of the waterfall.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

There are really nice rock formations downstream from the waterfall. Get as low as you can and photograph the abstract shapes and forms of the cliffs. Be careful not to fall.

TIP

A wide angle or 24-70mm lens is a fine for the waterfall but use a telephoto lens for tighter shots and rock formations / abstracts



Aldeyjarfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 July 18, 2012, 10:46 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 21mm
🔍 f22, 1/25
⚙️ ISO 100



River and hexagon columns below Aldeyjarfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 17, 2014, 12:24 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 70mm
🔍 f32, 1,6
⚙️ ISO 100

ASKJA

SUBJECT

Mountains &
Geothermal

AREA

Highlands

NEAREST TOWN

Mývatn

ACCESS

4x4 + hiking

GPS COORDINATES

N65°02.520' /
W016°35.720'
(Parking at Dreki
cabin)

Askja is a very large caldera with a large lake inside and a smaller crater called Víti (“Hell”). From the rim you can photograph the perfectly round crater with a wide angle lens. The turquoise blue water and the red lava on the slopes, together with the rim of the caldera in the background, make this a nice place to visit and photograph. Note that it’s located at an elevation of 1,000 m a.s.l. (3,300 ft) in the central highlands so you can expect any kind of weather. The road to Askja is only for 4x4 vehicles and opens late June or early July and closes again in September. There are many great photographic locations near Askja which can be included in your trip: Svartá (“Black River”), Herðubreiðarlindir, Mt. Herðubreið and perhaps the new lava from the 2014 eruption in Holuhraun, with Kverkfjöll mountains and Vatnajökull glacier in the background. There are of course countless other motifs in this volcanic desert.

DIRECTIONS

There are a few routes to choose from. The shortest route is road F88 from the Ring Road east of Mývatn. From there it’s about 100 km to Askja but it’s a slow route so allow plenty of time for the journey. There are a couple of unbridged streams to cross which can be too deep for low 4x4 vehicles. Midway along route F88, Herðubreiðarlindir, an oasis in the desert, becomes visible. Freshwater river originates from under the lava, nurturing angelicas and other vegetation in the desert.

Another route is from Möðrudalur, driving along F905 until it merges with F910. This route is longer and not as photogenic.

At Dreki cabin (see gps) there are park rangers who can provide information.

SEASONS

The mountain road to Askja opens late in the summer and closes early in autumn. It takes a whole day to reach it from Lake Mývatn (nearest hotels) so it’s a rather long drive and it’s difficult to choose exactly

when it’s best to be there. The light is so changeable that it depends more on the weather than the time of day. You could overnight at the mountain cabin at Dreki, but it’s basic sleeping bag accommodation or a very rough campsite.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

Just a few kilometres south of Askja there is a little detour off F910, marked Svartá. Ground water seeps from under the black volcanic sand in the desert and forms one of the shortest rivers in Iceland, the Svartá. The water and the green against the black sand desert give a lot of photo opportunities. It’s a fun place to play with the camera. Drive to the end of this sandy track and also photograph the spot where Svartá falls into the glacier river Jökulsá á Fjöllum. Svartá flows over a small cliff in 3 waterfalls and again it’s greenery against the black volcanic sand. The fact that this place gets very few visitors and photographers makes it also just a little bit more interesting.

FUN FACT

This is the area Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins used to train for their moonwalk. They stayed at Dreki cabin.

TIP

Bring hiking boots and Gore-Tex clothing.



Víti crater inside Askja Caldera.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 June 30, 2014, 13:47 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 16mm
🔍 f20, 1/60
☀️ ISO 100



Waterfall in Svartá river, south of Askja.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 9, 2014, 13:05 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 25mm
🔍 f22, 1/15
☀️ ISO 100

HÁIFOSS & GRANNI

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Selfoss

ACCESS

Car in summer, 4x4
autumn to spring

GPS COORDINATES

N64° 12' 39.2"
W019° 40' 7.00"

Háifoss (“Tall Waterfall”) is the third tallest waterfall in Iceland, 122 m high, and Granni (“Neighbour”) is almost as tall. For a long time Háifoss was believed to be the second tallest waterfall in Iceland but newer measurements show that Hengifoss (see page 44) is 6 metres taller.

The falls tumble from the plateau into the narrow valley, Fossárdalur. They are a bit off the beaten track, so a car with higher clearance is needed. Access is from above, on the opposite side of the falls. There are no railings or safety lines to obstruct the view – or to prevent one from falling into the canyon. Pure nature, as we love it.

DIRECTIONS

From Selfoss, access is from road 32, approximately 10 km north of Búrfell. Turn left onto road F332 where a sign points towards Hólaskógur - a cabin is visible in the distance. Closer to the cabin, where there is a sign pointing to Háifoss, follow the road for another 10 km. Then pass under the power lines and follow the sign to the parking area. From there, it is only a 5 min easy walk down hill. The road to the falls is a rough gravel road but there are no un-bridged rivers to cross until after the falls.

SEASONS

This is a great location for all seasons except winter when the location is inaccessible due to snow. It is never

crowded although photographers have heard of the place.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

You will be mostly photographing from the south-southeast, facing north-northwest; so, from around noon the sun shines into the falls. The afternoon has the most beautiful light and you are likely to see rainbows in the spray.

GEOLOGY

The strata of the falls are close to 2 million years old, made of thick lava flows above and below them. The most obvious rock is from before the last Ice Age, called tuff; i.e., layers of tephra compressed and moulded together.

TIP

There are good vantage points further down the edge of the canyon so go explore.



Háifoss and Granni.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk II
🕒 May 31. 2009, 15:58 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 24mm
🔍 f20, 1/30
☀️ ISO 100



Háifoss.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk II
🕒 June 25. 2009, 12:48 GMT

👁️ EF100-400 mm f/4.5L USM @ 100mm
🔍 f32, 1/20
☀️ ISO 100

LANDMANNALAUGAR

SUBJECT

Geothermal & Mountains

AREA

Highlands

NEAREST TOWN

N/A

ACCESS

4x4

GPS COORDINATES

Main parking:
N63°59'448"
W019°03'476"

Riverside parking:
N63°59'673"
W019°03'592"

Landmannalaugar is a nature pearl in the interior highlands, located in a valley between colourful mountains at the dark edge of the rhyolite lava field Laugahraun. A visit to Landmannalaugar is a geological exploration where the hot and cold meet in a great array of colours and beauty. Many hot and cold springs create a warm brook, where people can bathe. Most likely you will be too busy hiking in the lava fields, exploring the hot springs and steam vents, capturing the amazing tones and shapes while photographing, to enjoy a soak in the natural geothermal pool. You will almost certainly want to stay longer and visit again. In spite of the often crowded campground, it's easy to be alone in the magnificent surroundings within a few minutes' walk.

DIRECTIONS

There are basically 3 routes to Landmannalaugar:

1. F208 from Hrauneyjar (safest & quickest from south-west, Reykjavík)
2. F225 through Dómadalur (close to Hekla volcano)
3. F208 from Skaftártunga (shortest from south-east, Vík and Kirkjubæjarklaustur)

1. Hrauneyjar route from Reykjavik: Drive east on Route 1 about 15 km further than Selfoss, before turning left onto road 30. Continue for about 30 km, then turn right onto road 32 and follow it until it joins road 26. Some 15 km further, there is a petrol station and guesthouse Hrauneyjar – which is the last chance for fuel. Shortly after Hrauneyjar, about 5-6 km further, at the sign for Landmannalaugar, turn onto road 208. This is where the road changes to a gravel road and it can be quite coarse. There are also rivers to cross before reaching Landmannalaugar, some 35 km further. The last 35 km are a bit slow because the road is both rough and scenic. Along this route, there is a short worthwhile detour to Sigalda Canyon (see page 110). Visiting Ljótípollur is also worthwhile.

2. Dómadalur route from Hella in south Iceland: Less than 10 km west of Hella, at the petrol station, turn right onto road 26 and follow it for about 50 km. It's a good tarmac road till just past Leirubakki

(last place for fuel, but further along it becomes a gravel road. There are a couple of big signs where the turnoff is onto F225. There are also a couple of unbridged rivers on this route, which are normally not an obstacle for most 4x4s. This route joins F208 from Hrauneyjar 5 km before reaching Landmannalaugar.

3. Coming from the south-east: Midway between Vík and Kirkjubæjarklaustur, turn off the Ring Road onto road 208 which leads to the Búland, the last farm of the valley, where the road turns to an F-road. There are quite a few unbridged rivers and streams to cross before reaching Landmannalaugar. It is 75 km from the Ring Road to Landmannalaugar, but it's a rather slow drive and very scenic, especially for landscape photographers.

SEASONS

The roads usually open early to mid June and close with the first snow of the autumn, usually in September.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

There are many great hiking routes to choose from, but we would recommend the "Green Canyon Circle". Seek advice at the rangers hut and study the maps in Landmannalaugar.

Allow plenty of time and try not to be disappointed if you don't get to see everything. Just visit again.

TIP

Bring a bathing suit and towel for the geothermal pool



Barmur ridge in Landmannalaugar.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 August 16, 2010, 17:40 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 62mm
🔍 f13, 1/80
☀️ ISO 320



Valley flowers in Landmannalaugar.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 July 17, 2010, 15:32 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 29mm
🔍 f10, 1/80
☀️ ISO 100



Grænagil (Green Canyon) in Landmannalaugar.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 August 17, 2009, 17:46 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM @ 70mm
🔍 f10, 1/100
☀️ ISO 100

Hotel Highland

★★★

Hotel Highland is open from 1st of June to the 30th of September. Hotel Highland is a three star hotel situated at the edge of the Iceland's most impressive and active volcanic area. From here it is a short distance to many of the most beautiful and popular tourist attractions in the Icelandic highlands.



Hotel Highland | Sprengisandur road 26 | 851 Hella | Iceland | Tel. 354 487 7782 | hrauneyjar@hrauneyjar.is | www.hotelhighland.is



The Hrauneyjar Highland Center is situated at the edge of the country's most impressive and active volcanic area. It is the last stop before entering the vast and untouched interior of Iceland. Hrauneyjar is close to many of the most beautiful and popular tourist attractions in the highlands.

Guesthouse Hrauneyjar | Sprengisandur road 26 | 851 Hella | Iceland | Tel. 354 487 7782 | hrauneyjar@hrauneyjar.is | www.hrauneyjar.is

SIGALDA CANYON

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

Highlands

NEAREST TOWN

N/A (Hrauneyjar petrol station on road 26)

ACCESS

4x4

GPS COORDINATES

N64°09'462"
W019°07'494"

Series of small waterfalls cascading into a gorge, with nice blue water and green moss. Water from the reservoir above seeps through rock layers and finds its way out on the south side of the gorge which was the riverbed of the River Tungná before it was dammed for hydropower purposes.

DIRECTIONS

This location is a bit tricky to find – which is part of its charm and attraction. It's not marked on maps or with road signs. From Sigöldustöð - Sigalda Hydroelectric Power Station, drive towards Landmannalaugar on road F208. At the top of the first hill, Sigalda (which actually has some great views and is worth a stop), there is a small track to the left and down towards Krókslón. The canyon is visible in front, with the power plant reservoir behind it. Continue slowly down the hill and onto the plateau between the canyon and the lava, about half way towards the reservoir, to where the turn into the canyon becomes visible. Park on the road (don't drive on the fragile flora).

SEASONS

The road into Landmannalaugar (F208) from the Sprengisandur route (F26) is open from early June until the first autumn snow, which usually falls in mid-September or early October. Like other F-roads, this road is not cleared in the winter time. There are, however, super-jeep tours that go into Landmannalaugar in winter but don't try getting there in a rental car.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

A telephoto for a tighter shot of the waterfalls and the river, eliminating the sky.

OUR LITTLE SECRET

These falls are an insider secret. The buses don't go there and very few tour operators take the 5 minute detour on the way to Landmannalaugar.

TIP

Sunny days give too much contrast so aim for cloudy skies with soft light.



DRESS CODE ICELAND



Sigöldugil in summer.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 August 21, 2012, 20:08 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM
🔍 f32, 4,0
⚡ ISO 100



Sigöldugil in winter.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark i
🕒 November 25, 2010, 12:25 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 175mm
🔍 f7,1, 1/60
⚡ ISO 3200

VEIÐIVÖTN

SUBJECT

Mountains

AREA

Highlands

NEAREST TOWN

N/A

ACCESS

4x4

GPS COORDINATES

N64°08'050"
W018°47'094"

* The GPS point is at the wardens hut, just as a central point for the area.

Veiðivötn is a series of crater lakes in the highlands north of Landmannalaugar. For landscape photographers Veiðivötn is a visual feast: red lava against a black desert, bright green moss reflecting in clear blue crater lakes, strange lava formations and stacks of mountains in different colours.

Many volcanic and tectonic features, mostly with a south-west direction, are found in the Veiðivötn region. Those include crater rows, single craters, cinder cones, faults, fissures, rift valleys, hyaloclastite ridges and mountains, pillow lava sheets, along with many lakes.

DIRECTIONS

From Reykjavík, drive east on road 1 about 15 km further than Selfoss, before turning left onto road 30. Continue for about 30 km, then turn right onto road 32 and follow it until it joins road 26. Some 15 km further, there is a petrol station and guesthouse Hrauneyjar – which is the last chance for fuel. From Hrauneyjar continue another 10 km or so further up road F26. By the power plant at Vatnsfell (Vatnsfellsstöð), turn right onto road F228 and continue around 20-25 km to reach Veiðivötn. When in Veiðivötn, there are many routes around the lakes and endless motifs.

There are a couple of unbridged streams on the route which are normally not deep or fast flowing but be careful not to get water into the air intake of the vehicle.

SEASONS

Summer to early autumn

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Bring food and drinks for the day, there are no shops or cafés nearby.

GEOLOGY

Veiðivötn area contains the Tröllagígur craters that were formed during the latest eruption in the volcanic system, between 1862-1864 AD, and produced the Tröllahraun lava sheet. This is where we also find the great rift valley Heljargjá, the mountain Þóristindur (826 m) and the extremely long volcanic fissure Vatnaöldur which boasts a beautiful lineament of craters and cinder cones formed in 870 AD. The cinder cones Máni, Fontur and Saxi near Heljargjá rift valley were probably formed in the early Holocene. The craters found in the Veiðivötn lakes were created during the last major eruption in the fissure swarm in 1477 AD.

TIP

Fill up on gas and coffee at Hrauneyjar before going to Veiðivötn.



Veidivötn.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk II
🕒 August 23, 2012, 11:38 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L IS USM @ 155mm
🔍 f32, 0,5 sec
⚙️ ISO 100



Reflections in one of the crater lakes in Veidivötn.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk I
🕒 August 23, 2012, 18:24 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L USM @ 200mm
🔍 f45, 0,8
⚙️ ISO 100

ÞÓRSMÖRK

SUBJECT

Mountains

AREA

South Iceland

NEAREST TOWN

Hvolsvöllur

ACCESS

4X4 + hiking

GPS COORDINATES

N63°40'559" /

W019°29'014"

(Básar hiking hut)

Þórsmörk (Thorsmork) is a valley hidden between three glaciers in southern Iceland. It is named after Þór (Thor), the Viking god of thunder, and the landscape is as grand as the name.

Þórsmörk is a hidden pearl filled with winding gorges, flower-filled hillsides, crystal clear streams and sheltered by three glaciers: Tindfjallajökull, Eyjafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull. The mountains and the glaciers are standing guard and shielding the valley. Rock formations twist and twirl towards the sky like stone arches of an ancient cathedral. Fluorescent Arctic flowers bloom in the spongy moss, adding brilliant splashes of colour to the quiet interior landscapes.

The route into Þórsmörk takes you quite close to the outlet glacier Gígjökull where the deluge from the famous Eyjafjallajökull eruption came gushing down under the glacier and flooded the valley.

Þórsmörk is not easy to photograph, in the sense that there is not one obvious spot to take a single good photograph of, but rather a large Nature Reserve full of opportunities to capture a great variety of images, especially for people willing and able to walk a bit. Þórsmörk is a favourite place for many Icelanders who hold it close to their heart. Visit and you will understand why.

DIRECTIONS

Access is from the Ring Road (Route 1) approximately 25 km after Hvolsvöllur and a few km after the bridge across Markarfljót River. Turn left onto road 249, at the sign for Þórsmörk. The sign also points to Seljalandsfoss (see page 70). Soon after Seljalandsfoss, the road turns into a gravel road and eventually becomes mountain road F249. Note there are several unbridged rivers and streams to cross. At the end of the road, after approximately 25 km of a slow and rough drive, there is an area known as Goðaland (Land of the Gods), which, as the name suggests, is divine. The main camping area and parking lot in Goðaland is Básar.

Þórsmörk and the cabin in Langidalur are on other side of the valley, accessible only

by high clearance 4WD vehicles, as getting there involves crossing the dangerous Krossá River. Regular 4WDs cannot make the crossing, but there is a footbridge. Though Þórsmörk is close to the Ring Road, only high clearance 4WD vehicles can reach the reserve, after crossing about 20 unbridged rivers and streams – which is exciting, until the engine floods.

SEASONS

Þórsmörk is accessible by high clearance 4x4s from spring to autumn, for drivers with knowledge of crossing rivers. Please note: The water level of the rivers depends on the weather, rainfall and temperature, and the rivers are often impassable. In summer, there are bus tours into Þórsmörk and Super-Jeep companies offer tours to Þórsmörk all through the year.

TIP

No insurance covers damages to rental cars caused by crossing unbridged rivers, so you might be saving a lot of money by buying a tour with one of the excursion companies, either by bus or in a Super-Jeep.

Bring your wading shoes if you intend to go into Stakkholtsgrá canyon.



Pórsmörk in winter.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark III
🕒 February 28, 2014, 15:04 GMT

👁️ EF24-70mm /f2.8L USM @ 24mm
🔍 f2.8, 6.0
⚙️ ISO 200

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Near Básar, there are hiking trails suitable for everybody. A detailed hiking map can be bought from the warden at Básar. Both large and small feet can hike the “Básar Circle”, which is about a one-hour hike. There is a beautiful view from the mountain Réttarfell, and the mountain Útigönguhöfði is suitable for those who prefer exercising more. Hvannárgil canyon is like a wonderland.

On the way to Básar/Pórsmörk, don't forget to stop at Stakkholtsgjá (Stakkholts canyon). It was dug out by water and has vertical walls. There is moss, angelica and ferns. Fulmars are everywhere, nesting high on the canyon walls. At the bottom of the canyon – keep left where it splits into two, there is a little waterfall, tumbling from high up. Remember to bring your tripod.

GEOLOGY

In Pórsmörk many unique hyaloclastite ridges are present, most of them formed by subglacial fissure eruptions during the last glaciation. These hyaloclastite ridges are the subglacial manifestations of subaerial fissure eruptions; another example is the Laki eruption of 1783-1784.

The Pórsmörk ignimbrite is widespread over the area and it originates from a great explosive eruption in the Tindfjöll volcanic system, around 55 thousand years ago. The ignimbrite consists of two magma components, a dominating salic component (comendite), and a basic (mugearitic) component.

KERLINGARFJÖLL

SUBJECT

Mountains &
Geothermal

AREA

Highlands

NEAREST TOWN

N/A

ACCESS

4x4

GPS COORDINATES

N64°38'786"
W019°16'741"

FUN FACT

Kerling means
“old hag” and
fjöll means
“mountains”.

The names derives
from a lava pillar
that the mythology
says is a troll
woman (old hag)
that turned to
stone.

TIP

Remember to fill up
the petrol tank in
your vehicle before
you go to Kjölur.

Kerlingarfjöll is a mountain range south-west of Hofsjökull glacier, which is the 3rd largest glacier right in the middle of Iceland. The ground level around Kerlingarfjöll is 600-700 m above sea level and the highest peaks rise up another 800 metres, to around 1,500 m a.s.l.

The mountain range was formed in a series of sub-glacial eruptions during the later stages of the Ice Age. Calderas and rhyolite mountains abound, some with a lava top which makes them rhyolite mesas that are quite rare. Kerlingarfjöll also has a lot of geothermal features such as sulphuric steam vents and boiling mud pools. Multi-coloured hot spring mud, steam plumes, rhyolite mountains and glaciers add to the diversity and richness of colour in this otherworldly landscape. There are postcard photos to be had, abstracts of ash patterns in the snow, macro shots of the fumaroles, countless S-lines in the canyons and endless tonal combinations... It's a great playing field so we recommend you stay a night or two at a mountain lodge.

On the way to Kerlingarfjöll is Gýgjarfoss. It's perhaps not the greatest of the endless waterfalls in Iceland but it's there and well worth a bit of time (see page 118).

DIRECTIONS

Coming from the south, drive from Gullfoss on road 35, continuing for about 60 km along the Kjölur route (F35) through the highlands – it takes a couple of hours as the road is often quite bad with a lot of potholes. Lake Hvítarvatn can be sighted on the left hand side and behind it Langjökull, Iceland's second largest glacier. The turnoff to Kerlingarfjöll, onto route F347, is to the right - quite a bit further, but it's well marked and difficult to miss.

Coming from the north, from the Ring Road drive onto road 35 towards Hveravellir – about 90 km away. After another 30 km or so, turn left onto route F347 to Kerlingarfjöll.

The Kjölur route (F35) is being improved so hopefully there will be fewer potholes and the road will be open longer in the coming years.

The road from Kjölur to the mountain lodges at Kerlingarfjöll is about 10 km, but the best area to photograph is further up the mountain. Go past the lodges and continue up the hill to the end of the road at a small plateau surrounded by the peaks.

SEASONS

The Kjölur route (F35) is only open in summer, from around mid-June until the first snow, which is usually in September. See chapter on driving in the highlands and when the mountain roads usually open.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Stay a night or two in Kerlingarfjöll.

Bring warm windproof clothing and hiking boots for the muddy terrain.



Panorama of Kerlingarfjöll.

📷 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D mark ii
🕒 June 30, 2014, 13:47 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 16mm
🔍 f11, 1/60
☀️ ISO 100



Photographers in Kerlingarfjöll.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 15, 2014, 18:55 GMT

👁️ EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM
🔍 f10, 0,5
☀️ ISO 400

GÝGJARFOSS

SUBJECT

Waterfall

AREA

Highlands

NEAREST TOWN

N/A (Kerlingarfjöll Mountain Resort off Kjölur route)

ACCESS

4x4

GPS COORDINATES

N64°42'209"
W019°23'726"

If you drive on Kjölur route (F35) through the highlands, it's an absolute must to visit Kerlingarfjöll (see page 116). Gýgjarfoss is on the way to Kerlingarfjöll. It's perhaps not the most striking of the countless waterfalls in Iceland, but it's well worth a bit of time.

There is a nice combination of dark muddy glacier water on the far side and clear fresh water on the near side as well as some interesting rock formations around it, so plenty to play with.

There are a few obvious angles: straight on to the waterfall from the flat cliffs in front of it and at a 45° angle from the road, along the small gully with the red rocks. For the stout-hearted and surefooted, there are good wide angle shots up close where you can capture the fine trickling lines down the rocks in the foreground, have the main stream of the clear fresh water in the middle and the angry muddy glacier river at the back.

DIRECTIONS

Drive off the Kjölur route (F35), onto F347 towards Kerlingarfjöll. Gýgjarfoss is easily spotted on the right hand side by the road, just past the Kerlingarfjöll Mountain Resort chalets and the airstrip.

Note: Remember to drive all the way to Kerlingarfjöll (see page 116).

SEASONS

The Kjölur route (F35) is only open in summer, from around mid-June until the first snow, which is usually in September. See chapter on driving in the highlands for information on when the mountain roads usually open.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Go to Kerlingarfjöll.

TIP

Wide-angle lens and a polarizer.



Gýgjarfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 15, 2014, 16:01 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 16mm
🔍 f14, 1/13
☀️ ISO 100



Gýgjarfoss.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D mark iii
🕒 September 15, 2014, 15:43 GMT

👁️ EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM @ 20mm
🔍 f22, 1/6
☀️ ISO 100

NORTHERN LIGHTS

ICELAND AND THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

The Northern Lights, also called Aurora Borealis, are one of the most spectacular shows on this Earth and can frequently be seen in Iceland from September through March on cold, clear and crisp nights. Iceland is located in the middle of the auroral belt, which stretches from 60° - 70° north, so it's an ideal destination for photographing the Northern Lights.

Iceland has better flight connections to both Europe and the US than many, if not most, other places within the auroral belt.

There are basically two factors which determine whether the Northern Lights are visible:

1. Solar activity: Solar flares erupt and send electrically charged particles into space via the solar wind, some of which hit the Earth's magnetic field and create the auroras. The activity varies from one night to the next and from one year to the next. If there are no particles from the Sun hitting the atmosphere, there are no auroras.
2. Weather: If it's cloudy and the stars are not visible, the auroras won't be visible. A clear sky away from the light pollution of the cities is needed.

Iceland has an island climate and very rapid changes in weather. However, if it's cloudy in one part, it's often clear in another. The key thing is to follow the cloud cover forecast – which unfortunately only predicts a few days ahead. There are no months when the skies are typically more clear.

SEASONS

From mid-September to mid-March. The auroras are happening all year but in the summer, it's too bright to see them. It's possible to see them as early as August but only at very late hours and for a short time as the night is still short.

PHOTOGRAPHING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

General tips and advice on photographing the auroras:

- Tripod is key as you will be shooting with long exposures.
- Headlight is needed to see in the dark.
- Wide angle lens with a wide aperture is best.
- Longer exposures than 20-30 sec will make the stars blurry.

- A higher ISO is needed but it's a trade off; the higher the ISO, the more grainy the photo becomes, while a higher ISO needs shorter exposure times and is therefore less likely to make the auroras wash out in a green blur.
- Use manual focus. Auto focus is difficult in the dark, as you have nothing to focus on in space. We often set the focus on infinity before heading out and use tape to make sure it doesn't shift in the field.
- Use a cable release or 2-sec timer to avoid shake.

A good foreground generally improves a photograph of the auroras, gives scale and makes it more interesting. There are plenty of good foregrounds anywhere in Iceland: waterfalls, mountains, fjords, lakes and glaciers.



Aurora Bomb.

📷 Photo by Hawk

📷 Canon 5D MIII

🕒 February 27, 2014, 21:23 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 16mm

🔍 f2.8, 6

☀️ ISO 1600

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Try to have a flexible itinerary so you can follow the weather and find clear skies.

See the cloud cover and aurora forecast in Iceland here:

<http://en.vedur.is/weather/forecasts/aurora/>

Other helpful Northern Lights links:

<http://spaceweather.com/>

<http://sec.noaa.gov/pmap/>

PHYSICS AND A MORE TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The Northern Lights exist in the outermost layer of the atmosphere. They are created by electrically charged particles that make the thin air shine, not unlike a fluorescent light. Auroras or “polar lights” can be seen in auroral belts that form 20-25 degrees around the geomagnetic poles, both the north and the south. The Northern Lights are also called Aurora Borealis – “northern dawn”, named after the Roman goddess of dawn, Aurora, and Greek god of the north wind, Boreas.

The Northern Lights occur high above the surface of the Earth where the atmosphere has become extremely thin, at an altitude of 100-300 km. The source of the auroras are the electrically charged particles, protons and electrons carried by the solar wind, that become trapped in the Earth’s magnetic field and begin to spiral back and forth in a circle around the magnetic poles. While dancing around endlessly in their magnetic trap, some particles escape into the Earth’s atmosphere. They hit molecules in the atmosphere causing the molecules to glow, thus creating the auroras. White and green are usually the dominant colours but sometimes there are considerable colour variations, as the pressure and composition of the atmosphere varies at different altitudes. At extremely high altitudes where the pressure is low, there tends to be a reddish glow produced by oxygen molecules when they are struck by the tiny particles of the solar wind. At lower altitudes, where there is higher pressure, impact-irritated oxygen molecules may glow with a greenish tinge and sometimes there is a reddish lower border created by particles colliding with nitrogen molecules in the immediate vicinity.

VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS

“CAN I PHOTOGRAPH A VOLCANIC ERUPTION IN ICELAND?”

A version of this question is frequently asked: “Can I see magma or red lava?”

The short answer is, sometimes.

There is a volcanic eruption in Iceland, on average every 3 years. Some eruption sites are easily accessible whilst others are not.

At the time of writing (November 2014), there is an ongoing eruption in the northern highlands, north of Vatnajökull glacier, and it's not yet known when it is likely to stop.

It's possible to see and photograph the eruption from the air but not from land because access to the area is prohibited due to danger from poisonous gases. The Civil Protection Agency has closed the area, subject to heavy fines.

Many travellers remember the effect the eruption in Eyjafjallajökull had on air traffic, closing many airports in Europe (although the Icelandic airports never closed). The Eyjafjallajökull eruption was under a glacier, producing high clouds of ash, but no red glowing lava, and it was not possible to get close to it. On the other hand, the previous smaller eruption in Fimmvörðuháls was the complete opposite; one could get very close and photograph the red magma spewing up from the ground.

The most active volcanoes in Iceland: Grímsvötn, Katla, Bárðarbunga and Eyjafjallajökull, are located under glaciers. They are therefore not easily accessible and generate ash plumes as the magma explodes when suddenly cooled by the ice.

The exception is the Hekla volcano which is not under a glacier and which is easily accessible. The last eruption in Hekla was in February 2000 and many believe Hekla is overdue for the next one.

PHOTOGRAPHING VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS

General tips and advice on photographing volcanic eruptions:

- Safety first. Dangers can stem from poisonous gases, falling rocks, ash, sudden flooding etc.
- The twilight hours before sunrise and after sunset are the best to capture the reddish glow while still getting texture in the landscape.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Get all the necessary information before attempting to venture close to an erupting volcano.

The Icelandic Met Office website provides reliable information and updates.



Volcanic eruption in Fimmvörðuháls.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 April 7, 2010, 20:58 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm + 1.4 extender, f/2.8L II USM @ 210mm
🔍 f5.6, 1/30
⚙️ ISO 400



Eyjafjallajökull spewing ash into the air above my super-jeep and a crashed US Navy plane on the black sand beach.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 April 21, 2010, 16:50 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 70mm
🔍 f9, 1/320
⚙️ ISO 200

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Iceland offers a similar range in variety of scenery from the air as it does from the ground but of course from a different perspective: cascading waterfalls, creviced glaciers, black sand beaches, colourful mountains and even active volcanoes. A part from offering different angles and perspectives to landscapes which are possible to photograph from ground level, aerial photography also opens up a whole new world for abstracts. Among the most popular abstract landscape features to photograph are:

- River deltas, where the river currents cross in a series of endless S-shapes
- Glaciers, creviced glaciers with blue ice and sandy streaks create great patterns
- Colourful mountains, rhyolite mountains in Landmannalaugar, Kerlingarfjöll and Lónsöræfi that have a great array of tonal variation, often best captured from the air
- Snow patterns, the highlands in the spring and early summer often have photogenic patterns of snow
- During high summer, unbelievable contrast between black sand and green mountain ridges

WHERE?

There are a few companies offering photo flights, either by helicopter or small plane, from different airports: Reykjavik, Bakki on the south shore, Skaftafell by Vatnajökull in the south-east, Lake Mývatn in the north-east and Akureyri in the north.

SEASONS

All year from Reykjavík, Bakki and Akureyri. Other, smaller airports might be more seasonal and require prior arrangement.

Of course, flights are quite dependent upon weather.

PHOTOGRAPHING FROM THE AIR

Camera vibration is even more of a problem when shooting from the air than it is from the ground. Airplanes, but more so helicopters, produce a lot of vibration, and the speed of the aircraft can contribute to motion blur on your subject as well. Most likely, you will be using a zoom lens so keep in mind that the magnification will also magnify motion. For great aerial shots, you will need to use a higher ISO

and a fast shutter speed (between 1/500 and 1/1000). This will freeze motion and prevent camera shake. Do not brace yourself against the plane to help steady the camera, because it will not work and you will only pick up extra vibration that way and make it even harder to get a great shot.

If you are flying low in a helicopter, you can use a 24-70mm or 24-105mm zoom lens. In an aircraft you may be flying higher, so you will need a longer lens - a 70-200mm is a good choice. You might also want a wide shot or two to help convey the feeling of flight, so if space permits bring a wide-angle lens in the range of 16-35mm. You should be aware that the rotor blades on a helicopter or the struts of an airplane will most likely be visible in wider-angle images. That is fine if you want to portray the experience of flying and you could crop them in post-processing.

Expect turbulence, so make sure your camera is on a strap and secured safely around your neck, or you may lose it if you are shooting with the door off or the



Eruption in Holuhraun, north of Vatnajökull.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 December 5, 2014, 13:13 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L USM @ 47mm
🔍 f7.1, 1/200
☀️ ISO 200

window open. Even if you are not sitting next to an open helicopter door, you will still need to make sure your camera is protected from unexpected jolts.

Do not use a lens shade. If you are photographing from an open door or with an open window, the lens shade can blow off or it will create some extra draft.

If you have two camera bodies, bring both. Things happen fast when flying and it's usually not easy to change lenses in a tight cockpit of a moving plane or helicopter.

As landscape photographers, we are used to using a tripod but for obvious reasons that might not be possible in a plane. If the helicopter is landing and they have space, you could bring a tripod, but always ask your pilot.

If you are flying with an open door or window, you stick your camera out until you can find the drag from the wind and then you pull back a little.

Be prepared for a big adventure and bring a big memory card.



Markarfljót River from the air.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 June 20, 2013, 09:14 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 30mm
🔍 f7.1, 1/80
⚙️ ISO 200

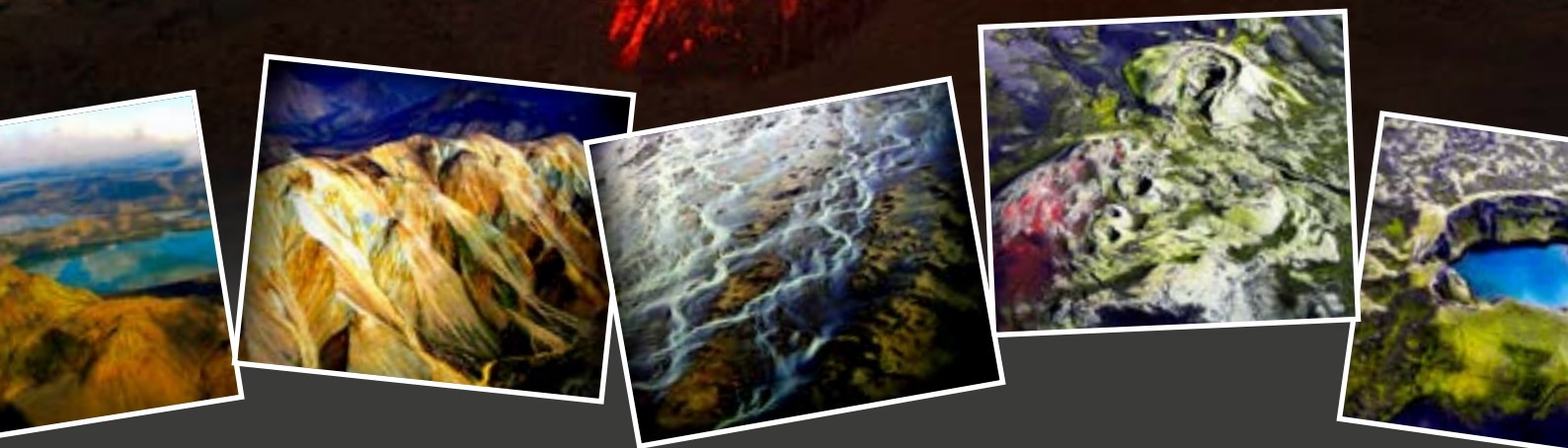


Gígjökull glacier in Eyjafjallajökull from the air.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 June 20, 2013, 09:17 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 42mm
🔍 f8, 1/80
⚙️ ISO 200

ICELAND FROM ABOVE



Atlantsflug offers daytours from Reykjavik to Skaftafell/Jökulsárlón as well as sightseeing flights tours from Skaftafell National Park, Bakki Airport on the south coast and from Reykjavik.

VISIT WWW.FLIGHTSEEING.IS TO BOOK YOUR ONCE IN A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

PHOTO FLIGHTS

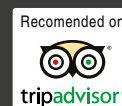
Atlantsflug aircraft are equipped with windows that can be opened during photo flights.

Photo flights are quoted on individual request basis. Other charter and sightseeing flights by request.



Atlantsflug
Flightseeing.is

Reykjavík, Bakki Airport & Skaftafell • Phone: +354 854 4105
www.flightseeing.is • E-mail: info@flightseeing.is



“ PROPER PLANNING & PREPARATION PREVENTS PISS-POOR PERFORMANCE ”

A photo trip consists of three basic parts: planning the trip, being on the trip and then processing the photos and memories of the trip. The first part greatly impacts the next two; with bad planning, the trip will be less enjoyable and most likely give fewer good images to work on after the trip.

Planning a photo trip can be exciting and fun but for many of us, it's time consuming and time is scarce. We have gathered information on some key factors, and we hope that the following pages will make the planning of an Iceland photo trip a bit easier:

- General Information on Iceland – Summary
- When to Visit Iceland
- Weather
- Roads
- Safety
- Gear
- Sunrise & Sunset times
- Icelandic Nature Words

Information on flights and accommodation is easy to find online so there seemed no need to include it here. Travel costs change from year to year and within the year, as well as being subject to exchange rates, so this is also not included.

Enjoy planning a fun photo trip to Iceland.



Auroas at Jökulsárlón.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 September 4, 2012, 22:43 GMT

👁️ EF16-35 mm f/2.8L II USM @ 20mm
🔍 f2.8, 20 sec
⚙️ ISO 800

DECIDING WHEN TO VISIT ICELAND

Each season in Iceland has its own unique charm and as a photography destination Iceland offers a great variety of options any time of the year. From a photographer's perspective, deciding when to visit might include factors such as the number of daylight hours available, quality of light, ambience you wish to capture, the type of scenery, accessibility of locations, crowds, weather, etc. To help you decide, we have outlined some of the seasonal variations below.

SUMMER - JUNE JULY AND MOST OF AUGUST

Summer is Iceland's main tourist season, peaking from mid-June through August. June, July and August are the warmest months. The days, and nights, are bright with nearly 24-hour daylight, and everything is in bloom. The Midnight Sun phenomenon in the southern part of Iceland can be experienced from mid to late June. After the summer solstice, the days start getting shorter again, but only gradually, and the nights are still bright until August. The temperatures in the lowlands are mild, whilst the snow in the highlands starts retreating, making increasingly more F-roads passable. A few F-roads become open at the beginning of June, many F-roads open in mid-June, but others are not passable until July, so always check beforehand (see page 134) More remote locations in the highlands gradually become accessible, opening up many nature trails for exploring and photographing. Summer adventure trips and activities options are abundant. Camping and lodging choices are numerous; however, prices are higher and booking well in advance for activities and accommodation is essential. This might be the ideal time for those who want the most light and are willing to spend the nights photographing while others who prefer solitude and tranquillity, this is perhaps not the ideal season, although locations in Iceland are almost never crowded.

AUTUMN - LATE AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

The number of tourists starts to drop after August 20 but increasingly more hotels keep the higher summer prices until mid or end of September as the number of visitors is growing.

The temperature starts to drop getting into September, with colder nights as it gets dark but the days are often mild. Autumn colours adorn the landscapes; burnished russets, reds and yellows sprinkled amongst the greens. However, as the season progresses, daylight hours start to diminish, temperatures drop and the weather becomes more volatile. Precipitation increases in October, especially in the southern and western parts, and there can be periods of storms and driving rain – but that can and does happen in any given month in the year. However snow starts to fall in the mountains, areas in the interior become less accessible and some highland roads are not cleared for snow. Nevertheless, from mid-September onwards (until around mid-March), there is a chance of seeing the fabled Northern Lights, Aurora Borealis.

WINTER – NOVEMBER, DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH

Winter can be a truly magical season in Iceland but also quite miserable. Daylight hours are limited and driving and photography conditions can be difficult, but Iceland is perhaps at its most impressive and otherworldly at this time of year. However, the weather is highly unpredictable, occasionally changing dramatically within hours, making planning for photography complicated. The wind and the cold can be fierce, especially when standing outside at night, sometimes for long hours, waiting to photograph the Northern Lights – but, Aurora Borealis is a sight well worth waiting for.

Highland roads are closed in winter, and some major roads can occasionally become closed due to snow, especially those outside of the south and south coast routes. Roads that are open can become covered in snow and ice, making driving hazardous. Some of Iceland's most striking scenic features can become inaccessible because of impassable roads, except in specially adapted "Super-Jeeps". Additionally, travel facilities in more remote areas are lacking in winter, and grocery shops have limited hours.

If you are planning to visit in winter, good preparation is vital. Being well informed about the local conditions and having equipment such as good protective gear and sensible shoes, will give you better opportunities to explore the winter landscapes. If you are well prepared, visiting in winter can be very rewarding for photography.

SPRING – APRIL, MAY

Spring is heralded by the return of the golden plover, longer days and warmer weather. At lower elevations, vibrant greens start to emerge, as vegetation bursts into life, and Iceland's fascinating mosses are everywhere. Bird-watching season begins in April and May, and puffin watching tours become available (although some reserves are closed to visitors to protect the nesting birds). If you wish to photograph wildlife, this is a good time to visit. Whale watching boat tours are also offered.

Spring arrives slightly later in Iceland than in Europe or North America, since Iceland is just south of the Arctic Circle; however, daylight hours are roughly the same. Most sights along the Ring Road are open, but the highland roads are closed. The earliest opening time for some of the F-roads in the interior is the end of May (for many others, it's not until July), subject to weather and snow conditions. On the other hand, tourist attractions and sightseeing locations are not crowded, and photography options are plentiful. In certain weather conditions, Icelandic landscapes can acquire a particularly appealing, atmospheric and mysterious quality at this time of year.

Many of the most renowned sightseeing destinations, especially those relatively near Reykjavík, are generally accessible all year-round, including the Golden Circle attractions of Gullfoss, Pingvellir and Geysir. The Blue Lagoon spa in Reykjanes Peninsula is always accessible. In the south, Seljalandsfoss, Skógafoss, Vík, and Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon are usually accessible. In the west, the diverse scenery of Snæfellsnes Peninsula can be reached year-round, and some country retreats in the Westfjords remain open. In the north, the beautiful town of Akureyri, Iceland's second largest urban area, is always a delightful place to visit and an array of picturesque nature locations are accessible all year from Akureyri. Lake Myvatn has the largest number of duck species and is therefore great for bird photography.

ICELANDIC WEATHER

Referring to Iceland, an advertisement said, “The whole island is air conditioned!” Iceland’s cool, oceanic climate is quite mild for its latitude of 63°-66° North, thanks to the warm Gulf Stream. The summers are short but bright and the best time to visit is late May to early September – that is, if you’re planning a summer holiday. The average daytime temperature around the coast during May to September is 10-12°C (50-55°F). A very warm summer day would have temperatures of around 20°C. Average daily sunshine in July and August is 5-6 hours and during the summer months, the nights are bright. On clear days, you have 24 hours of daylight and even the midnight sun near the Arctic Circle.

However, the weather is extremely changeable and unpredictable so you should always be prepared for the unexpected. A typical weather experience would be something like this:

Last June I went with a group of friends to the Hekla volcano. Our journey started with beautiful clear skies on a very still and sunny morning. When we reached the

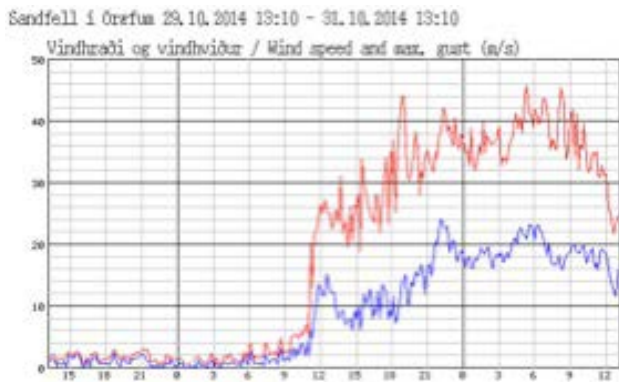
summit around noon, it was foggy and started to snow, which turned to rain when we came down the mountain and in the afternoon, there was a refreshing wind and rain in our face.

In Iceland, you can expect all kinds of weather in a single day. You can check out the weather forecast in English on the website of the Icelandic Meteorological Office: <http://en.vedur.is/>.

If you are looking to see the Northern Lights, the time to visit is from September through March. Icelandic winters are not as cold as you might expect and the winter is in many ways a more interesting time to visit Iceland. The average temperature in Reykjavík in January, which is the coldest month, is 0°C (32°F).

There is a saying in Iceland, as in many other countries: “If you don’t like the weather, just wait 5 minutes.” This not only affects how to dress and which extra clothes to bring but also the driving as the wind can reach close to hurricane levels very quickly. Consider this wind chart from the Ring Road near Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon on the south shore:





Notice how quickly the wind increases and that it's reaching 45 m/sec which equals over 100 mph.

There are weather signs along the Ring Road that inform drivers of the wind direction, wind strength, temperature, and maximum wind gusts. Here is such a sign on the Ring Road by Borgarnes:



The first letter "A" is for "Austur" which means East; 12 is 12 m/s wind force; the temperature is +10°C and the red number on the right, 27, is wind gust in m/s maximum value - which can be more than double the average wind strength.

Below is a useful phone number: 1777 which is the phone number of the Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration (IRCA) - and they do speak English so, when in doubt, please call to check the road conditions.

It's also possible to see the wind strength on the website of the Road Administration. Here is an example for the northern part of Iceland:

<http://www.vegagerdin.is/english/road-conditions-and-weather/north-iceland/north1.html>

Click on the boxes for more details of each road.

Icelandic abbreviations for wind directions:

- A = East
- V = West
- N = North
- S = South
- NV = North West etc

Key websites to seek information on weather:

<http://en.vedur.is/>

<http://www.vegagerdin.is/english>



The changeable weather and clouds.

ROADS IN ICELAND

A large portion of Iceland's road system is made up of gravel roads, even some of the main highways, the more so as you get further away from Reykjavík and larger towns. The main highway around Iceland, Route 1, or Ring Road, circumnavigates Iceland in 1,332 kilometres of which 33 km is dirt road. Most of the population lives in or around Reykjavík so the further you get from the capital the less traffic there is. On gravel roads you may encounter stretches with potholes or "washboards" and occasionally some sand, but mostly the roads are good. However, there are many single lane bridges, even on the Ring Road and blind hills ("blindhæð"/ "blindhæðir", in Icelandic) and blind turns.

The Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration, IRCA (Vegagerðin) has a website with maps and excellent information on current road conditions, including the interior highlands; weather conditions on certain mountain roads, safety information, webcam locations and lots more. If you intend to drive in Iceland, please visit the Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration website: <http://www.vegagerdin.is/english> . Before your journey, please ensure that you check the current situation for all main roads provided by the IRCA. Icelandic roads can be dangerous, especially for those unfamiliar with them and unused to travelling in uninhabited areas and rough country.

When driving in Iceland, remember to have your vehicle headlights on at all times, day and night.

In terms of driving speed limits, the following applies:

The speed limit in populated areas is usually 50 km/h.

The speed limit is often 60 km/h on throughways, but in residential areas it is usually only 30 km/h.

The main rule in rural areas is that gravel roads have a speed limit of 80 km/h, and paved roads 90 km/h. Signs indicate if other speed limits apply.

The Icelandic Road Traffic Directorate (Umferðarstofa) has produced a downloadable brochure in English, German and French, accessible on their website.

Here is a link to the brochure in English in pdf-format: http://ww2.us.is/files/How_to_drive_in_iceland_A4_HQ_2012.pdf .

THE INTERIOR HIGHLANDS

The mountain roads across the interior highlands are not open in winter and they are completely closed in spring. They start to open in late May, many in mid June but some not until July. Many of them are quite rough, with lots of steep hills and unbridged rivers. The quality of the roads depends a lot on how long it's been since they were maintained and also on the weather. It can range from a relatively smooth gravel road to endless potholes and washboards.

NOTE: Off-road driving is strictly prohibited and carries heavy penalties.

In the interior, there are no shops so you must bring enough food. The Icelandic Touring Association (Ferðafélag Íslands) is the biggest travel association in Iceland and it runs shelters and 38 mountain huts in numerous places in the Icelandic interior. However, these are often full, need to be booked long in advance and accommodation is not guaranteed. Some areas are protected nature reserves where you must camp at designated campsites. Elsewhere you can rough camp almost anywhere except on private land, provided you don't leave any marks or litter. Ask permission if you think the spot is privately owned.

Most rivers are unbridged and, at over 40 fords, signs ("óbrúaðar ár", in Icelandic) and notices have been put up with instructions on how to ford rivers. Be sure to assess the strength of the current, depth and the nature of the riverbed before fording a river. If a river looks dangerous to cross, it probably is, and, if you are travelling by yourself, you should wait for someone who could keep an eye out and help you or get help if you run into trouble. Glacial rivers swell as the day progresses and can be a lot more dangerous than they look.

Check the weather forecast before heading into the



Icy road to Dettifoss in January.

📷 Photo by Hawk
📷 Canon 5D
🕒 January 26, 2011, 16:22 GMT

👁️ EF24-70 f/2.8L IS USM @ 51mm
🔍 f11, 1/4
⚙️ ISO 500

interior highlands and every day while there. The weather can change very suddenly. You should also ask the wardens in the huts, and others, about conditions ahead. Sometimes rivers flood and bridges and roads are closed. In most areas you will find small rivers with fresh spring water every few hours, but in certain areas you may have to stock up on water for two days.

The Icelandic Association for Search & Rescue, ICE-SAR (Landsbjörg), provides vital information for safe travel

in Iceland on their website: <http://www.safetravel.is/> where you can also register your travel plan. It is imperative to be well informed when travelling around Iceland, especially in the highlands, since the unfamiliar terrain and the abrupt weather changes can otherwise prove hazardous. Travellers should prepare well for each trip and know its route conditions. This is the best way to prevent accidents and ensure a safe and pleasant journey.

NOTE

To the best of our knowledge, the following rules apply at all Icelandic car rentals:

- No insurance covers damages occurring when crossing unbridged rivers and streams.
- No insurance covers the undercarriage of the vehicle.

Essentially, it means that if you lose or damage the rental car in a river, you're liable.

If you damage the undercarriage, you are liable.

If you plan to visit places like Thorsmork Nature Reserve where you need to cross about 20 glacial rivers and streams, you might be saving money by going on a guided tour rather than by driving yourself and risking having to pay for a new rental car.

TIP

Do not stop on either side of a blind hill. Always stop where other cars can see you from a distance.

ICELANDIC NATURE – FRIEND OR FOE?

We are drawn to nature again and again; it can show us beauty, make us experience something that we have never encountered before and the details can sometimes be otherworldly. Icelandic nature is our friend, when everything goes well. However, if we don't treat it with respect, it can suddenly show us its power.

There is an old joke that we Icelanders like to tell our guests, which goes something like this: "If you don't like the weather here in Iceland, just wait five minutes." The truth is that sometimes this can be the case. During autumn, winter, spring and in mountain areas even during summer, the weather can change very fast.

Good preparation is the key for successful travel in Iceland and part of that is to check the current conditions in the area you are travelling to. As well as checking the latest road conditions and weather, it is important to get information from locals or others who know the area. For photographers this can also be valuable, as the best spots are sometimes only known to locals.

Safetravel website provides vital information for safe adventure in Iceland. The first thing to do when travelling off the beaten track is to leave your travel plan with someone. This is paramount for your safety, along with the knowledge of the local conditions. On www.safetravel.is/travel-plan/ you can leave your travel plan, send it to your contact and choose the option for the search & rescue to monitor your safe return.

Next step is to check the weather forecast on www.vedur.is, see what the road conditions are like on

www.road.is and check if there are any alerts on www.safetravel.is. It is sensible to make it a habit to check these websites regularly on your trip. If you are travelling in mountain areas in wintertime, do not forget to check whether there is a risk of avalanches as well as the snow layers in the area.

Clothing is, of course, very important. For Icelandic conditions, it is advisable to have three layers of clothing: wool or insulated material closest to your body, more insulation in the middle layer and the last layer should be wind & waterproof.

Good communications devices are particularly important in rural and mountain areas. Mobile phones are useful where there is coverage, but, where there is none, other tools are needed. Spot or personal locator beacon is something everyone should consider if travelling off the beaten track.

GPS, compass and a map, as well as first aid equipment and other safety equipment should always be part of your gear.

On the Safetravel website you can find suggestions for equipment lists for different kinds of travel. There you can also find helpful information about driving and travelling safely on our little island.

Enjoy your trip.

Jónas Guðmundsson
Project Manager, Safetravel



Designed and tested in Iceland, a country known for its harsh weather conditions.

Our products are technologically advanced, functional and stylish.

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GEAR: WHAT TO BRING TO ICELAND

SUMMARY

The key to enjoying a photographic adventure in Iceland, as on any outdoor trip, is staying warm and dry. Therefore, the first thing we recommend that you bring is good clothing, more precisely wind and waterproof shell (jacket and trousers). This is true for all seasons, including summer. Good comfortable shoes and an extra pair would be sensible.

For camera gear, bring what you have and what you use. What you're most likely to need is more memory cards as most visitors take more photos than expected. Of course, the camera gear needs protection from weather.

LENSES

Bring your favourite landscape lenses and what you feel like carrying. It's difficult to generalize for all photographers, but most photographers will probably predominantly use a 24-70 mm or similar.

Our second most used lens is a telephoto, for abstracts, close ups or simply when the subject is too far away and we can't get close enough.

A wide-angle lens is very useful when photographing northern lights, to include a big sky, and often when photographing waterfalls up close or inside canyons. A lens with a wide aperture (low f-number) is good for northern lights.

TRIPOD

Iceland is the second windiest inhabited place on Earth (after the Falkland Islands) so, the sturdier the tripod, the better – as long as it's not so heavy that you don't feel like carrying it. Iceland is rugged so a tripod with independent leg movement is a big plus. Furthermore, it's good to have a tripod that can get the camera very low or extra high.

FILTERS

We always recommend having a filter on the lens, if only to protect the lens. Replacing a filter is far less expensive than replacing a lens and, more often than not, the filter we use is the circular polarizer. When photographing lakes, rivers, glaciers, beaches, waterfalls and rainbows – all which are in abundance in Iceland, a circular polarizer is the filter to have.

While many bracket their exposures rather than using a Neutral Density Grad filter, the ND Grad filters do

help to increase exposure time to get the silky effect in moving water etc. The summers in Iceland can be so bright that you will want to be able to decrease the exposure time and that is where a Big Stopper or Grad filters will come in handy.

PROTECTIVE GEAR

Prepare to protect yourself and your gear from wind and rain.

Bring Gore-Tex jacket & trousers for you and a protective pack for your camera. Bring lens-hoods and perhaps some zip-loc plastic bags or the specially designed plastic covers or rain-sleeves for the lenses. Consider bringing wellingtons, waders or sandals so you can go into water to get that unique photograph (or just because it's fun).

Note: Don't leave a wet camera in the camera pack for longer periods. Most cameras can handle getting a bit wet in the field but locking the moisture in overnight is a no-no.

ALL SORTS OF SMALL STUFF

Lens cleaning tissues, since most wiping cloths are bad at absorbing moisture; so, bring a few packs of paper tissues to wipe rain off the lenses. Choose an unscented tissue variety as there can be chemicals in the scented ones and the chemicals can leave residue on the lens.

Remote cable release for northern lights and longer exposures (but you can also use the 2-sec timer).

Battery charger and a plug/electricity adapter (Iceland's electricity is 2-pin 230V European standard).



Hawk getting his feet wet.

👤 Photo by Finn
📷 Canon 5D Mk III
🕒 September 9, 2013, 16:15 GMT

👁️ EF70-200 f/2.8L IS USM @ 145mm
🔍 f8, 1/125
☀️ ISO 400

Bubble level – to mount on camera hot-shoe, or fit into camera hot-shoe mount (depending on the type), to check if your camera is level, which can be useful on uneven ground and for stitched panoramas.

TIP

There is an excellent photo store in Reykjavik which carries a larger selection than stores in many metropolitan cities. We recommend you visit Beco (www.beco.is)

SUNRISE AND SUNSET

	Reykjavík		Mývatn	
	Sunrise	Sunset	Sunrise	Sunset
January 1	11:20	15:43	11:28	14:53
January 15	10:56	16:19	10:57	15:36
February 1	10:09	17:14	10:02	16:40
February 15	9:24	18:01	9:12	17:31
March 1	8:37	18:45	8:23	18:20
March 15	7:48	19:28	7:30	19:06
April 1	6:47	20:18	6:25	19:58
April 15	5:57	21:00	5:31	20:44
May 1	5:01	21:51	4:33	21:40
May 15	4:14	22:36	3:38	22:33
June 1	3:24	23:29	2:33	23:41
June 15	2:58	23:59	1:44	0:31
July 1	3:05	23:57	1:53	0:25
July 15	3:40	23:25	2:48	23:34
August 1	4:33	22:32	3:55	22:29
August 15	5:18	21:45	4:46	21:38
September 1	6:09	20:45	5:43	20:32
September 15	6:50	19:55	6:24	19:38
October 1	7:36	18:58	7:14	18:37
October 15	8:17	18:09	7:59	17:47
November 1	9:10	17:12	8:57	16:44
November 15	9:55	16:28	9:49	15:55
December 1	10:45	15:48	10:43	15:06
December 15	11:16	15:29	11:23	14:41

OPENING OF MOUNTAIN ROADS

Mountain Roads 2009-2013	Opening date earliest	Opening date latest	Opening date average
Lakagígar, F206	05.06	28.06	15.06
Fjallabaksleið nyrðri, F208			
1. Sigalda - Landmannalaugar	31.05	29.06	10.06
2. Laugar - Eldgjá	07.06	28.06	18.06
3. Eldgjá - Skaftártunga	31.05	10.06	08.06
Fjallabaksleið syðri F210			
1. Keldur - Hvanngil	12.06	08.07	28.06
2. Hvanngil - Skaftártunga	12.06	08.07	28.06
Landmannaleið (Dómad.) F225	02.06	05.07	14.06
Emstruleið, F261	12.06	01.07	24.06
Kjalvegur, 35			
1. Gullfoss - Hveravellir	05.06	22.06	12.06
2. Hveravellir - Blönduvirkjun	26.05	13.06	31.05
Sprengisandur, F26			
1. Hrauneyjar - Nýidalur	10.06	05.07	22.06
2. Nýidalur - Bárðardalur	23.06	13.07	03.07
Skagafjarðarleið, F752	30.06	13.07	05.07
Eyjafjarðarleið, F821	04.07	13.07	06.07
Öskjuleið, F88			
1. Inn að Herðubreiðarlindum	14.06	24.07	21.06
2. Herðubreiðarlindir - Dreki	15.06	25.06	21.06
Öskjuvatnsvegur, F894	15.06	07.07	23.06
Vesturd. (Hljóðaklettar), F862	03.06	25.06	05.06
Kverkfjalaleið, F902	14.06	24.06	19.06
Uxahryggjavegur, 52	24.04	31.05	12.05
Kaldadalsvegur, 550	05.06	29.06	14.06

ICELANDIC WORDS IN CONNECTION WITH NATURE, AND A FEW OTHERS

Icelandic	English
alda	wave; hilly ridge
askja (pl öskjur)	caldera
á (pl ár)	river, stream
ás	small hill, ridge
bær	farm, township
bakki	river bank
berg	rock; rock face
bjarg (pl björg)	cliff, rock, boulder
blóm	flower
borg	city; crag
botn	bottom/head of fjord
brekka	slope
brú	bridge
bunga	rounded peak
dalur	valley, dale
djúp	long inlet, deep
drag (pl drög)	watercourse
drangur (pl drangar)	isolated column of rock
dreifbýli	rural area, hinterland
dyngja	dome
eiði	isthmus
eldfjall	volcano
eldgos	volcanic eruption
ey (pl eyjar)	island
eyri	delta, sandpit
fell	mountain, hill

Icelandic	English
fjall (pl fjöll)	mountain
fjörður (pl firðir)	fjord
fljót	large river
foss (pl fossar)	waterfall
gata	road, path, street
gígur	crater
gil	gorge, ravine
gjá	canyon, chasm, fissure
gljúfur	gorge, canyon
grunn	shoal, shallow
hamar	crag
hálendi	highlands
háls	ridge, isthmus
heiði	heath, moor
hlíð	mountain side
hnjúkur / hnúkur	peak, summit
höfði	promontory, cape
höfn	harbour
hóll	rounded hill
hólmur	islet
holt	stony hill
hraun	lava field, lava
hryggur	ridge
hvammur	dell, (grassy) hollow
hver	hot spring
hvoll	hill

Icelandic	English
hvönn	<i>angelica</i>
jökulhlaup	<i>glacier outburst flood</i>
jökull	<i>glacier</i>
jökulsá	<i>glacial river</i>
kirkja	<i>church</i>
klettur	<i>rock, cliff</i>
kot	<i>small farm</i>
kvísl	<i>river, branch of a river</i>
landslag	<i>landscape</i>
lækur	<i>brook</i>
laug (pl laugar)	<i>hot spring; pool; bath</i>
lón	<i>lagoon</i>
melur	<i>gravel; barren plain</i>
múli	<i>headland; spur</i>
mýri	<i>swamp</i>
mörk	<i>forest, woods</i>
náttúra	<i>nature</i>
nes	<i>peninsula, headland</i>
núpur / gnúpur	<i>peak; spur</i>
oddi	<i>point; tongue of land</i>
ós	<i>estuary</i>
öræfi	<i>wilderness</i>
reykur	<i>smoke, steam</i>
ríf	<i>reef</i>
sandur	<i>sand(s)</i>
skagi	<i>peninsula</i>

Icelandic	English
skarð	<i>mountain pass</i>
sker	<i>skerry</i>
skógur	<i>forest</i>
ský	<i>cloud</i>
slétta	<i>plain; grassland</i>
staður	<i>place</i>
stapi	<i>bluff, crag</i>
stræti	<i>street</i>
steinn	<i>stone, rock</i>
strönd	<i>beach, coast, seashore</i>
súlur	<i>mt peaks; columns</i>
tangi	<i>narrow peninsula</i>
tindur	<i>peak, summit</i>
tjörn	<i>small lake, pond</i>
tunga	<i>tongue (of land)</i>
tún	<i>farmstead, hayfield</i>
vað (pl vöð)	<i>ford</i>
varða	<i>cairn</i>
vatn (pl vötn)	<i>water; lake</i>
vegur	<i>road, track</i>
ver	<i>grassy spot</i>
vík	<i>inlet, small bay</i>
vogur	<i>inlet</i>
völlur (pl vellir)	<i>field, plain</i>

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ICELAND

BEFORE YOUR JOURNEY TO ICELAND

Please view the website of the Icelandic Directorate of Immigration for information on passport and visa requirements, as well as the Schengen Area regulations.

BUSINESS | SHOPPING | BANKING HOURS

Office hours are generally 09:00-17:00 and 08:00-16:00 during June, July and August. Shopping hours are Mon-Fri 09:00-18:00, Sat from 10:00 to 13:00/14:00/15:00 or 16:00. Some supermarkets are open to 23:00 seven days a week. Banking hours are Mon-Fri 09:00-16:00.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE

The Icelandic monetary unit is the Icelandic krona (Íslensk króna) - ISK. Coins are in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 50 and 100 krónur (pl. of króna). Bank notes are in denominations of 500, 1000, 2000, 5000 and 10000 krónur. All Icelandic banks provide foreign exchange and are generally open on weekdays from 09:00 to 16:00. There is a bank at Keflavík airport, open every day and for longer hours. Exchange rate is set by the Central Bank of Iceland, see: <http://www.cb.is/exchange-rate/>.

TRAVELLERS CHEQUES | DEBIT & CREDIT CARDS

All the above are widely accepted in Iceland. The major credit/debit cards used in Iceland are VISA and MasterCard but Amex and other cards are not as widely used. Cash can be obtained at every branch, as well as in all ATMs throughout the country. Please note that there might be a difference between the official currency exchange rate in Iceland and the exchange rate that the credit card companies do ultimately charge.

SHOPPING IN ICELAND

The shops in Iceland are of international standard and carry a wide variety of merchandise. Local specialities include uniquely crafted woollen knitwear (sweaters, cardigans, hats and mittens), handmade ceramics, glassware and silver jewellery as well as Icelandic outdoor wear and designer fashion. Also available is a great variety of high-quality seafood.

TAX-FREE SHOPPING

A refund of local Value Added Tax (VAT) is available to all visitors to Iceland. The refund will result in a reduction of up to 15% of the retail price, provided departure from Iceland is within 3 months after the date of purchase. The purchase amount must be no less than ISK 4000 (VAT included) per store. All goods (except woollens) need to be shown at customs before check-in. At Keflavík airport, this applies only to tax-free forms the refund value of which exceeds ISK 5000. All other forms can be refunded directly in cash at Landsbanki Íslands bank in the departure hall.

POST OFFICES

There are post offices located in all major communities in Iceland. General hours are Mon-Fri 09:00-16:30, but some post offices are open longer.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS & WI-FI

Direct calls can be made to all parts of Iceland. The code to Iceland from overseas is +354 and a seven-digit number. Direct long-distance calls can be made to Europe and the USA by dialling 00 or +, and then the country code, and the telephone number you wish to reach.

Mobile phones / GSM: There are four GSM operators in Iceland: Síminn, Nova, Tal and Vodafone. Together they cover most of Iceland, including all the towns and villages with over 200 inhabitants. These telephone companies sell pre-paid GSM phone cards as well as offer GSM/GPRS services. Pre-paid cards are available at petrol stations around the country. Iceland has surprisingly good network coverage and is quite tech-savvy. More information can be found on the Síminn website: <http://www.siminn.is/english/>. Most hotels and many guesthouses will have Wi-Fi.

WEATHER | CLIMATE

Thanks to the Gulf Stream, Iceland enjoys a cool temperate maritime climate: cool in summer and fairly mild in winter. However, the weather is very changeable and tourists should be prepared for the unexpected. Average temperature in Reykjavík in July is around 11°C (c. 52°F), while temperature in January is around 0°C (32°F). However, temperatures vary considerably from one region of Iceland to another. The Icelandic Met Office provides an extensive range of weather related information in English and has excellent articles showing annual temperature averages in Iceland over the past few years. For more information on weather, please go to page 132.

CLOTHING | FOOTWEAR

When travelling in Iceland bring along lightweight woollens, a sweater or cardigan, a wind and rainproof (weatherproof) jacket and trousers. Hats, scarves and gloves are good to have year-round, especially on nature exploration or boat tours. Travellers who are camping or heading into the interior highlands will need thermal underwear and socks, weatherproof outer layer, rubber/ waterproof boots with good grip, and a warm sleeping bag.

Iceland has numerous indoor and outdoor swimming pools, usually with natural geothermal water; therefore, in any season you should bring a swimsuit.

NORTHERN LIGHTS

The magical Aurora Borealis can frequently be seen in Iceland from September through March, provided that solar activity is sufficiently high and the weather conditions are favourable. Iceland is unique in that the Northern Lights can be seen in every part of the country. The Icelandic Met Office provides Aurora Borealis forecast for Iceland: <http://en.vedur.is/weather/forecasts/aurora/>.

For more information on Northern Lights and photographing them, please go to page 120.

MIDNIGHT SUN

During summer, the nights are bright in all of Iceland. In the month of June, the sun never fully sets in the north. There are even special excursions to the island of Grímsey on the Arctic Circle where you can experience the phenomenon of the midnight sun. The sun at midnight is not as warm as at midday, so do bring along a sweater.

TIME

Iceland is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) throughout the year, and does not go on daylight saving time.

HEALTH | PHARMACIES | MEDICAL HELP

Icelanders enjoy a healthy life, thanks to clean air and water and quality fish. Water is safe to drink throughout Iceland. Pharmacies/chemists are called “apótek” and are open during normal business hours. Many are open at night. In Reykjavík, the pharmacy Lyfja, on Lágmúli 5 (tel.: 553-2300), near the Hilton Reykjavik Nordica, is open every day from 08:00 until midnight. For contact details of pharmacies in other locations in Iceland, please go to: <http://www.lyfja.is/ThjonustallYfju/Apotek/>; listed under Apótek.

Reykjavík has a great many general practitioners, as well as specialists, many of whom will receive patients at short notice. There are also many health centres in Reykjavík, with officially appointed family doctors who receive patients at short notice during the day. For information, tel.: 585-1300. Outside of normal business hours, for non-emergency medical assistance, dial 1770. For dental emergencies, tel.: 575-0505.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL HELP

24-hour emergency phone number in Iceland is 112 - for ambulance, police and fire services.

There is a medical centre or a hospital in all major cities and towns in Iceland. Please also read safety information on www.safetravel.is.

INSURANCE

We advise travellers to have comprehensive travel insurance. In case medical assistance is needed, citizens of other Nordic countries need to show their passport. Citizens of EEA countries and Switzerland need to show their passport and present a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) otherwise they will be charged in full. Citizens of non-EU/EEA countries will be charged in full. For further information, please contact the Icelandic Health Insurance by phone: +354-515-0000 or visit their website <http://www.sjukra.is/english/tourists/>.

VACCINATIONS

Vaccinations are not required.

POLICE

Emergency phone number in Iceland is 112 - for police, fire and ambulance services.

Reykjavík police phone number for information only is: +354-444-1000.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Offices, banks and most stores are closed on these holidays:

- 1 January - New Year's Day
- 2 April - Maundy Thursday
- 3 April - Good Friday
- 5 April - Easter Sunday
- 6 April - Easter Monday
- 23 April - First Day of Summer; usually 3rd Thursday in April

- 1 May - Labour Day
- 14 May - Ascension Day,
- 24 May - Whit Sunday
- 25 May - Whit Monday
- 17 June - Iceland's National Day - Icelandic Independence Day
- 3 August - Bank Holiday Monday; first weekend in August
- 24 December - Christmas Eve (from noon)
- 25 December - Christmas Day
- 26 December - Second Day of Christmas
- 31 December - New Year's Eve (from noon)

Hotels, restaurants and most tourist places are generally open all year but some close for Christmas.

RELIGION

The established religion in Iceland is Lutheran.

LANGUAGE

Icelandic is a North Germanic language of the west Scandinavian group, believed to have changed little from the language spoken by the Norse settlers during the Viking Age. English is widely spoken and understood. Icelandic has several letters of its own, including: Þ/þ, pronounced like th in "thing" and Ð/ð pronounced like th in "they."

TIPPING

Service and VAT are customarily included in prices in Iceland.

ELECTRICITY

The electric current in Iceland is 220 volts, 50 Hz AC; European standard.

Europlug/Schuko-Plug (CEE types) - plugs have two round prongs.

SIGNING OFF

Thanks for making it all the way through our little book. Hopefully it will help you plan an Iceland photo adventure, get many great images but mostly enjoy the whole experience. We encourage you to get out there, be there, enjoy and make things happen. Some times you are happy with your imagery and sometimes not so happy but it's the moment that matters - It is being there. Similarly we enjoyed making this ebook; going through our images; sometimes being happy with them and sometimes not so much and wanting

to go out and search for better compositions, different light or just to be out in nature. We are truly lucky to be surrounded by wonderful nature and ever changing light. We are certain that when you come to Iceland you will get the same sense of freedom and be inspired by the landscape - and although we truly believe your best photograph will be a motive unplanned in an unexpected moment, we hope you enjoyed our knowledge about Iceland and Iceland's nature, the imagery, and the emotions on nature and landscape.

*Finn & Hawk,
Iceland enthusiasts and keen photographers*



Please check out our photo-websites:

www.fpf.is
www.Hawk.is



As far as we go.

📷 Photo by Finn

FUN FACTS & PHOTOS OF ICELAND

BY HAUKUR PARELIUS
OF NATURE EXPLORER



Hawk's new photo book; Fun Facts & Photos of Iceland. Available in spring 2015.