Experience the beauty of Iceland’s Golden Circle route. Discover stunning landscapes, waterfalls, and geothermal wonders. Go World Travel is reader-supported and may earn a commission from purchases made through links in this piece. Our eagerness is palpable as my partner and I undertake an expedition to Iceland in August, usually a warm month with average daily temperatures of 50-59°F. We have fished our way down many rivers on hot summer days and perspired our way through the Amazon, so we are looking forward to arctic breezes and cool, clear streams. A chilly blast of wind welcomes us as we deplane in Iceland and set off for the Golden Circle route in southern Iceland. One can drive the route that covers about 140 miles in just over 3 hours, but who would want to do that when there is so much to see? Looping from Reykjavík and back, its main features are Þingvellir National Park, Gullfoss Waterfall, and the geothermal area in Haukadalur. Geysir and Strokkur geysers are in Haukadalur. Geysir has been mostly dormant for many years, but Strokkur erupts every 5–10 minutes. Other stops include Hellisheiðarvirkjun geothermal power plant. We plan to see it all. In Þingvellir Park (Thingvellir), we brave the wind to walk right through the mountainous divide of the North Atlantic Ridge. Iceland sits atop the European and North American tectonic plates where magma welling up from the earth’s core constantly creates new land as the plates drift apart. It’s exciting to climb to the top and stand atop the split that is moving imperceptibly, but constantly. This cleft in the mountains of Thingvellir is where the Vikings held congressional gatherings from 930 AD until 1798. They named the surrounding area the Valley of the Gathering (or Þingvellir). At least forty clans converged annually to recite laws, make speeches, present ideas and submit proposals. It was also a two-week festival with merchants, storytellers and traders bustling about the site. It’s a UNESCO World Heritage site because the oldest parliament in the world gathered here. Fragments of around 50 booths built from turf and stone are visible remnants of the gatherings. The frigid wind accompanies us as we approach the Geysir Geothermal area where the explosive power of Strokkur geyser streaks skyward. Iceland, with its geothermal activity and black lava fields twisted with rope-like coils, resembles Yellowstone Park, though Iceland is vaster. Our noses detect pungent sulfur wafting from the mustard-yellow rivulets spewing from percolating mud just like it does on the Yellowstone lunar landscape. We’re surrounded by sky-blue hot pools and steaming fields, so the sulfur odor is a minor inconvenience. We observe short, stocky Icelandic horses as we drive to Gullfoss Waterfall. The Icelanders developed the breed for its sure-footedness and ability to cross rough terrain. The Circle extends farther to reach Gullfoss Waterfall where we traverse a narrow path and get a close-up view of the massive, two-tiered waterfall below.