



ICELAND

a seven day summer
campervan experience



OVERALL THOUGHTS

Mother Earth clearly had a favorite son when handing out natural beauty. It's not that other countries are ugly, per se. It's just that Iceland packs so much into a country the size of Kentucky. This island – from its shy lava to its secret waterfalls and inky beaches; its fleeting ice caves and its indomitable canyons and sentient glaciers; its phallogological museums and its quirky pools and tiny towns nestled into the mountains; its callipygian sheep and its proud horses and clumsy puffins – is pure magic. Even the annoying midges and gargling sulfuric pits add to the intrigue. I felt like a trespasser, sneaking my way into every nook and cranny I could find, utterly overwhelmed by beauty I felt I would only experience once in a lifetime. Okay, I'll stop with the drama. The best way to see all that Iceland has to offer, without entirely moving to this ethnically-homogenous country, is by campervanning in the summer. Join me, an inexperienced but ardent camper, as I walk you through the trivial trials and terrific triumphs of my Icelandic Ring Road journey.



THE CAMPERVAN



Choosing your campervan is a wonderful place to start your journey - besides a plane ticket of course. The main considerations are:

- **Number of people.** We had two people to a car, and it was decently comfortable.
- **Manual vs. automatic.** Since I'm already terrible at driving, I decided not to test fate.
- **4WD vs. FWD.** Most campervans meet their match against Iceland's gravel roads and river crossings. We were fine with FWD.

Recommendations

Everyone knows that the cool kids rent from [KúKú Campers](#). KúKú picks you up from the airport, has artful graffiti on most vans, and encourages that campers "don't worry, be sexy." We were blessed with a Citroën Berlingo that we lovingly named Dovid. My friend referred to hers as Bessika. Get the WiFi router and avoid the Campingcard. Gravel insurance is a must. Other acceptable companies are [Rent.is](#) and [Happy Campers](#).

SECRETS TO SUCCESS

Best Campsites

Skaftafell: Located in Vatnajökull National Park, this campsite had the highest vibes. The hike to Svartifoss was steps away from our pitch, and locals come here for a lazy day away.

Camp Egilstaddir: "Possibly the happiest campsite in Iceland," with a centrally-located café and spacious, non-timed showers in a large Eastern Icelandic town.

Ásbyrgi Campground: Near Dettifoss and Lake Mývatn. Great facilities and keeps you away from the sulfuric air of the Mývatn area.

Hamrar: Located in Iceland's unofficial northern capital. Most beautiful campsite with decent facilities and lots of playgrounds.



Best Activities

Geothermal Pools

Blue Lagoon and Mývatn Nature Baths are heavy-hitters, but the local *sundlaugs* are the 'Worth It' winners. Note: shower naked!

Glacier Hikes

We explored ice caves, encountered deadly moulins, and ate 700-year old ice. Warning: crampons are sharp!

Whale Watching

Húsavík's humpbacks kept us good company. Overall, this was a gritty experience salvaged by the hot chocolate and hilarious puffins.

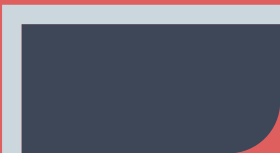
Other Notable Experiences

Snorkeling between tectonic plates, horseback riding, volcano hunting, glacier lagoon kayaking, and fishing.



Language Tips

- Takk - Thank You
- Foss - Waterfall
- Sandur - Beach
- Sundlaug - Pool
- Snyrtingar - Toilet
- Jökull - Glacier
- Fyrirgefðu - Sorry



The Motto

Petta Reddast - "Everything will work out in the end."

Fun Fact

One in ten Icelanders will publish a book in their lifetime.

DAY ONE

Arrive at Keflavík International Airport, and catch that free shuttle to your campervan co.'s Reykjavík headquarters (or else pay \$80 to Uber there). Don't forget to stock up on Icelandic spirits in the duty-free section! Spend the morning getting coffee at the convivial [Laundromat Café](#), and then check out sites like Hallgrímskirkja Church and Harpa Concert Hall while fighting off the bitter jet lag exhaustion. Catch your second wind, and drive over to the [Blue Lagoon](#), which you pre-booked a month in advance because you're a travel genius. Tie up that hair, and prepare to smear silica all over that crusty plane skin. Shower, and then head to your boutique townhouse hotel, [R13](#) - you'll need your sleep for what I've got planned.



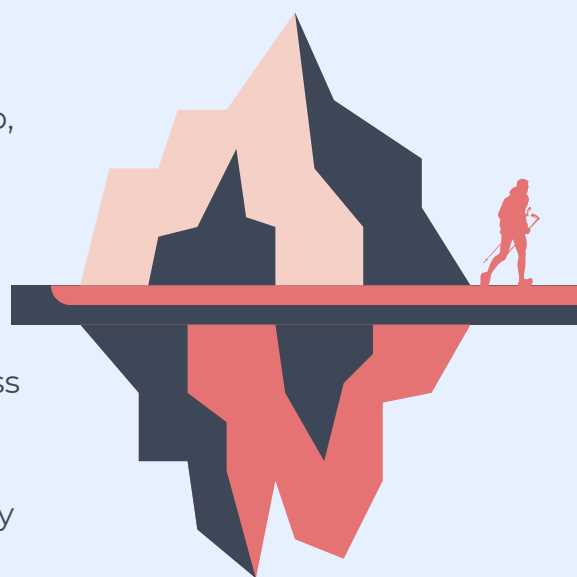
DAY TWO

Stock up on groceries at Nettó, like apples, sandwiches, and chips. Don't try to cook in the campervan - we ain't got time for all that. We're traveling around the Ring Road in a counterclockwise direction, so today is all about the waterfalls in the Southeast. Check out Seljalandsfoss (360°), Gljufrabui (hidden), and my personal favorite, Nauthúsagil (haunted, more hidden). Skógafoss (big) is on the way to Vík, where you can grab lunch and see the black sand beach of Reynisfjara. After lunch, traipse around the Dyrhólaey Viewpoint and befriend some puffins. Drive off into the sunset towards your first campsite, Skaftafell. It's the perfect launching point to the glaciers you'll hike in the morning.



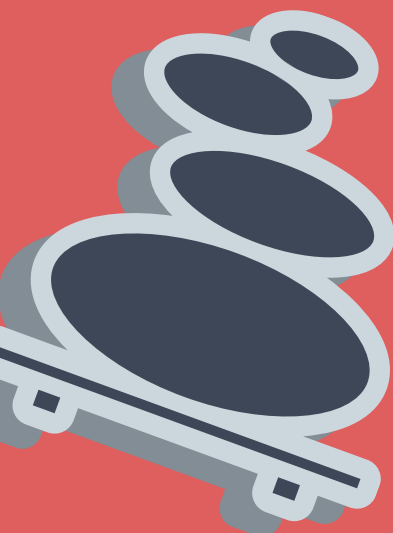
DAY THREE

Wake up, stretch your legs from your first campervan sleep, and immediately do an hour-long, not-so-strenuous roundtrip hike to Svartifoss, an iconic waterfall with basalt columns that sparkle in the sunlight. After, you'll drive to Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon, where you will quickly eat a langoustine roll, and then either kayak around or hike on the glaciers. Non-negotiable. Diamond Beach is right across the road! Grub up in Höfn, and then engage in a long, incredibly scenic drive to Egilstaddir, where you'll be staying. Shower up and sleep blissfully, as today is definitely one of the tougher ones.



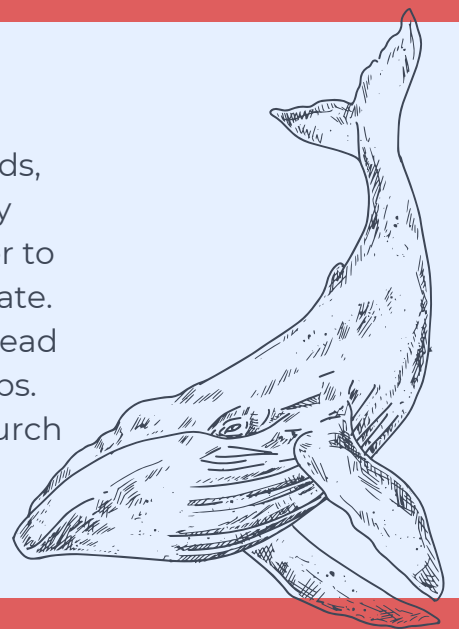
DAY FOUR

You're in East Iceland today - arguably my favorite area. The morning should be dedicated to checking out Stuðlagil Canyon, replete with basalt columns, a turquoise river, and many opportunities to fall to your death. Then, hit up Seydisfjörður, a splendid and colorful town that deserves every ounce of your attention. Not to mention that the drive is absolutely ridiculous. I might have cried. To round off your day before another drive to the Mývatn area, go to [Vök Baths](#), which consists of geothermal, hexagonal floating pools on a lake that you can also swim in. Right before you get to your campsite, the lovely Ásbyrgi, check out Dettifoss, which is on the way!



DAY FIVE

You're in stinkytown, bb. Honestly, the Dimmuborgir Lava Fields, Hverir Geothermal Area, and the Grjótagjá Cave can be quickly crossed off one after the other. From here, launch yourself over to Húsavík for a whalewatching sesh – they have a 95% success rate. You'll be frigid after, so it's time to do what the locals do and head over to the local [Sundlaug](#), which has a water slide and hot tubs. Drive over to Akureyri for dinner, and admire the Lutheran church that sits atop the hill. Stay in Hamrar, and don't get bullied by grumpy tourists for parking too close to their stupid fat RVs.



DAY SIX

Today, after a coffee stop at [Kaffi Ilmur](#), drive back to Reykjavík - the longest drive you'll do. You can break it up with lunch, or by stopping at [Krauma](#), another geothermal bath and spa. If there is a volcano erupting on the Reykjanes peninsula, today would be a great day to check it out. Stay in [Galaxy Pod Hostel](#), a super unique and bubbly hostel with lovely amenities and a bar.



DAY SEVEN

Your last day in the city. Sad! Mourn by heading to Laugardalslaug and swimming your little heart out. There is also botanical gardens and a zoo in that area. Get gelato, try that hotdog you've been skeptical of, and return your campervan. Shuttle it to the airport and remember to test negative for COVID! If the pandemic is over by the time you read this, congrats!

PACKING LIST

HIKING BOOTS
COMFORT SNEAKERS
FLIP FLOPS
2X PAIRS OF LEGGINGS
WATERPROOF PANTS
SWEATPANTS
JEANS
3X WATERPROOF THERMAL ZIP UPS
7X T-SHIRTS & LONG-SLEEVES
HEAVY HOODIE
LIGHT WATERPROOF JACKET
GLOVES
HAT
ADVIL
MOISTURIZER
TOOTHBRUSH & TOOTHPASTE
CONTACT SOLUTION
FACE WASH
SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER
SLEEP MASK
3X BATHING SUITS
FAST DRYING TOWEL
REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE
7X UNDERWEAR
4X SPORTS BRAS
7X SOCKS
NICE OUTFIT
SUNGLASSES
CONVERTER
PORTABLE POWER BANK
INSECT REPELLENT
4X PROTEIN BARS
FIRST-AID KIT

BUDGET

PER PERSON, USD

FLIGHT EXPENSES = \$500
INCLUDES FLIGHT, AIRPORT PARKING, AND SHUTTLES

ACCOMODATION = \$800
INCLUDES CAMPERVAN, HOTELS, HOSTELS, CAMPSITE FEES, AND WIFI

FOOD AND DRINKS = \$200
INCLUDES GROCERY, RESTAURANTS, AND ALCOHOL

ACTIVITIES = \$200
INCLUDES A GLACIER HIKE AND A WHALE WATCHING TOUR

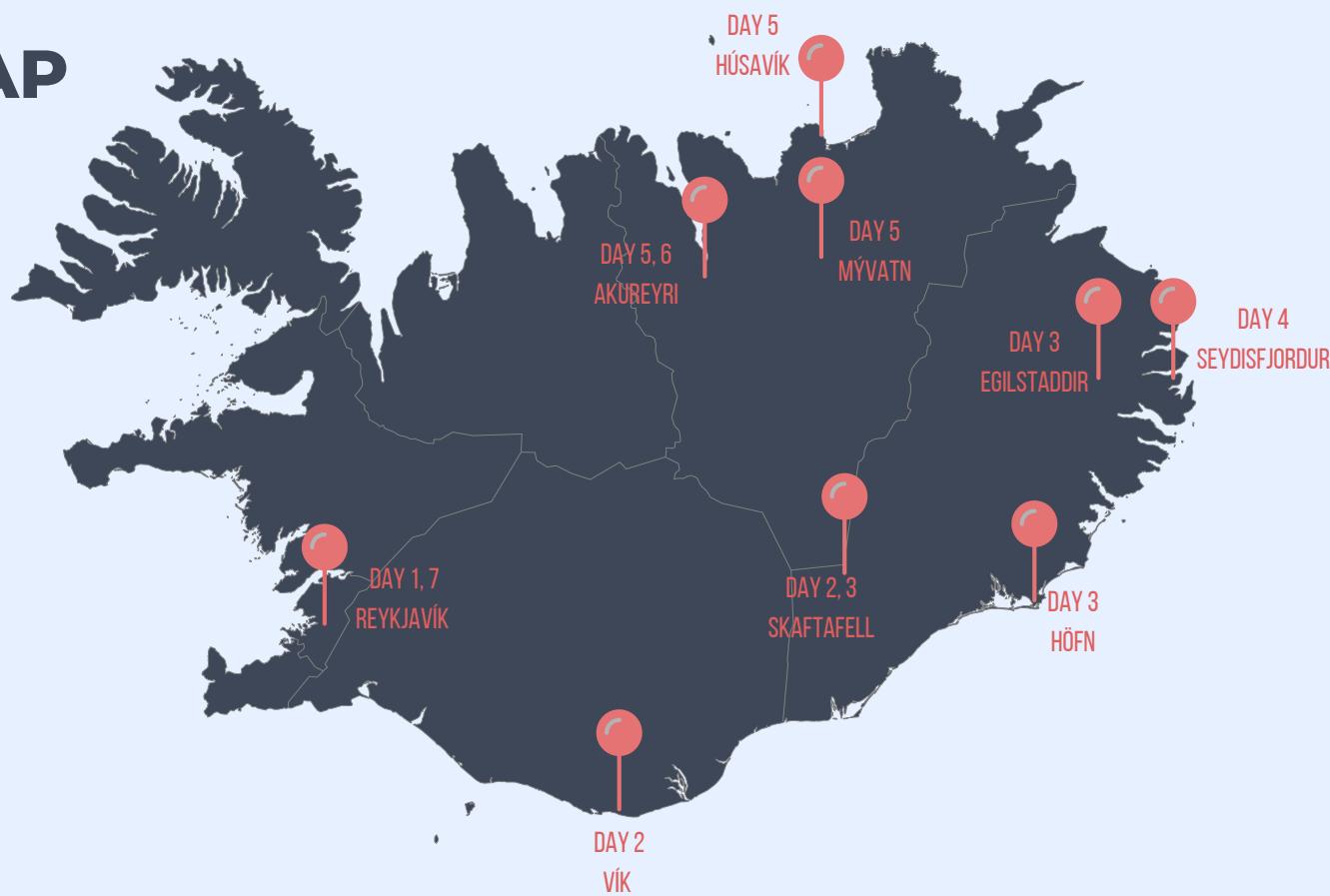
POOLS = \$140
INCLUDES BLUE LAGOON, MÝVATN NATURE BATHS, AND TWO LOCAL POOLS

GAS = \$110
INCLUDES STOPS AT NI AND ORKAN

UNIQUE PURCHASES = \$75
INCLUDES PERSONAL PURCHASES AND A COVID TEST

TOTAL = \$2,025

MAP



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is everyone in Iceland white?
Honestly, pretty much. The racial diversity there is practically non-existent, and there was no way anyone would have accidentally mistaken me for Icelandic. I was free to look as touristy as I felt, complete with a fanny pack and Norwegian flag hat.

How was camping? How were the bathrooms?
As a traveler with IBS who definitely prioritizes access to bathrooms on vacations, I felt fine! There were bathrooms in every gas station and coffee shop, and bathrooms located in natural tourist spots were typically 200 ISK (around \$1.60). The campsite facilities were well-maintained, and reminded me of college dorm living. Some were definitely better than Georgetown's New South bathrooms – a low bar to clear, actually.

How was the fermented shark? The minke whale?
I did not eat any of that shit, and neither do Icelanders. I had delicious burgers, lamb soup, hot dogs, langoustine pasta, and skyr yogurt. The ingredients are fresh and the execution is impressive.

Did you survive the drive? You can barely parallel park, dude.
Yeah, yeah. I drove our automatic van and traversed random gravel roads, avoided the innumerable sheep, and cleaned the bugs off the windshield during the spitting rain storms. The Ring Road is one-lane in each direction, so passing people became an F1-esque endeavor.

What is a midnight sun? Sounds oxymoronic.
She was a beaut. The world is your oyster when the sun never sets. We drove a lot from 9pm to 12am, with perfect visibility and virtually no other cars on the road. I melted into those three-hour long sunsets. Just buy an eyemask, or wake up to blazing sun at 5am.



QUESTIONS? EMAIL
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