

A breathtaking journey across

fire, ice and endless roads

ICELAND

HOW TO PLAN YOUR TRIP



All the essential things to know
before you arrive blah blah
blah blah blah

MAPPING THE ROUTE



A breakdown of the iconic
Ring Road and key detours
worth taking

DAYWISE EXPLORATION



A structured guide to exploring
Iceland efficiently without
missing the highlights.



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Iceland at a glance

A brief introduction to the land of fire and ice – what makes it special, what to expect and why it's unlike anywhere else



If there's one country that feels like it exists in its own universe, it's **Iceland**. It's dramatic, surreal, often moody and heartbreakingly beautiful. A place where **nature** takes center stage in every possible way. In my 15 years of travelling, I can safely say that Iceland is the most beautiful place I've ever been to. It didn't just live up to the hype, it completely blew my mind.

We did Iceland as a **road trip**, which I think is the best (and only real) way to see the country. One moment you're driving through moss-laden lava fields that look like an alien planet, the next moment you're standing by a thundering waterfall or watching steam rise from geothermal vents beside the road. It's unpredictable and wild, in the best way possible. But beyond its raw and cinematic beauty, what stood out to me most was how **well balanced** and **accessible** everything felt. The country is incredibly well maintained, roads are in great condition, **people** are kind and welcoming and there's a quiet rhythm to life even in the most extreme weather. The **weather** though, well, that's another story.

This **guide** is a compilation of everything we learned and loved during our journey – from where we stayed and what we ate, to tips that'll make your trip smoother. It's not just a list of logistics but a **personal curation of experiences**. Places that made us gasp, laugh, get drenched and sometimes just sit quietly staring at landscapes that didn't feel real.

So, in the next few pages, expect a mix of facts, itineraries, personal notes and tiny anecdotes – things we wish we knew, things that surprised us and things that made us fall in love with this magnificent country.

If you're planning a trip to Iceland, I hope this guide helps you plan better, travel lighter and feel a little more prepared, but also leaves room for serendipity, because trust me, in Iceland, it's the unplanned moments that stay with you the longest.

How to plan your trip

Essential things to know before you arrive

Best time to visit

There isn't one right answer for this. It really depends on what you're looking for in Iceland. If you want **long hours of daylight** and the magic of the **midnight sun**, visit in the summer months – **June, July or August**. If it's the **northern lights** you're hoping to catch with a decent 12 hours of sun, late **March – April** or late **September – October** are ideal.

That said, Iceland's weather has a mind of its own. You could wake up to sunshine, have your hair whipped by wild winds an hour later and drive through sheets of rain before spotting a double rainbow. It's all part of the show. So don't let a cloudy or stormy forecast keep you indoors. Iceland rarely looks dull, even on grey days.

My trip was from 27th September to 9th October 2025. I got a bit of everything – rain, rainbows, clouds, sunshine and even a storm or two. With about 12 hours of daylight, it felt like the perfect balance and I was lucky to catch the northern lights on two or three nights. For a first visit, this time of year felt just right.

That said, if I were to plan another trip, I'd probably choose the summer months. With longer daylight hours, there's simply more time to explore, hike and do all activities without having to watch the clock.



A rainbow spotted at Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Visa & Entry Requirements

You'll need a valid **Schengen visa** to visit Iceland. I already had mine but my friend applied about a month and a half in advance and received it within 10 days. She went through a travel agent who handled the documentation and appointment process smoothly. The visa cost around **10000 INR** and the agent charged an additional 2500 INR as a service fee.

You can absolutely apply on your own too but we decided to skip the paperwork hassle and go through an agent instead to make things easier.

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Ideal Trip Duration

I've seen itineraries that try to cover Iceland in 5 to 7 days, but I'd strongly recommend keeping at least **10 to 12 days** in hand. In a week, it's difficult to comfortably do the full Ring Road. And since this is such a faraway and expensive destination, it's worth giving yourself those extra few days to truly experience it instead of rushing through. That being said, if you only have a week, you can still plan a beautiful trip. Focus on exploring the West to East and back to West route. It'll give you a good mix of landscapes without feeling too hectic.

Flights & Getting There

There are **no direct flights** to Iceland from India, so you'll have to transit through another country in the Schengen zone. It's actually a great excuse to add a small detour, spend a day or two exploring that country before or after Iceland.

I flew via Paris, spent two nights there and returned through Germany. You can check platforms like Skyscanner or Zomunk to find good deals and compare routes.

One important note: if your flight connects through London or anywhere in the UK, you'll need a valid UK transit visa. This is different from the Schengen visa, even if your layover is short and you don't plan to step out of the airport. So double-check the visa requirements for any non-Schengen country you're transiting through before booking.

Getting Around (Car Rentals & More)

The only real way to explore Iceland is by **renting a car or a campervan**. Public transport is almost non-existent outside of Reykjavik and a few larger towns. An **Indian driving licence** in English works perfectly fine so you don't need an international one.

I rented from [Go Car rentals](#) and booked a three-door **Jimny** for our trip. You can check their website, see the available options and book directly. They'll pick you up from the airport and take you to their office and you can return the car either at their Reykjavik branch or at the airport itself. Some other trusted car companies are **Blue car Rentals, My Car Rentals**.

If you're planning to rent a campervan instead, **Happy Campers** is a great option to look into.

It's **left-hand driving** in Iceland but you get used to it quickly. I'd highly recommend taking the **full platinum insurance** package with your car. It may seem steep but fines and repair costs in Iceland are famously high – I've heard of people paying over a lakh for speeding fines during their trip. Please follow the speed limits, cameras are everywhere.

We also opted for **roadside assistance** for about 9000 INR. Thankfully, we didn't need to use it but it was reassuring to have.

Payments and Currency

The whole of Iceland runs almost entirely on **cards**. I had some euros beforehand and barely ended up using even 100 euros. Interestingly, the Icelandic króna is lower in value than the Indian rupee ($1\text{INR} = 1.43 \text{ ISK}$), but that doesn't make Iceland any less expensive – it's easily one of the costliest countries to travel to.

Make sure you carry more than one working **international debit or credit card**. Get a **zero forex card** if you don't have one. I used **Scapia** primarily.

Travel Insurance

I never leave for any international trip without booking travel insurance first. It provides comprehensive protection in case anything goes wrong (ie. illness, injury, theft, cancellations, etc.). I usually book mine via **MakeMyTrip**. The process is quick and hassle-free.



Kirkjufell, Snæfellsnes Peninsula

SIM Cards & Connectivity

I personally use the **Raizing e-sim** for international travels. Used the same in Iceland and it worked perfectly fine in most places.

You can DM **@raizingsim** on Instagram or message my contact person using my reference.

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All stays in usually have wifi. Also the car comes with a wifi dongle if you take platinum insurance. However I did need mobile data to pay parking fees and research purposes sometimes so it's good to have at least one working sim card in the group.

Plugs & Power Sockets

Iceland uses **Type F plug sockets**, the standard European ones with two round pins. If you're travelling with multiple gadgets, it's a good idea to carry a small extension board with multiple sockets since most Airbnbs or hostels usually have just one or two charging points.

The adapter I carried from India didn't work in Iceland, so I ended up buying one from a local grocery store in Reykjavik. They're easily available, so don't panic if yours doesn't fit, you'll find one around the corner.

Mapping the route

A brief introduction to the land of fire and ice – what makes it special, what to expect, and why it's unlike anywhere else



Iceland typically has two main routes.

The most popular one is the Ring Road, marked as Route 1 on Iceland maps. Then there are the F-roads that are typically gravel mountain roads that lead into the highlands. These require 4x4 vehicles and are usually open only during the summer.

If you're travelling to Iceland for the first time, I would suggest doing the entire Ring Road. You start from Reykjavík and head southeast, covering the famous Golden Circle, the waterfalls, the glacier belts and then gradually make your way west, up north, through the Snæfellsjökull Peninsula and eventually circle back to Reykjavík. You can do the entire loop in reverse too, there's no right way. It really depends on the availability of stays. Personally, I preferred going east to west, since the first few days were a little hectic and touristy (beautiful nevertheless) and it gradually got quieter and better paced.

Itinerary

*Day-by-day highlights from my
12 day journey around Iceland*

Day	Travel Plan	Things to do	Stay	Notes
DAY 1	Arrive at Reykjavik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hallgrímskirkja Church - Verzlanahöllin Thrift Store - Rainbow Street - Local eateries and bakeries. - Souvenir Shopping 	Reykjavik	
DAY 2	Reykjavik  Vik	<p>The golden circle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Öxarárfoss at Thingvellir national park - Geysir - Gullfoss Falls - Bruarfoss - Kerid Crater - Sunset at Dyrholaey 	Vik	I decided to stay in Vik on this day mainly because 'The Barn' stay was available only for that date. You can always book a stay closer.
DAY 3	Vik  Kirkjubaejar-klaustur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reynisfjara – black sand beach - Seljanaldfsoss - Gljufrabui - Skogafoss - Kvernufoss - Fjadragljufur canyon - Eldhraun lava fields 	Kirkjubaejar-klaustur	I decided to stay in Vik on this day mainly because 'The Barn' stay was available only for that date. You can always book a stay closer.
DAY 4	Kirkjubaejarklaustur  Hofn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Svinafellsjokull -Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon -Diamond beach -Fjallsarlon 	Hofn	I chose to stay in Höfn for both nights because there was nothing else available nearby. This region has very limited stay options, so if you do find something closer to the glacier area, that would be a better pick.
DAY 5	Hofn  Glacier Point – and back to Hofn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Early morning sunrise at Stokksnes (Vestrahorn). -Explore Viking Village set. -Drive to Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon for Ice Cave Exploration 	Hofn	Same as above

Itinerary

*Day-by-day highlights from my
12 day journey around Iceland*

Day	Travel Plan	Things to do	Stay	Notes
DAY 6	Hofn 🚗 Seydisfjordur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Early morning sunrise attempt 2 at Stokksness. -Drive to Egilsstaðir -Explore Seydisfjordur 	Seydisfjordur	You can also choose to stay in Egilsstaðir, which is a bigger town with more stay and dining options. However, Seyðisfjörður, though a little off route from the Ring Road, is an incredibly charming and picturesque town and I'm so glad I chose to stay here instead.
DAY 7	Seydisfjordur 🚗 Akureyri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dettifoss via 862 (west side view) -Viti Crater -Hverir Geothermal Area -Grjótagjá -Hverfjall -Myvatn Nature Baths. 	Akureyri	I decided to stay in Vik on this day mainly because 'The Barn' stay was available only for that date. You can always book a stay closer.
DAY 8	Akureyri 🚕 Snæfellsjökull	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Godafoss waterfall -Head to Snæfellsjökull. -Black Church at Búðir. -Arnarstapi cliffs & Hellnar. -Sunset at Kirkjufell + Kirkjufellsfoss. 	Grundarfjörður	You can choose to stay either in Grundarfjörður or Ólafsvík – both are great options. Grundarfjörður is closer to the iconic Kirkjufell mountain and waterfall, while Ólafsvík offers easier access to the other attractions across the Snæfellsjökull Peninsula.
DAY 9	Snæfellsjökull	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Skarðsvík golden beach. -Ingjaldshólskirkja church. -Hellissandur murals. -Stykkishólmur (Walter Mitty town). -Sunset at Kirkjufell 	Grundarfjörður	Same as above

Itinerary

*Day-by-day highlights from my
12 day journey around Iceland*

Day	Travel Plan	Things to do	Stay	Notes
DAY 10	Snæfellsjökull 🚗 Reykjavik	-Snorkelling at Sílfra -Reykjadalur Thermal River -Or skip the two above and book Kerlingarfjöll Hiking activity	Reykjavik	
DAY 11	Reykjavik	Explore Reykjavik	Reykjavik	
DAY 12	Flight back			



Fjadrargljufur canyon



Seljalandsfoss

Daywise Exploration

A structured guide to exploring Iceland efficiently without missing the highlights

DAY 1

Arrive at Reykjavik

Depending on your flight timings, you'll likely land at Keflavik airport, pick up your car and drive to the capital city, Reykjavik. Try arriving during the day if possible. It gives you a few extra hours to settle in, shake off the jet lag and get a taste of the city before your road trip begins. We landed around 2 PM, which left us with just enough time to explore Reykjavik at an easy pace.

Reykjavik, though small, is a charming, walkable city with plenty of character. Spend your first evening strolling around. Stop by cozy cafes, peek into local boutiques and simply soak in the Nordic vibe.



Hallgrímskirkja Church, Reykjavík

Here are a few things you shouldn't miss:

Hallgrímskirkja Church – The city's most iconic landmark. You can take the elevator up the tower for panoramic views of Reykjavik's colorful rooftops.

Verzlanahöllin Thrift Store – A hidden gem for vintage lovers. You'll need to dig through a bit, but it's worth it. We found a lovely red sweater here at a fraction of Iceland's usual prices.

Rainbow Street – A cheerful stretch painted in rainbow colors, created to celebrate Reykjavik's deep commitment to the LGBTQ+ community.

Local Cafes & Food Halls – Reykjavik's cafe culture deserves a slow afternoon. You'll find my detailed food recommendations in the "Food" section, but this is the perfect city to linger over coffee and people-watch.

Souvenir Shopping – Reykjavik has some beautiful souvenir stores – from hand-knit wool sweaters and lava jewelry to local chocolates and skincare.

The Golden Circle

The Golden Circle is Iceland's most popular and accessible driving route. It's a compact loop that showcases some of the country's most iconic natural wonders within a few hours' drive from Reykjavík. Many travellers and tour groups visit Iceland just to cover this route before heading back, so you'll likely find a fair bit of crowd along the way.

Öxarárfoss at Thingvellir National Park

A beautiful waterfall tucked inside Thingvellir National Park, Iceland's only UNESCO World Heritage Site on the mainland. The walk is quite a bit though. You'll take at least an hour to cover for the round trip from the parking lot.

Geysir

This geothermal field is home to Strokkur, the most active geyser in Iceland, erupting every 5–10 minutes. It's extremely touristy but still fascinating to watch. Fun fact – the English word geyser actually originated from here. For the best photos, position the sun behind the eruption.

Gullfoss Falls

One of Iceland's most iconic waterfalls and a major stop on the Golden Circle. The sheer power and volume of the Hvítá river crashing into the canyon are awe-inspiring. On sunny days, you might catch a rainbow arching over the falls.

Bruarfoss

Often called the "Blue Waterfall" of Iceland for its surreal icy-blue water, Bruarfoss feels almost unreal. It however involves a 3km up and down hike to the falls so plan accordingly.

Kerid Crater

We skipped this due to time constraints, but it's a striking volcanic crater lake with vivid red slopes and turquoise water. It's a short stop and a 15-minute walk around the rim offers a great perspective of Iceland's volcanic landscape.

Sunset at Dyrhólaey

A dramatic cliff overlooking the black sand beaches near Vík. The viewpoint is famous for its massive rock arch and sweeping views of Reynisfjara. At sunset, the light turns everything golden. It was a perfect way to end our day.

South Iceland Highlights

This stretch is easily one of the most spectacular drives in Iceland where every few kilometers bring something new and dramatic. From thunderous waterfalls to black sand beaches and mossy canyons, it's the part of the country that makes you stop every ten minutes just to take it all in.

Reynisfjara – The Black Sand Beach

Perhaps the most famous beach in Iceland, Reynisfjara is known for its jet-black volcanic sands, towering basalt columns and the striking Reynisdrangar sea stacks rising out of the ocean. It's hauntingly beautiful but notorious for its sneaker waves – sudden, powerful waves that can drag people into the sea. Stay well behind the warning signs and never turn your back to the water.

Seljalandsfoss

One of Iceland's most photographed waterfalls and for good reason. You can actually walk behind the curtain of water for a surreal perspective, especially at sunset when the golden light filters through the mist. Do wear your rain jacket, we got completely soaked once we were out.

Skógarfoss

The sheer power and perfect symmetry of this 60-meter waterfall make it unmissable. On sunny days, you might see double rainbows forming in its mist.

Fjaðrárgljúfur Canyon

A breathtaking canyon with winding river, lush moss-covered walls, and dramatic cliffs. There's an easy walking path along the rim offering multiple viewpoints. Go early morning or late evening to avoid crowds.

Now here are some places we missed due to time constraints but worth visiting.

Gljúfrabúi

A hidden gem just a short walk from Seljalandsfoss, is known as the Secret Waterfall because it's partly concealed behind a cliff. To reach it, you'll need to wade through a shallow stream into a narrow gorge and you'll suddenly find yourself standing at the base of a roaring waterfall surrounded by mossy walls.

Kvernufoss

Just a short walk from Skógarfoss and tucked inside a narrow gorge, you can walk behind it just like Seljalandsfoss but without the crowd.

Eldhraun Lava Fields

A vast stretch of moss-covered lava from one of Iceland's largest volcanic eruptions in history.

Ice, Blue, and Beyond

Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon



By now you have probably seen too many waterfalls and while they will make a comeback, today is all about glaciers and lagoons. Every stop on this stretch, from glacial tongues to ice-studded beaches is a reminder of nature's raw, evolving power.

Svínafellsjökull

A dramatic outlet glacier of the massive Vatnajökull ice cap, Svínafellsjökull is where you truly begin to grasp the scale of Iceland's ice world. The drive to the parking lot is bumpy but the short walk to the glacier edge is worth it. It's a little offbeat so you wouldn't find too many people here.

Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon

One of Iceland's most iconic sights. A serene, icy lagoon filled with floating icebergs that have broken off from the Breiðamerkurjökull glacier. You can take a zodiac or amphibian boat tour if time permits but even standing at the shore feels magical. Our Ice Cave exploration tour started from here.

Diamond Beach

Just across the road from Jökulsárlón, this black sand beach sparkles with ice chunks washed ashore from the lagoon, glistening like diamonds in the sun. Each piece is different, melting and reshaping with every wave.

Fjallsárlón Glacier Lagoon

A smaller and quieter version of Jökulsárlón, Fjallsárlón has its own tranquil charm. The glacier here feels much closer and the absence of crowds makes it even more special. You can sit by the edge, watch the ice drift and listen to the sound of cracking ice.



Stokksnes

Early morning sunrise at Stokksnes (Vestrahorn)

Start your day early as this is one sunrise worth losing sleep for. The black dunes, the mighty Vestrahorn peak and the golden light coming together create one of the most cinematic frames in Iceland. This is where you get to see the famous Iceland reflection photographs if the sun is by your side. The area is privately owned, so you'll need to pay a small entrance fee at the



Sourced from Freepik

Explore the Viking Village set

We skipped this but next to Stokksnes lies a small replica of a Viking village, originally built as a film set. Though it's not a big site, it's a fun stop for photos and to imagine what life in old Iceland might have looked like.



Ice cave exploration

Drive to Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon for Ice Cave Exploration

We had our Ice Cave exploration activity today. We can choose to do that or any other activity on that day. You can read more about ours under the 'Experiences & Activities' section.



Stokksnes

Early morning sunrise attempt 2 at Stokksnes

We made a second attempt at Stokksnes since the weather didn't cooperate on the day before. On a clear morning, the reflection of Vestrahorn on the wet black sands is pure magic.



Pit Stop towards Egilsstaðir

Drive towards the East – Egilsstaðir

This stretch is easily one of the most beautiful drives of the trip, especially in autumn when the valleys burst into shades of rust, gold and orange. Every curve revealed a new postcard-perfect view and we couldn't help but pull over multiple times for drone shots and sometimes just for quiet admiration. We were lucky to have a clear sunny day, which made the landscape glow even more.



Blue church

Seyðisfjörður

We were spending the night here, so we naturally ended up in Seyðisfjörður but even if you're staying in Egilsstaðir, it's worth taking the detour from the Ring Road. This charming little fjord town is straight out of a storybook, with colorful wooden houses, cozy corners full of character and the famous Rainbow Street leading up to its blue church.

The Raw North – Fire, Ice and Otherworldly Wonders

If there's one day that captures the raw, untamed energy of Iceland, it's this one. The landscape shifts dramatically, from thundering waterfalls to steaming geothermal fields, from deep blue craters to milky hot springs.

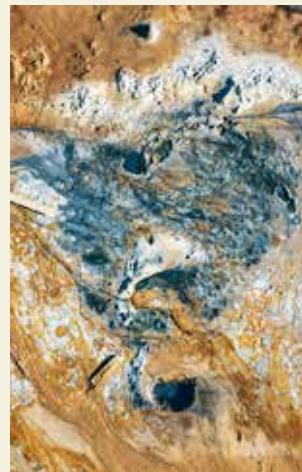
Dettifoss via Route 862 (the west side)

Europe's most powerful waterfall. You can hear it before you see it. You can also go from the lesser visited east side, but it requires a fair bit of walking.



Viti Crater

A brilliant turquoise lake sitting inside a volcanic crater.



Hverir Geothermal Area

A brilliant turquoise lake sitting inside a volcanic crater.



Mývatn Nature Baths

End your day soak into the warm, mineral-rich waters. I have added a detailed description under the 'Experiences & Activities' section.

Some places we missed due to time constraints but worth visiting.

Grjótagjá Cave

A small lava cave with a thermal spring inside, once a filming location for Game of Thrones.

Hverfjall

An enormous tephra crater that rewards you with panoramic views of the entire Mývatn region.

Goðafoss Waterfall

Start the day at Goðafoss, the 'Waterfall of the Gods.' Its perfect crescent shape and has a thunderous flow. Legend has it that when Iceland converted to Christianity, idols of the old Norse gods were thrown into these waters, marking the fall of the old faith and the rise of the new. Visit early to see the morning light catching the mist.

Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Then begin the long but scenic drive toward the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, often called 'Iceland in Miniature' because it captures the country's entire essence in one stretch. Lava fields, glaciers, waterfalls, black sand beaches, and quaint fishing villages.

Places to visit in Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Black Church of Búðir

A small wooden church painted in deep matte black, standing stark against the surrounding lava fields. We literally experienced three different weather here all in a span of an hour. First it was sunny, followed by intense rain and then appeared a double rainbow.

Arnarstapi & Hellnar Cliffs

The short trail connecting these two villages winds past dramatic basalt formations, sea arches and roaring waves.

Kirkjufell & Kirkjufellsfoss

End your day at Kirkjufell and Kirkjufellsfoss, one of Iceland's most iconic sights. The mountain's perfect pyramid shape, mirrored by the waterfall in front, looks almost too symmetrical to be real.



Skarðsvík golden beach.

A rare golden-sand beach in a country known for its black shores. The contrast of golden sand against dark volcanic cliffs is striking.

Ingjaldshólskirkja Church

A small white-and-red church perched on a hill overlooking the ocean. It's said to be the oldest concrete church in the world. This is also known as the famous 'eye test church' that got very popular in China so you'll see a lot of Chinese tourists here.

Hellissandur Murals

Once a quiet fishing village, it's now bursting with color and creativity. Over 30 murals paint its walls, depicting everything from Norse mythology to Icelandic folklore.

Stykkishólmur (Walter Mitty Town)

This is a charming seaside town made famous by The Secret Life of Walter Mitty. Its pastel houses, calm harbor and view from Súgandisey Cliff Lighthouse make it a place where time seems to slow down.

Sunset at Kirkjufell

We returned to Kirkjufell for sunset since we were staying really close to it and because no matter how many times you see it, it never loses its magic.



Kirkjufellsfoss



Ingjaldshólskirkja Church

DAY 10

Snorkelling at Silfra

Snorkel between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. The water is so clear you can see up to 100 meters below and it's a once-in-a-lifetime feeling to literally float between continents.

Reykjadalur Thermal River

An hour away from Reykjavik and a 3 kms one way hike through steaming hills and bubbling mud pools leads you to a natural hot river where you can soak in warm water surrounded by mountains. It's one of the few places in Iceland where you can actually bathe in a wild geothermal stream. Carry a quick-dry towel.

Kerlingarfjöll Hiking

If you'd rather skip the other two and want to do something truly special, head to Kerlingarfjöll. The mix of red rhyolite hills, steaming vents, and snow patches feels otherworldly. It's a bit of a detour and needs a full day, but absolutely worth it if you love hiking and want to see Iceland at its rawest and least crowded. You have to book this activity in advance. I have linked this experience under the 'Experiences & Activities' section.

DAY 11

Slow down and soak it all in. Your last day in Iceland deserves to be unhurried. Today we through Reykjavík's streets, had a couple of drinks, celebrated a little and reminisced about everything we've seen and felt over the past few days. It was a day full of emotions and quiet joy, the kind that only comes after an adventure of a lifetime.

If you missed exploring some spots on Day 1 like Hallgrímskirkja Church, Rainbow Street, or the local cafés, this is the perfect time to revisit them at your own pace before you wrap up your journey.

Reykjavík



DAY 12

Take that flight. Head back home with memories of a lifetime.

Staying in Iceland

Types of stays, how to book smartly and notes from my own experiences.



Djupivogur, iceland

Here are all the **stays** I booked, listed in the order of my travel. I'm also adding my personal ratings and little notes so you can make an informed choice.

These were among the best available options at the time since we booked a month in advance and our travel dates happened to coincide with a Chinese national holiday week, so a lot of places were already sold out. Make sure you book your stays soon after locking in your flights. Unlike many other destinations, you really can't wing it in Iceland, especially between the Golden Circle and glacier regions. Accommodation is sparse in these areas and fills up fast.

That said, we were really happy with the stays we picked. Almost all of them turned out to be great and had their own unique charm.

1) Grettir Guesthouse Downtown Charm, Reykjavik

Rating: 4 out of 5.

Pros: Central location, easy to find, spacious bathroom and access to a shared kitchen.

Cons: No private parking (like most places in downtown Reykjavik). If you get the basement room, there's no view.



Saudanes, Hofn

2) The Barn, Vik

Rating: 5 out of 5.

The Barn is one of the most popular hostels in Vík and usually sells out early, so it's best to book this first. It has private rooms as well as shared two-bed dorms which was pretty cool and a first for me personally.

Pros: Great place to meet other travellers, plenty of toilets, cozy and hip vibe, kitchen access.

Cons: Honestly, nothing to complain about.

3) Hotel Laki, Kirkjubaejarklaustur

Rating: 3.5 out of 5.

Pros: Hotel-style amenities, breakfast included in our deal and decently spacious rooms.

Parking space available

Cons: No kitchen access.



Seydisfjordur town

4) Saudanes, Hofn

Often called the "Blue Waterfall" of Iceland for its surreal icy-blue water, Bruarfoss feels almost unreal. It however involves a 3km up and down hike to the falls so plan accordingly.

5) Seydisfjordur Guest House, Seydisfjordur

Rating: 5 out of 5

Pros: Very cozy and filled with hygge elements, great location, big kitchen and spacious rooms. Parking available

Cons: None, we loved every bit of it.

6) Hafnarstræti Hostel, Akureyri

Rating: 3 out of 5

These are unique pods stays. If you haven't stayed in pods before, do check the pictures and read about them before booking.

Pros: Well located, access to kitchen, equipped with new-age technology, big common area.

Cons: No dedicated space to keep luggage. May feel claustrophobic if you're not comfortable with closed spaces, no private parking available.

7) Grundarfjördur Hostel, Grundarfjördur

Rating: 3.5 out of 5

Pros: Centrally located and very close to Kirkjufell waterfall, with full kitchen access.

Cons: Rooms are slightly small and parking space is about 200 metres away.

8) Bus Hostel, Reykjavík

Rating: 4 out of 5

Pros: Spacious rooms, close to the bus station, parking available and full kitchen access.

Cons: Located slightly away from Reykjavík city centre.



Seyðisfjörður

Experiences & Activities

Food budgeting, my favorite meals and hidden gems from across Iceland.

A trip to Iceland, in my opinion, can be divided into three broad elements.

The **first** is the **road trip** itself. Truly extraordinary. The landscapes shifted dramatically every single day and we were constantly greeted by jaw dropping scenery that felt almost otherworldly. If I were to just drive across Iceland without stepping out even once, I think I'd still be spellbound.

The **second** is the **scenic points**, which are mostly free of cost except for a parking fee. This covers a majority of what you'll see in Iceland – waterfalls, glaciers, national parks, churches, sunset spot and countless unnamed stops along the way that'll take your breath away.

The **third** is the **activities** which need to be booked in advance and come with a set cost. Out of the many available, we chose to do two.

1) Myvatn Nature Baths

Iceland is dotted with natural thermal **hot springs** and soaking in one is an absolute top to-do. The most famous is the Blue Lagoon, located near Reykjavík but it's also quite commercial and expensive.

We opted for the **Myvatn Nature Baths** in the north and it turned out to be one of our most loved experiences from the trip. It felt more intimate, quieter and less crowded. We paid around **6000 INR** per person and got a drink each at an additional cost.

There's something magical about sitting in warm, mineral-rich water while icy winds blow around you. Steam rising, the landscape stretching out endlessly and everything slowing down for a while. It's easily a **5/5 experience** and one I'd wholeheartedly recommend.

We booked our slots directly through their [official website](#). You can also book via [GetYourGuide](#).



2) Jökulsárlón Ice Cave Exploration

Jökulsárlón ice cave exploration is a guided winter experience that takes you deep inside the natural blue ice caves of the **Vatnajökull glacier** reached via a 4 by 4 vehicle or a bus ride from the Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon area. These caves are famous for their **blue hues** – a result of centuries of compressed ice that has pushed out air and created a crystal like transparency.

That said, I would still call it a **skippable** experience for us, mainly for two reasons. One, the **weather** was **extremely harsh**. We had relentless rain and freezing cold and walking several kilometres in that weather wasn't particularly enjoyable. And two, around October, a layer of **black volcanic dust** settles on the glaciers, turning them dark and making them look quite different from the stunning blue ones you see in photos. The first thing our guide told us on the bus was, "It doesn't look like the pictures right now," which set our expectations.

Still it was fascinating to learn about the glacier, walk on its surface and witness its scale in person. The caves change shape and size every year due to the glacier's movement, so no two visits are ever the same. And knowing that they might cease to exist in the future adds a certain urgency to seeing them now. I've seen incredible photos from other travellers who went in better weather, so I truly think it depends on luck and timing.

We booked our experience through [Troll.is](#), though I'd recommend checking [localguide.is](#) first, as they're one of the main operators. It was sold out there for our dates, so we went ahead with Troll. The tour cost us around **15000 INR** per person and took roughly half a day.

Please note: This activity involves a fair bit of **walking**, so it may not be suitable for those who prefer to avoid long or uneven walks. It's available **only during the winter** months, when the natural ice caves are formed. If you're visiting in summer, you can opt for the **Katla glacier caves** instead. They are man-made but remain open all year round.

A few other activities I'd recommend, ones we couldn't fit in because of time or weather, are:

Glacier Ice Walk/Climb in Jökulsárlón

Whale Watching in Akureyri or Reykjavik

Silfra Snorkelling (you literally snorkel between two tectonic plates – how cool is that!) at Thingvellir national park

Kerlingarfjöll Hiking Day Tour from Reykjavik

All of these are highly rated and worth considering if your itinerary and weather allow.



Ice cave exploration

Costs & Budgeting

A realistic look at expenses – what's worth splurging on and where to save.

List of expenses	Cost (INR)	Notes
Flights	1,80,000	
Visa	20,000	There's an additional fee of 2500/pax if you go via an agent
Travel Insurance	1200	
Stays	1,50,000	You can save a considerable amount here if you book a campervan instead
Car rentals	1,10,000	Includes the platinum insurance and road side assistance costs
Petrol	40,000	
Parking	15,000	
Activities	42,000	Myvatn Hot Springs and Glacier Ice Cave
Eating out + groceries	48,000	
Misc	15,000	Includes shopping, souvenirs, drinks, scooter rentals at Reykjavik
Total	6,21,200	

Please note: These are **costs for two people** in the month of September–October in 2025.

- This is a **rough estimate** of your **budget** in Iceland. **Costs** can vary depending on the season, availability of stays and flight prices.
- We saved quite a bit by cooking our own meals, while choosing to splurge on cozy stays instead of going the campervan route.
- On our last day, we returned the car two days early and explored Reykjavik on foot and by scooter, saving on one day of car rental. For the airport transfer, we took the Flybus, which was simple and convenient.
- Remember, little planning in advance goes a long way in keeping your Iceland trip comfortable without stretching your budget too far.

Food & eatery Recommendations

Food budgeting, my favorite meals and hidden gems from across Iceland.

I'm a big advocate of trying **local food** wherever I travel. In fact, many of my trips are built around it. I suppose, the Bengali in me makes me a full time foodie. But food in Iceland is quite expensive and eating out every day can take up a big portion of your budget. We found a good balance by doing about **80% eating in and 20% eating out**.

Ready-to-eat meals. Pre-cooked ready-to-eat meals were absolute lifesavers for us. They're easy to carry, quick to make and surprisingly more delicious than I imagined. Some of what we took along were Masala Rice, Chole, Dal Makhani, Dal Rice, Thai Curry, Lemon Rice, Chana Masala, Bisibele Bath. My friend was vegetarian, so we stuck to veg options, but there are plenty of great non-vegetarian ones available online or in supermarkets too.

Breakfasts were cereal and spreads from home milk locally.

For lunch, since outdoors and on the wasn't always carried cup noodles WaiWai) or picked up hotdogs from petrol usually have small exactly cheap but than restaurant costs around 350 about 550 INR.



Brauð & co, Reykjavík

simple. We carried jam/peanut butter and bought bread and

we're usually go, heating food possible. We often (Maggi, Buldak, Koka, sandwiches and stations, which cafés. They aren't relatively cheaper options. A croissant INR and a hotdog

Since you'll probably be on the road for long hours, carry **snacks**. We had a snack bag filled with soy sticks, popcorn, chips, cakes, biscuits, chocolates and dry fruits. It often came to our rescue on long stretches with no food in sight.

Supermarkets in Iceland are quite an experience, so definitely explore them. Some of them are massive and stocked with all sorts of interesting finds. I stumbled upon my favourite Australian biscuit, TimTam, on one of the shelves and it turned out to be cheaper than what I get in India so I instantly grabbed it.

If you do eat out, a few must-try Icelandic dishes would be the **classic hotdog, Icelandic lamb/mushroom soup, burgers and fish and chips**.

Here are some of my favourite restaurants from the trip that I've listed down for you.

Eateries in Reykjavík

Krua Thai

I was personally delighted to find a **Thai** place in Iceland (my second favourite cuisine after Bengali food) and ended up eating here twice. Comforting flavours, generous portions and a nice break from all the breads.

Posthus Food Hall

A buzzing **food hall** with several cuisines under one roof and a lively open-space dining setup. We tried some spaghetti from an Italian place and some sushi from a Japanese cart.

Bæjarins Beztu Pylsur

The most famous hotdog stand in Iceland and rightly so. You might spot long queues but they move quickly. The **hotdogs** are juicy, flavourful and have that perfect crunch from crispy onions.

Braud and Co.

Famous for their **cinnamon rolls** and **sourdough breads**. You'll probably smell it before you spot it. Gosh, they were lovely. I am drooling a little remembering them right now.

Baka Baka

Another lovely must-try **bakery**. We went around closing time and lucked out with a free sweet bun.

Bastard Brew and Food

A fun, happening bar with good cocktails and pub food. We had a cocktail here.

Kaffibarinn Bar

Another fun and a little **old-school bar**. We celebrated our last evening with beers here.



Icelandic mushroom soup



Fish and chips

Eateries from other locations

Pylsuvagnin in Selfoss town

The only place in Iceland serving **vegan hotdogs**. So if you're vegetarian and still want to try the famous Icelandic hotdogs, this is your spot. You can try this by taking a short detour on your way to Vik.

The Old Dairy Food Hall

Located in Selfoss, right next to the Pylsuvagnin hot dogs, this beautifully restored building was once Iceland's first dairy factory and is now a modern **food hall** with multiple restaurants under one roof. It's a great stop for lunch or to pick up food for the night.

Turninn Kebab, Akureyri

This place was right opposite our hostel, serving delicious **doner kebab rolls** – both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Quite reasonable too by Icelandic standards.

Kaffi 59 in Grundarfjordur

I had **fish and chips** here and quite liked it. Simple, hearty and crispy.

Harbour cafe in Grundarfjordur

Another local favourite at Grundarfjordur. Cosy, warm and well-loved by both tourists and residents.

Valeria speciality coffee art and souvenirs in Grundarfjordur

We tried **coffee** and **hot chocolate** here. It was raining that day and we ran from our stay to this place and felt instantly cosy once we stepped in. Although expensive, the coffee was quite delicious.

Hafid Bistro

We stumbled upon this gem while taking a detour to look for a petrol pump on our way to Egilsstaðir. It was located in a fairytale looking port town.. This is where we tried the famous **Icelandic soup** and it was delicious.

Packing for Iceland

Everything you need (and don't) to stay warm, dry and comfortable.

While Iceland is breathtaking, its weather can be truly unpredictable. I can't stress this enough - **be prepared for every kind of weather**, no matter which season you visit. The key to staying warm in Iceland is effective layering. It allows you to adapt easily, adding or removing layers as temperatures shift through the day.

Here's everything I carried for my trip during the autumn months, along with a few links to what worked best for me.

Clothing

- Thermals. Ideally carry 2 pairs (top and bottom) because this is something you'll ideally be wearing all the time.
- Windproof and rain-resistant winter jacket. Carry atleast one of this and don't compromise on quality. This will quite literally save you on bad weather days. I personally carried two, one from Decathlon and another from Superdry.
- One wind proof light down jacket
- Sweaters/Fleece – Atleast 2-3 for your mid-layer
- 3-4 regular tshirts
- 1-2 trek pants or pants suitable for all terrains
- 1-2 comfortable pants. I personally carried my uniqlo white and black pants
- 2 woollen caps
- 2-3 woollen socks and 2-3 regular socks
- Mufflers/neck warmers
- Raincoat (Full Set): Top + bottom. This is non-negotiable and again should be of good quality. Getting drenched in the cold is not fun.
- Swimwear. For thermal baths and hot springs.

Footwear

- Waterproof Trekking Shoes/Boots. For all terrains.
- Slip-ons or Chappals. For indoors or when visiting hot springs.

Miscellaneous

- Waterproof Bag / Rain Cover: To protect your essentials.
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Torch / Headlamp
- Thermal Bottle: To carry hot water on the go.
- Medicine Pouch
- Quick-Dry Towel
- Power Bank
- Toiletries

- **Photography Equipments I carried**
- A lightweight tripod for your mobile phone
- DJI Mini Pro 4
- Phones – iphone 16 pro and vivo X200 and Fold
- Gopro 10 for underwater shots (incase you are doing Silfra snorkelling)
- Sony A7iii



Reynisfjara – black sand beach

Handy apps & Websites

Tools that made planning and navigation effortless.

Parka

This is the official app to pay for **parking** at all places. You can add your card details here and pay directly through the app once you are at the parking spot. Alternatively, there are parking booths at every location to pay for parking directly, using your card.



Icelandic horses

Road.is

The official website of the **Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration**. It provides up-to-date information on road conditions, weather warnings and closures across the country. It's a great site to keep handy on your phone. We would make it a habit to do a quick check each morning before we start our journey to stay informed about any roadblocks or closures.

Vedur.is

The official website for **weather** updates in Iceland. While your regular weather app works fine, this one offers far more accurate, detailed and hourly forecasts specific to each region. We used it throughout our trip and it turned out to be impressively reliable.

My Aurora Forecast app

This is the app we used to track the **Northern Lights**. While there are plenty of expensive Northern Lights tours in Iceland, you can easily save that budget and track them on your own. We relied on this app along with the Vedur website every evening to check our chances. It shows real-time KP index, forecasts and best viewing locations – all in an easy, free-to-use interface.

Google Maps

It's best to **download** the entire **Iceland map** on Google Maps before your trip. There were long stretches where we didn't have internet access and having offline maps ensured we didn't lose our way.

Tips & Takeaways

Practical advice, cultural notes, and little things you'll thank yourself for.

Most Indian cards don't work at Iceland's **petrol stations**. These stations typically deduct a large amount first and then refund the difference, which Indian banks often flag as a fraudulent transaction. It's best to inform your bank beforehand.

Alternatively what I did was buying **prepaid fuel cards** directly from staffed petrol stations and using those throughout the trip. At some places, the staff can also manually activate the pump for you so you can pay by card after refuelling. However, since many stations are completely self-service, plan your fuel stops in advance, especially on long drives through remote areas.

You can **drink** water from **anywhere** in Iceland. Tap water is exceptionally clean and safe, sourced directly from natural springs and glaciers. Carry a **reusable water bottle** to stay hydrated while exploring and to reduce plastic waste. Carry at least one **thermal bottle** to keep hot water during long drives. It comes in handy for instant meals like cuppa noodles or just to have a warm drink.



Fjadrargljufur canyon



Northern lights at Seydisfjordur

Most **parking** areas in Iceland are self-regulated, but don't be fooled by the lack of attendants, nearly all have surveillance cameras. Skipping payment might seem easy at the moment but fines are automatically issued later. Always pay for parking to avoid unnecessary penalties.

Like most popular destinations, Iceland's main attractions can get crowded. The best time to experience them is **early morning or late evenings** (if you are travelling in summers). Plan your route accordingly and visit your must-see spots first each day if your map allows.

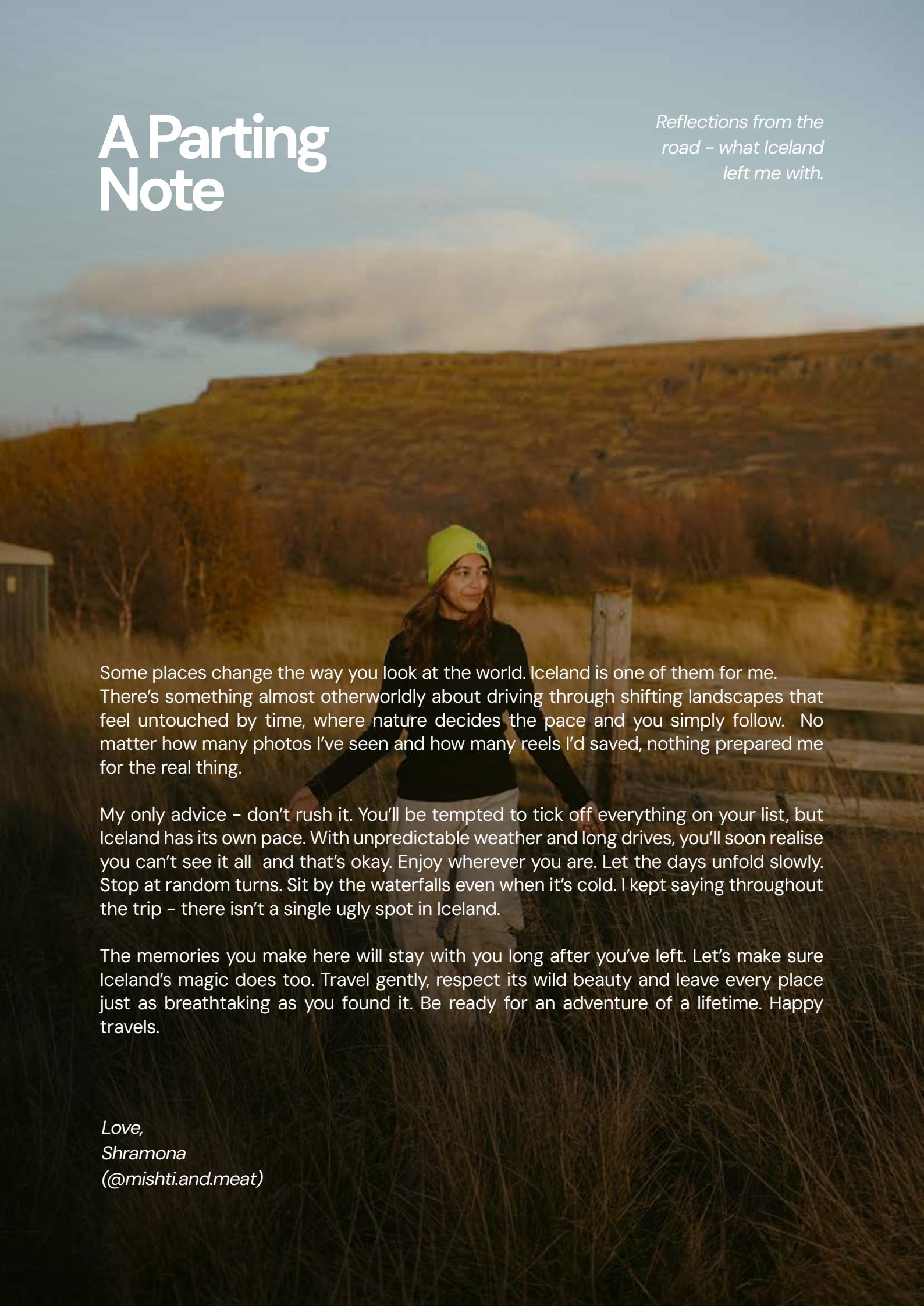
The weather changes fast. You can experience all four seasons in a single day. Always keep a raincoat and an extra layer handy.

Most Icelanders **speak English fluently**, so getting around and communicating is generally easy. However, it's always nice to learn a few local words, it shows respect for the culture and often brings a smile from the locals. **Takk** is thank you and **Bless** is goodbye.

Respect nature. Iceland's landscapes are fragile. Don't step on moss or venture off marked trails even for photos. The Reynisfjara black sand beach is infamous for sneaker waves. Even if the sea looks calm, these waves can sweep people off their feet and pull them into the ocean. So always stay a safe distance from the water's edge, never turn your back to the waves and follow any local safety warnings.

A Parting Note

Reflections from the road – what Iceland left me with.



Some places change the way you look at the world. Iceland is one of them for me. There's something almost otherworldly about driving through shifting landscapes that feel untouched by time, where nature decides the pace and you simply follow. No matter how many photos I've seen and how many reels I'd saved, nothing prepared me for the real thing.

My only advice – don't rush it. You'll be tempted to tick off everything on your list, but Iceland has its own pace. With unpredictable weather and long drives, you'll soon realise you can't see it all and that's okay. Enjoy wherever you are. Let the days unfold slowly. Stop at random turns. Sit by the waterfalls even when it's cold. I kept saying throughout the trip – there isn't a single ugly spot in Iceland.

The memories you make here will stay with you long after you've left. Let's make sure Iceland's magic does too. Travel gently, respect its wild beauty and leave every place just as breathtaking as you found it. Be ready for an adventure of a lifetime. Happy travels.

Love,
Shramona
(@mishti.and.meat)

**May Iceland stay with
you long after you
leave its shores.**

Íslandsvinur

[islands-vin-ur] • Icelandic saying

1. a friend of Iceland.
2. a person that keeps coming back to Iceland and thinks of it as a home away from home.
3. someone who really loves Iceland.

