

# Glaciers, Geysers and Hot Springs



Imagine an island, rising up from the North-Atlantic Sea and resting on the Arctic Circle's shoulder as one of the outposts of Europe. Iceland sits on its throne; a hot spot on the Mid-Atlantic ridge that gave birth to the island some 16 million years ago and is still moulding the landscape with its volcanic activity. Iceland is a geologically young land and the combination of the country's northerly location and its geology makes Iceland a place where forces of nature, fire and ice along with water and wind, come together to create spectacular scenery.

Iceland is the perfect destination for nature-loving travellers and is best known for its natural beauty although the domestic economic crisis of 2008, which made headlines all over the world, has boosted the world's attention. But the economical difficulties and the currency fall have not had a negative effect on the tourism industry, as travel enthusiasts now welcome the opportunity to visit more affordable Iceland.



Nature is the country's major attraction and even though travellers choose to use Reykjavik City as their base, many out-of-town destinations are within reach. A trip to the always popular Blue Lagoon on the Reykjanes peninsula; a glacier walk on Vatnajökull, one of the biggest glaciers in Europe; a visit to Thingvellir - a UNESCO world heritage site - or the Geysir hot spring area, are ways to get in close contact with nature even for those who do not have time to explore the more distant parts of

the island. The summertime is still the most popular period for travelling to Iceland, highlighted by the Midnight Sun, but travellers are gradually becoming more aware of the charm of the darker winter months as well. The temperate climate, moderated by the Gulf Stream, makes the winters mild even though swift winds can quickly cool down the temperature, often resulting in the dark skies lighting up with various coloured Northern Lights.

Glaciers cover 11% of Iceland and the country's largest icecap, Vatnajökull, is also Europe's largest glacier. The interior highlands remain the principal destination for the more adventurous traveller. Take Thorsmork in South-Iceland for example; it is a wondrous place, an oasis surrounded by glaciers, high mountains and deep glacier rivers. A guided tour to Thorsmork, preferably on a Super Jeep 4x4 vehicle, is an unforgettable experience through historical sites and rough terrain.

Vatnajökull National Park, in East Iceland, is home to the glorious Skaftafell but from there you can go ice climbing or glacier hiking or simply walk through the birch forests up to the waterfall Svartifoss (Black Fall) which flows over a step of about 12m high black basalt columns. From Vatnajökull National Park you can catch a glimpse of Iceland's highest peak, Hvannadalshnukur (2110 m), and you can even climb that peak accompanied by an experienced guide that equips you with all the necessary mountain- and glacier-climbing gear you need.

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Iceland is a warm country despite its position and nearness to the Arctic. Hot springs and geysers can be found in various areas near Reykjavik City and a hike through impressive geothermal areas is a mysterious experience not easily forgotten. Experience bubbling mud pools, steaming sulphur vents and boiling water pools as you hike through lava fields changing from black to green while looking out for elves and trolls.

Super jeep chauffeurs can take you on an adventure to some of the most amazing and beautiful locations in Iceland, that is not accessible by a regular vehicle or a bus. A jeep tour on a 4x4 vehicle will bring you up close and personal with Iceland's natural wonders first hand. They can drive you up to the colourful highlands or take you to the black sandy beaches. Or try horseback riding through the same scenery on an Icelandic pony. Whatever the travel method you choose, Iceland has so much natural beauty to offer and so much diversity too. Come and join us in this wondrous place of contrasts and natural phenomena.

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Date: 2009-11-30

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-glaciers-geysers-and-hot-springs-article1040>