

TOP 7 STUNNING NATURAL SITES IN ICELAND



Fiery, extreme, bubbling. Iceland is not a destination like the others. It is an experience in itself. You sail among unreal icebergs, you explore on foot the second largest glacier in Europe and you are amazed by the powerful geysers that gush from the bowels of the earth. Shaped by intense volcanic activity, this island of character offers in itself a condensed collection of exceptional places. Tourism

Review presents the most fascinating natural sites in the country.

The National Park of Thingvellir

Located 47 km from the capital Reykjavik, Þingvellir National Park is the first of the three main sites of the Golden Circle. This famous tourist route can be done in one day, or more if you are not in a hurry. In Þingvellir, you can live a singular experience: walking between two tectonic plates! In this particular place, the North American and Eurasian plates are moving away from each other by several millimetres per year, which explains the volcanic activity of the island. This movement leads to the formation of faults, such as the one of Almannagjá, several meters deep. A unique sensation: you are straddling Europe and America. This national park is also a place of Icelandic history: the first parliament of the country was founded here in 930 AD, which is why it is classified by UNESCO. Þingvellir is accessible all year round by car.

The Vatnajökull Glacier

Located in the southeast of the country, Vatnajökull is the second largest ice cap in Europe. With an area of about 8,000 sq km, it covers 8% of Iceland. Since 2008, it is integrated into the Vatnajökull National Park. To discover this ice colossus, the best place to go is Skaftafell, the starting point for many marked routes. In just one hour on foot, you will be face to face with Skaftafellsjökull, one of the glacier tongues of Vatnajökull.

Another more sportive hike takes you to the magnificent Morsárjökull glacier. The must: book a tour with a guide to walk on the ice. Put on your crampons and admire this icy world. Several agencies offer tours.

The Icebergs of Jökulsárlón

60 kilometers east of Skaftafell, Jökulsárlón is an absolute must-see in Iceland. This lagoon full of ice blocks is the result of the melting of Breiðamerkurjökull, another glacier tongue of the famous Vatnajökull. If you've never seen an iceberg, discovering this Arctic landscape can be like an initiation experience. Imagine yourself sailing between these giants of ice in various shapes and colors. From white to black, sky blue to turquoise, icebergs also change according to the light and the time of the year. They are one of the most fascinating natural sites in the region. Jökulsárlón can be reached all year round by tarred road number 1. You can admire the landscape from the shore but the best is to take a boat trip (from April to October).

The Geysers of Geysir

60 km east of Þingvellir, the Geysir geothermal field is the second major site on the Golden Circle route. If you have never seen a geyser, here is a golden opportunity to observe this rare and impressive spectacle. This set of hot springs consists of several geysers, starting with Geysir, famous for having given its name to this phenomenon. Today, it is not very active but just next door, you can admire Strokkur, which projects large jets of boiling water every five to ten minutes. Thrills guaranteed!

Many agencies offer day trips from Reykjavik to the Golden Circle route. For more independence, it is better to rent a car. The road is paved and passable all year round with a car.

The Mountains of Landmannalaugar

With its rhyolite mountains streaked with yellow, pink and red, Landmannalaugar is one of the most aesthetic natural sites in the country. From the refuge, you will have the choice of many walks. Don't miss the trail to Brennisteinsalda, a volcano rising to 855 meters that will surprise you with its red hues. At its feet, you will walk through solfatares, fumaroles releasing large amounts of sulfur. Climb to the top of Bláhnúkur, a volcano with amazing blue-green colors, covered with grey ash at the top. Back at the refuge, relax in the hot spring at 38°C.

Landmannalaugar is only accessible in summer. From June to September, a daily bus leaves from the bus station of Reykjavik. Otherwise, you will have to rent a 4x4. You can also make a day trip with an agency from Reykjavik.

The Gullfos Waterfall

10 km from Geysir, this waterfall is the third unmissable spot on the Golden Circle route. It is formed by the river Hvítá which leaves the Langjökull glacier before pouring here in a deafening din. You will be even more impressed that it is in fact a double waterfall with the first stage of eleven meters followed by a second fall of 21 meters. The result is grandiose and will fill your eyes. A path, open only during the summer, allows you to access the waterfall. You will be able to be sprayed by the powerful sprays that come up from the bottom of the ravine. Enough to invigorate you a little!

Lake Mývatn

Feel like traveling to another planet? Then don't miss the Mývatn lake area in the north-east of the country, and in particular the geothermal area of Hverarönd. As soon as you arrive, you will be caught by a powerful smell of sulfur. Listen carefully and you will hear the strange sound of mud pools bubbling all around you. White fumaroles rise up from the depths of the earth, giving this place its alien charm. Take the trail up to the top of Námafjall Mountain for a bird's eye view of this surreal landscape. At 10 km, go and see the Hverfjall crater. A path allows you to climb up to the crater. The view of the moss-covered lava fields is splendid.

Lake Mývatn is 460 kilometers far from Reykjavik. To save time, it is best to fly to Akureyri and then rent a car to explore the northeast region. You don't need a 4x4 to go to Hverarönd.

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