

Some facts about Iceland

Iceland is located in the North Atlantic Ocean. It is considered a part of Europe though it spans both Europe and North America. It's area spans 103,000 square kilometre which is fairly big considering the 307 thousand people that live there. It is located on a hot spot and therefore making Iceland extremely geologically active having many volcanoes – such as Hekla, Eldgjá and Eldfell. Although this has made life for Icelanders miserable throughout the years, for example in 1783 when the eruption of Laki killed nearly quarter of Iceland's population, this isn't a problem anymore since Icelanders know use this as a power source, but we'll come back on that later.

As you will see in this short introduction of Iceland, it's actually a pretty nice place to live in and that we do NOT live in igloos (fairly common delusion of Iceland).

Geography

Iceland is as I said square kilometre . Despite that, Reykjavík – the capital of Iceland – is the only major city with about 120 thousand inhabitants. It's also the heart of Iceland's economic and governmental activity. But Reykjavík only takes up 450 km² of area, so where is the 102,500 km² that 's left? Of course there's no one answer to this question but I'm going to sum up some things:

- Wasteland, first of all takes up an (not so) amazing ~ 64.550 square kilometre
- Glaciers (Vatnajökull, Langjökull, and so on) covers ~ 12.000 square kilometre
- Lakes also cover ~ 3000 square kilometre
- And then it's the vegetation areas which cover ~23,805 square kilometre



The northern, western and eastern side of Iceland is very jagged. That is, the coastline is very „messed up“ - as you can see on the picture. Travelling this can also often get fairly tedious as you might understand. On the highlands of Iceland on the other hand we have like sand - - - and stuff. It's actually so cold there that most of the time that it's uninhabitable.

And although Iceland's highlands are a large part of Iceland the habitable area also takes up much of

Iceland's whole area and there we can find lots of small-sized villages and sea-villages like the one we live in – Hornafjörður. Other noticeable (we do consider Hornafjörður „noticeable“) small-sized villages are Akureyri, Egilsstaðir (our rivals) and the Keflavík.

Iceland also has four national parks which are very popular amongst the tourists. The „Skaftafell national park“ is maybe the most famous of these four, but his area covers 1700 square kilometre. The other three are „Jökulárgljúfur national park“, „Snæfellsjökull national park“ and last but not least „Þingvellir national park“.

Religion

Icelanders enjoy the freedom of religion in their constitution. Despite that, Icelandic's „Þjóðkirkja“ (Lutheran national church) is not separated from the Icelandic state, and hasn't been since Catholicism came to Iceland around in the year 1000. Around 1550 Icelanders converted to Lutheran Christianity and still today the Icelandic state isn't separated from the national church. This might though be about to change since people are generally getting bored of the national church as well as the Christendom. The Icelandic registry keeps track of Icelandic citizen religious status and the latest numbers are as follows:

- 82.1% members of the National church (as Icelanders are born into that church)
- 5.5% are members of unregistered religious (or not so religious) groups.
- 4.7% are members of Free Lutheran Churches like „Frikirkjan“ (meaning the free church)
- 2.6% are atheists and not members of any religious group.
- 2.4% are members of the Roman Catholic religion.



The remaining percents are divided between many little religious groups, most Christian but some Icelanders still prefer believing in the old Nordic gods.

Climate

The climate in Iceland is very fluctuating. The warmth of the Gulf Stream (north Atlantic current) ensures generally higher temperatures than in most places of the same latitude as Iceland. The winters are actually mild – contrary to what some may think – while the summers are damp and cool. The heat in the summers has most gone up to 30.5 degrees of Celsius while the lowest temperature ever recorded in Iceland was -38°C in 1918. Generally though, the temperature doesn't exceed 24°C at summer or -10°C in the winters here in Hornafjörður.

The wind here in Iceland is also very typical for Iceland but Icelanders often, understandably, get really tired of that phenomena.

Culture

The people of Iceland watch to protect their traditions and language. Women occupy an important place in society, prominently in the government.

Iceland's national festival are the annual Independence Day, that celebrates our independence in 1944 (17. June). The "Sumardagurinn fyrsti" which celebrates the first day of summer. The "Sjómannadagurinn" which is held every June to pay tribute to the country's seamanship past. There are also few other minor festivals.



Cuisine



Traditional meals are e.g. "Hákarl" (putrefied shark), "Hangikjet" (smoked lamb), "Hrútsprungar" (ram's testicles) and "Slátur" (made of sheep entrails). A popular dessert is the "skyr" which is made of cultured skim milk and served with bilberries. Icelanders have a national drink which is called *Brennivín* (alcohol) and it is made from potatoes and caraway. Not everyone drinks *Brennivín* these days.

Sports

The most popular sports in Iceland today are soccer, athletics, basketball, golf, tennis, swimming, chess and horseback riding.

Chess is a very popular type of recreation favourite by the Icelanders Viking ancestors. Icelandic country chess clubs have created many chess grandmasters such as *Jóhann Hjartarson, Jón Arnason, Friðrik Ólafsson, Margeir Pétursson, Hannes Hlífar Stefánsson & Helgi Áss Grétarsson*.

The national sport of Iceland is the Icelandic "Glíma" which is a form of wrestling, probably from the Vikings.

Iceland has a real strong handball national team. It is ranked as one of the best teams in the world.

Icelandic women seem to be surprisingly good at football compared to the size of the country. It is currently ranked the eighteenth best by FIFA.

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