



Practical Information about Iceland

Clothing for Iceland/Greenland

The key to dressing for both countries climate is layering, regardless of season. Lightweight woolens, rain- and wind-proof jacket & trousers, and good walking/hiking shoes are essential if you plan to do any touring in nature. When traveling to Iceland in winter you should bring along a warm overcoat, hat, scarf, gloves, socks (preferably made of wool) as well a sweater and/or cardigan, and weatherproof shoes. Long thermal underwear (a shirt and pants), a layer of fleece on top. In summer, carry a light, and preferably water-resistant, jacket. As trails are not common, sturdy walking shoes for trekking & hiking are needed. Else comfortable sneakers are convenient. Sometimes even rubber boots can be of use. Good to bring casual clothes for going out. Always bring a bathing suit! Icelanders' favorite pastime year-round is outdoor swimming in the countless geothermally-heated pools and lagoons.

Business, Banking & Shopping Hours

Office hours are generally M-F 9:00 to 17:00 and 8:00 to 16:00 during June, July and August. Banking hours are M-F 9:15 to 16:00. General Post Office hours are M-F 09:00–16:30. Shopping hours are M-F 9:00 to 6:00; Sat from 10:00 /11:00 to 14:00/18:00. Some food stores are open to 23:00 seven days a week or even 24 hours in the larger towns. Shopping malls, souvenir and bookshops in the city center are open on weekends.

Calling from Iceland

The international code for calling Iceland from abroad is 354. There are no area codes in Iceland. To call internationally from Iceland, first dial 00 followed by the country code and telephone number. For directory assistance dial 118.

Cell Phone Systems

The following mobile systems can be used in Iceland: GSM900 and 1800, 2G, 3G and UMTS 4G. Pre-paid cards are available at petrol stations around the country.

Currency & Money Exchange

The Icelandic monetary unit is the krona (plural kronur), which is abbreviated Kr or ISK. Money can be easily exchanged at the airport, bank and currency exchanges. All major credit cards are accepted and can be used to pay for virtually anything – except the public buses. Electron, Maestro and EDC debit cards are increasingly being accepted by merchants. ATM/Bank machines are found in most banks and many other locations throughout the country. Look for the Hradbanki sign.

Electricity

The electric current in Iceland is 220 volts; 50 Hz AC. Icelandic electrical plugs are of the rounded, European two-pin type.

Entry Requirements

A passport valid is at least three months beyond intended stay, is required for visitors to Iceland. Travel between countries participating in the Schengen cooperation is allowed without formal passport control including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Germany. For additional information on passport and visa requirements see Icelandic Directorate of Immigration website www.utl.is/english.

Internet Access

Iceland is a tech-savvy country with internet access available almost everywhere including internet cafes in the larger cities and towns. Hotels and Guesthouses generally offer internet access and Wi-Fi free of charge. Internet websites for businesses and organizations in Iceland end in the suffix '.is'.

Language

Icelandic is the national language of Iceland although English and Scandinavian languages are widely spoken.

Medical Attention / Emergencies

There are medical centers or hospital in all major cities and towns in Iceland. The 24-hour emergency phone number in Iceland is 112. Pharmacies are called 'Apotek' and are open during normal business hours. See also www.safetravel.is.

Public Holidays

Businesses, banks and most stores are closed on public holidays. For a complete list of holidays and events please see our Events and Festivals page.

Public Transportation

Extensive bus services are available in all major cities and towns. Tickets can be purchased at the local bus station or from the driver with exact change. Children under the age of four travel free of charge, and half price is charged for children aged 4–11. There is no rail or subway system in Iceland.

Smoking in Public / Drinking Age

Wine, beer and spirits are sold in government run stores called Vinbudin. The age limit for buying alcohol is 20. Smoking is not permitted on board aircrafts or other means of public transport. It is not permitted to smoke in public buildings and other places open to the public, offices, shopping centers, hotels, bars, and restaurants. The age limit for buying tobacco is 18.

Special Needs Travel

Iceland is putting increased emphasis on adapting facilities for special needs travelers. Many hotels, restaurants and larger department stores are accessible to wheelchair users. For accessible tourist attractions see the official website for the Association of the Disabled in Iceland. (<http://www.sjalfsbjorg.is/index.php/forsiea/english>)

Taxis

All taxis accept credit cards and have to be reserved in advance. In some major cities and towns there are also taxi stations where you can line up to get a car. And there are of course taxi stands at airports for transfer. (Arriving in Iceland)

Time Zone

Iceland is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) throughout the year, and does not adjust to daylight saving time.

Tipping

In Iceland gratuity is always included in the bill therefore tipping is not required. This applies to everything: restaurants, taxis, cafés, room service and more. However if you do feel that you have received great service, Icelanders appreciate a tip and will gladly accept it.

Traveling with Pets

Iceland is one of the few European countries without rabies, therefore traveling to Iceland with a dog or cat requires a strict application process with several forms, an import application fee, and four weeks of quarantine.

VAT Tax-Free Shopping

Value Added Tax in Iceland is 25.5% or 7% on special goods. A refund of the local VAT is available to visitors and will result in a reduction of up to 15% of the retail price provided departure from Iceland is within 30 days after the purchase is made. The purchased amount must be no less than ISK 4,000, (VAT included) per sales receipt. Refunds can be collected in the departures hall of Keflavik International Airport.

Practical Information about Greenland

The remote location and island status of Greenland means that virtually all items must be imported; hence, even everyday items cost more than they do in Iceland or Denmark (which Greenland is a part of) or are simply sold out during your stay. Accommodations tend to be small in size, due to high cost of importing building materials. Repairs might also take a while, due to spare parts or tools being imported.

Please keep in mind that the Greenlandic travel infrastructure is not comparable with Western standards and service is often more relaxed than you will find elsewhere. Most towns and villages have limited resources of planes, boats, helicopters and guides, so even with the best preparation possible, unexpected events can change your travel plans, such as flights not being on time, sudden weather changes or last-minute cancellations of other participants, leading to a specific tour not reaching the minimum.

We can therefore not completely exclude uncertainties or minor inconveniences, but as soon as you adapt to the lack of haste in Greenland, you will find the country a fascinating and breathtaking destination.

The Greenlandic people remain in many ways, unaffected by the influence of the Western culture and true to their own customs. As a result of this you may see things that you do not personally agree with, but which form a part of the culture and customs in Greenland. This may come in the form of food offered in restaurants, items for sale or the way the locals treat their dogs, which some people may find disturbing. It is important to remember that the dogs are working animals and not pets. However, you will find the people of Greenland very friendly and that generous hospitality has deep roots in the society.

Climate

Greenland is the world's largest island at 810,810 square miles. It boasts the Northern Hemisphere's largest ice sheet – 694,981 square miles, which cover 85 percent of its total area. The Greenland climate is arctic to sub-arctic, but the distance between north and south means there are tremendous differences in temperature and climate. Thanks to a very dry air, cool summers feel surprisingly comfortable. In general, summer temperatures are highest inland and coolest along the coasts. But you will be surprised to know that warm + 70° F days are not uncommon during the summer!

What to wear

It is best to be prepared by wearing “layered” clothing. The outer layer should be wind and waterproof. Gloves and hats are recommended when sailing. It is a good idea to wear solid boots, waterproof shoes or rubber boots with a solid sole in the summer and winter. Clothing tends to be casual in Greenland and acceptable also in finer restaurants.

Currency

Danish Krone (DKK).

Accepted Credit / Debit Cards and ATMs

These cards are valid at banks or ATMs although we advise you to carry some cash as not all shops accept foreign credit cards: VISA, VISA PLUS-card, VISA Electron, Euro cheque card, Eurocard/Mastercard. Traveler's checks are usually not accepted in Greenland.

Electricity

220 voltages is standard (as in much of Europe). You may want to bring an adapter.

Time Zones

There is a four hour difference between Copenhagen and Greenland (Kangerlussuaq). When it is 10.00 am in Greenland it is 14.00 in Copenhagen. There is a two hour difference between the American East Coast and Greenland. When it is 10:00 am in Greenland it is 8:00 am EST in Baltimore.

Communication

Greenland has a modern telecommunications infrastructure, and it is possible to access the internet at most hotels and many net cafes.

Entering the country

Although Greenland is a part of Denmark, a Schengen visa is not valid to travel to Greenland. It needs to be specifically marked "Valid for Greenland" on the visa (if the Schengen visa is issued by a Danish Embassy and valid for Greenland) Valid travel ID or passport must be shown, when entering and leaving Greenland. American citizens do not require a visa for trips shorter than 3 months.

Import restrictions

Greenland is not considered a European Union country. Information on what you can bring into the country is available in airports – although drugs, weapons, living animals – including pets and birds are not allowed.

NB: From January 1, 2011 it is forbidden to bring any form of beer, wine and spirits with you when entering Greenland.

Export restrictions

It is illegal to import any art or artifact created from a marine mammal, including whalebone, walrus tusks (ivory) and narwhal tusks (also ivory) into the USA. For more information, contact a local tourist office.

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