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# 10 reasons to visit Iceland



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Bathers in hte Blue Lagoon. Jane Mundy

It looks like another planet

Eerie rock formations, black sand beaches, volcanic craters, icebergs in glacial lagoons: all provide incredible photo opportunities.



Thermal Springs

Either begin or end your trip at the world-famous Blue Lagoon —it’s close to the airport, but book well in advance. There are many geothermal springs scattered all over Iceland. Some are in farmers’ fields, others like Fontana spa have steam rooms and saunas. In Reykjavík alone there are 15 outdoor pools—it’s a social thing. The city has so much hot spring water they pump it into the lake so you can go

VIDEO

Advertisement: Whistler  
3:31

VANCOUVER WEATHER

10°C



Fog  
Feels like 9°C

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

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swimming without freezing. And you have to put your bathing suit on *before* showering.

#### Waterfalls

So many waterfalls, so many photo ops. Some are powerful and enormous, others are like a long cool drink. Many have their own rainbows. You can walk behind Seljalandsfoss –pack a raincoat.



#### Icelandic Horses

There are four horses in Iceland for every human. These half-pint horses with punk hairdos are extremely friendly and sociable and love having their photos taken—especially when cajoled with a treat. The Icelandic horse is unique: it has an extra four-beat gait called a “tolt”. Several companies offer horseback excursions.

#### Puffins

It’s a birders paradise. Arctic terns abound but the real show-stopper is the puffin, with their goofy cute looks. You can easily spot them at Dyrholaey, a nesting area for these seabirds. Souvenir shops sell all things puffin. You’ll also see puffins smoked and pickled on many restaurant menus and I deeply regret taking a bite.

#### Midnight Sunshine

Endless hours of sunlight means more adventure time. Between June and August you can play golf, go horseback riding and soak in thermal springs at midnight. It’s a bonus for jetlagged travelers coming from B.C. whose body clocks are seven hours behind: you can sleep until noon and still pack in 12 hours of activities.



Iceland is a birders paradise with puffins being the feature attraction. Jane Mundy

### Northern Lights

Although you can (sometimes) see the Northern Lights in our northern climes, Iceland is your best bet. If you're staying in a hotel ask for a wake-up call so you won't miss them swirling across the sky in the middle of the night.

### No Mosquitoes

Virtually no mosquitoes still puzzle scientists. Lake Mývatn is home to *black flies that have been known to bite, but I can attest to being surrounded by black flies and walking away unscathed. Wasps are scarce. Felines flourish in Reykjavik* and they'll likely sidle up to you looking for a hand-out. They even have a Facebook page. If you're afraid of snakes, this island is for you.



### Best Road Trips

You can drive the Golden Circle 300 km route in a day and still experience spectacular landscapes. Horses and sheep flank the roadsides (the latter sometimes cross it) on your way to the Geysir geothermal field (yes, Iceland gave us the word geyser), where Strokkur hot spring dutifully erupts about every five minutes. You can't miss the Gullfoss waterfall and Kerid Crater Lake, formerly a volcanic crater.

Or circumnavigate the island. The 1,300 km Ring Road typically takes a week if you make leisurely stops for geothermal springs, waterfalls and rainbows, iceberg lagoons and volcanoes. In the summer months the road is safe and smooth.

### Architecture

Inspired by nature, Hallgrímskirkja church, the tallest building in Reykjavik looks like basalt columns that surround Svartifoss waterfall. Harpa, the new concert hall and Reykjavik's cultural hub, is also inspired by crystallized basalt columns. Its geometric constructions of steel and glass are designed to mirror the city. Visitors are encouraged to freely stroll the exhibition area. There is a bar, bistro and restaurant on-site.

List compiled by Jane Mundy who was a guest of Exodus Travel. No one from Exodus Travel read or approved of this list before publication.

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