



## Reykjavik Tourist Guide

### The four “Must See and Do’s” when visiting Reykjavik

- ▶ Bathing in the Hot Springs
- ▶ Hallgrímskirkja Church- Reykjavik’s landmark
- ▶ The Family Park and Zoo
- ▶ Reykjavik 871 +/-2 The Settlement Exhibition

### Municipality Facts 01

**Population**  
118 000

**Area**  
274,50 km²

**Regional Center**  
Reykjavik

### More Information 02

**Internet**  
[www.reykjavik.is](http://www.reykjavik.is)  
[www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

**Newspapers**  
The Reykjavik Grapevine  
[www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)  
Morgunbladið  
[www.mbl.is](http://www.mbl.is)  
Dagbladið Vissi  
[www.dv.is](http://www.dv.is)

#### Tourist Bureaus

**Visit Reykjavik**  
Adalstraeti 2, Reykjavik  
00354-590 1500  
[www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

### Notes 03

**Emergency** 112  
**Police** 570 25 00  
**Country Code** +354



Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

## Welcome to Reykjavik, the Hot Spring’s Capital

Reykjavik is a compact city which makes it easy to discover, whether you walk or travel by public transportation. In addition, a great landscape awaits you just a few minutes from the town center.

You can explore Reykjavik at your own pace or by one of the many organized tours. Don’t be afraid to ask one of the locals for assistance because they are very friendly and almost everyone can speak English.

Public transport is good, with a network of buses in Reykjavik and its’ suburbs, and taxis are always available.

Visit Reykjavik Tourist Office for assistance in planning your visit. Don’t hesitate to inquire about “The Reykjavik Tourist Card”, which is a good value for the money - especially if you plan to use the city’s buses. In addition, you get free entrance or discounts at the hot springs, museums and much more.





# Tourist Guide Reykjavik

## See and Do

### City

Reykjavik is the largest city in Iceland with a population of approximately 115,000. The surrounding cities and the metropolitan area of Reykjavik has a total population of around 170 000, which is about 60% of Iceland's population of 300,000.

#### Nature

In Reykjavik, you can enjoy many nature's miracles in a fantastic landscape. The magnificent landscape surrounding Reykjavik serves as an excellent school book of nature and geology. Children and adults alike, are fascinated by the bubbling hot springs, gleaming glaciers and plangent waterfalls, which come in all shapes and sizes. Outdoor activities such as horseback riding and whale watching, is an unforgettable experience.

## History

### Reykjavik's History

Iceland was settled by Norwegian and Celtic immigrants during the late 9th and 10th centuries A.D. According to the medieval Book of Settlements, Ingolfur Arnarson – the first settler of Iceland – built his farm on the peninsula where Reykjavik stands today. The place was named Reykjavik – “Smoky Bay” - after the columns of steam that rose from the hot springs in the area and made such a profound impression on the original settlers.

Many centuries later, around the middle of the 18th century, a small town started to grow around the farm of Reykjavik, thanks to Royal Treasurer Skuli Magnusson, known as the Father of Reykjavik, who established wool workshops at Reykjavik as part of his efforts to modernize the Icelandic economy. This led to the beginnings of urban development at Reykjavik. Reykjavik received its town charter in 1786.

The Icelandic parliament, Althingi, was founded in 930 AD at Thingvellir in the southwest. In 1798 the Althingi was abolished, but in 1845 it was reestablished in Reykjavik, where the country's government and administration were now located.



Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

When Iceland won Home Rule and then independence from Danish rule, Reykjavik became the capital of Iceland. With the rapid economic progress of the 20th century, Reykjavik grew steadily, but developed especially fast in the second half of the century.

For a living view of Reykjavik's past, visit the open-air Reykjavik City Museum-Arbaejarsafn, located in the eastern part of the capital. The newly opened and innovative Reykjavik 871 +/-2 Settlement Exhibition, located on Adalstraeti in the city center, allows visitors to view the recently discovered, oldest settlement ruins in Reykjavik and Iceland (possibly those of Ingolfur Arnarson or his descendants), featuring an original Viking age Long House.



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## Tourist Guide Reykjavik

### See and Do



Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

### Swimming

#### Arbaejarlaug (Swimming)

A large, modern pool with excellent facilities for children, popular with locals from all over the city.

*Fylkisvegur, Reykjavik*  
**+354 567 39 33**

#### Blue Lagoon

Blue Lagoon, just a few minutes from Keflavik International Airport, is a highly popular destination for visitors to Iceland.

Mineral-rich hot water from far beneath the earth forms the spectacular man-made lagoon, where a luxurious health spa has been developed in the rugged lava landscape. The lagoon's geothermal sea water is known for its positive effects on the skin.

Daily guided walks will take place where you will learn more about the lagoon's natural environment, geology and history. During

the excursions, a must see is the lagoon and the clinic. The excursion continues to the area where Blue Lagoon's Research and Development Center is located and the Hitaveita Suðurnesja Geothermal Power Plant, where the hot water makes it possible to grow bananas and other fruit near the lake.

#### Laugardalslaug Swimming Pool

The city's largest pool with extensive equipment, located in Laugardalur Valley.

*Sundlaugarvegur, Reykjavik*  
**+354 411 51 00**

#### Nautholsvik Geothermal Beach

In Iceland, the sea is normally far too cold to tempt swimmers, but at Nautholsvik bay in Reykjavik, a thermal beach has been created, where natural hot water flows out into the sea, and you can frolic in the waves as if you were in the Mediterranean!

A beach of golden sand has been created and a "pool" has been enclosed nearby, where the water temperature is about 20°C  
**+354 511 66 30**

#### Sundholl Reykjavíkur Swimming Pool

The city's oldest and only indoor swimming pool, with outdoor hot tubs. The pool is located in the city center.

*Baronsstigur, Reykjavik*  
**+354 551 40 59**

#### Thermal Pools and Spas

One of the delights of a visit to Reykjavik is bathing in one of the many thermal pools, filled with geothermal heated water, which are found in every district of the city. Abundant resources of geothermal springs mean that the pools are always pleasantly warm, whatever the weather. Most pools are open-air. All have outdoor whirlpools or 'hot-pots' to bask in before or after swimming, and most have water slides for the young (and young at heart).

### Family Activities

#### Activities in Reykjavik

The vast and beautiful landscape around Reykjavik lends itself to innumerable outdoor activities. Visitors to Reykjavik will be impressed by the city's proximity to nature and struck by the cleanliness of the city itself. There are plenty of possibilities when planning outdoor activities and excursions during your stay in the capital.

The local people love to spend time outdoors and play a variety of sports throughout the year. Icelanders are good swimmers, riders and skiers (when there is enough snow), while the two most popular sports in Iceland by far is baseball and football.

Year-round various sporting events.



Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)



## Tourist Guide Reykjavik

### See and Do

#### The Family Park and Zoo

The Family Park and Zoo in Laugardalur is open all year round. Here you can see a variety of Icelandic animals, both wild and domestic - from foxes, reindeer and seals to cattle, horses and sheep.

During the summer, the park has many attractions and playground equipment for children of all ages. Outside of the summer season, the park is kept open as a playground.

### Museum

#### Hofsstaðir - Remains of a Viking Long House

In 1994 important archaeological excavations commenced in Garðabær, in Southwest Iceland. Excavations unearthed the remains of a Long House of the Viking Age, the second-largest ever found in Iceland. Dating from the late 9th century, the Long House indicates the scale on which the first settlers lived. Research has thrown useful light on the life and work of the first Icelanders.

The Long House at Hofsstaðir is about thirty meters by eight meters on the outside, and the floor area is about 170 m<sup>2</sup>. This was the household of a farmer on a large scale. A total of about 300 items were unearthed at Hofsstaðir. Probably the most remarkable is a fine round bronze brooch in the Jelling style. About one-third of the finds are metal objects such as nails, slag from iron smelting, knives and scissors from the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries.

The identity of those who built the Long House is not known for sure, although it provides considerable information on its inhabitants. The size of the building indicates that it may have housed 20 to 30 people including slaves and laborers. Hofsstaðir is within the region originally claimed by Ingólfur Arnarson, Iceland's first settler, who arrived in Iceland around 874 AD.

At the new history park at Hofsstaðir, visitors can experience an interesting, extensive and entertaining multimedia presentation which includes three-dimensional reconstruction's



Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

of the Long House and items found during the excavations. A large variety of information is presented in audiovisual form. The presentation also includes comic strips which aim to provide insight into the lives of the residents of Hofsstaðir. The multimedia material is presented via touch screens which have been installed on the archaeological site.

It is very rare for such large archaeological remains are found in an urban area but this long house is located in the heart of the capital.

*Kirkjulundur, Reykjavik*  
**+354 525 85 00**

#### Iceland's National Gallery

Here is the country's largest collection of the works by various Icelandic artists from the 1800-1900s. International artists are also represented at the museum.

*Fríkirkjuvegur 7, Reykjavik*  
**+354 515 96 00**

#### Iceland's National Museum

Iceland's National Museum is a modern and progressive museum that gives a comprehensive picture of the last 1200 years

in Iceland's cultural history. The museum's permanent exhibition, "The Creation of a Nation - The Heritage and History of Iceland", is intended to provide insight into the history of the Icelandic nation, from the first settlements to the present. The museum has nearly three thousand objects and among them are the majority of Iceland's greatest treasures.

*Suðurgata 41, Reykjavik*  
**+354 530 22 00**

#### Reykjavik 871 +/-2 The Settlement Exhibition

A Viking-Age Long House, dated to around 930 AD was found in archaeological excavations in the center of Reykjavik in 2001. The ruins of the Long House and a part of a man made structure – a turf wall, have been preserved and are now on display "on site". These are the oldest archaeological findings in Reykjavik. The Settlement Exhibition is focused on the interpretation of the ruins, and by multimedia technique, guests can find out about life of the people who lived there and see a model of the long house.

*Adalstraeti 16, Reykjavik*  
**+354 411 63 70**





## Tourist Guide Reykjavik

### See and Do



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#### Reykjavik Art Museum - Asmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum

A permanent retrospective exhibition of works by Asmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982), one of the pioneers of sculpture in Iceland. The museum holds a collection of original sculptures by the artist, both indoors and outdoors. A sculpture garden surrounds the Museum, adorned by almost thirty of the artist's sculptures. The Museum is housed in a unique domed building that was designed and built mostly by the artist himself.

*Sigtun, Reykjavik*

**+354 553 21 55**

#### Reykjavik Art Museum - Harbor House

The Harbor House is located in the former Warehouses of the Port of Reykjavik, has diverse exhibitions of contemporary and experimental art, both Icelandic and

international. The museum also houses the Erró Collection, a large collection of works by one of Iceland's most celebrated modern artists - there are varying exhibitions on parts of this collection at the Museum.

*Tryggvagata 17, Reykjavik*

**+354 590 12 00**

#### Reykjavik City Museum - Arbaejarsafn

The Reykjavik City Museum collects and conserves objects from Reykjavik cultural history and carries out research on them, and promulgates knowledge of the history and living conditions of the people of Reykjavik from the Settlement Age to the present day. The objective of the Museum's work is to enhance interest, understanding and respect for the history of Reykjavik, and to ensure that everyone has access to the city's cultural heritage.

*Kistuhylur 4, Reykjavik*

**+354 411 63 00**

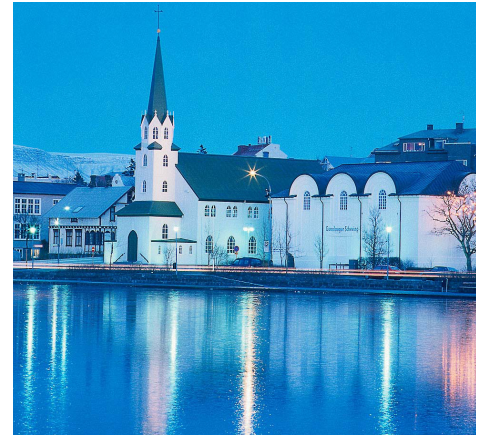


Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)



Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

#### Saga Museum

The Saga Museum transports you to the Viking Age and brings back to life renowned figures and major events in Icelandic history using life-like wax figurines. The Museum is located inside one of the hot water storage tanks in The Pearl.

*Oskjuhlid Hill, Reykjavik*

**+354 511 15 17, +354 894 30 96**

### Nature

#### Mount Esja

Mount Esja looms over Reykjavik like a guardian angel. The 914 meter high mountain is very popular for hiking. The hike is relatively easy and offers stunning views all over the capital area. There are several different routes up and around the mountain, differing in terms of difficulty.





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### See and Do



Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

Esja is located in Kjalarnes, past Mosfellsbaer town just east of Reykjavik. It is accessible by public transport: Take bus number 15 from Hlemmur bus station, get off at Haholt in Mosfellsbaer, then take bus number 27 to the foot of Esja at Esjumelar.

Don't forget to sign the guest book at the peak!

#### The Beach Walk

Reykjavik is surrounded by the sea and beach, so it is perfect for a leisurely stroll, jogging, cycling or roller skiing.

The city's northern port is a popular area with a beautiful view over Reykjavik's landmark, Mount Esja.

The striking sculpture called Sun Voyager, by Jon Gunnar Arnason, is located here and is made of massive steel representing a Viking ship. To be at this statue at sunset, is an unforgettable experience - anytime of the year.

### Parks

#### Laugardalur Valley

Laugardalur (Hot Spring Valley) is a center

for sports and recreation in the capital. Laugardalslaug is nearby and is the largest pool in Reykjavik with the water coming from the hot springs. You can swim year round in the warm water.

Laugardalur also has a beautiful botanical garden with forests, ponds, bird life and a wonderful garden café.

### Worth Seeing

#### City Hall

Reykjavik City Hall is an impressive building located at the northern shore of Lake Tjornin in the city center. The location of this strong modern building is unique because it blends in with the environment, which is surrounded by water and varied bird life.

The City Hall opened in 1992 and houses the Mayor and the executive officials of Reykjavik.

The ground floor houses an information desk, café Radhuskaffi, with a lovely view of Lake Tjornin and internet access, and exhibition rooms featuring alternating art exhibitions. There is also a large relief map of Iceland in one of the exhibition halls,

which is very interesting to study prior to or after touring the island

#### Hallgrímskirkja Church

Hallgrímskirkja church is Reykjavik's main landmark and its tower can be seen from almost everywhere in the city. It is located at the top of shopping street Skólavordustigur. The concrete building was designed by former state architect Gudjon Samuelson and is meant to resemble volcanic basalt rock formations. The church was built over 40 years and opened in 1986. It is named after Reverend and hymn writer Hallgrímur Petursson.

Hallgrímskirkja is the largest church in Iceland. The 73 meter high church tower provides excellent views all over Reykjavik. In front of the church is a statue of Iceland-born Leifur Eiríksson, aka 'Leif the Lucky', the first European to discover America around 1,000 A.D, which was 500 years before Columbus.

The church tower is open every day and offers excellent views all over and around Reykjavik. The church holds services every Sunday and also occasionally holds classical concerts. The church's organ is the largest of its kind in Iceland.





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Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

#### Hofdi House

Hofdi House was built in 1909, and is probably one of the most beautiful buildings in Reykjavik. It is best known as the location for the 1986 summit meeting of presidents Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbatsjov, that effectively marked the end of the Cold War. During this meeting the house became world known and a Japanese millionaire had an exact replica of the house built in his country.

Initially, Hofdi was the house of the French consul in Iceland and still bears many signs of its original purpose, such as the letters RF (the abbreviation of the French Republic), the name of the consul and the year of its construction above an inside door.

Among other renowned guests of Hofdi House are various heads of states (amongst them the Queen of England), Winston Churchill and Marlene Dietrich. In addition, the house is believed to be occupied by a ghost, "The White Lady", experienced by a former British Ambassador who once occupied the house (she tried his nerves so much, that he persuaded the British foreign office to sell the house).

Hofdi is owned by the City of Reykjavik and is currently used for official receptions and meetings of the municipality. Unfortunately, Hofdi House is not open to casual visitors, although visitors are welcome to explore the house from the outside. Hofdi is located at Borgartun and a visit to the house can be combined with a pleasant stroll along Reykjavik's waterfront.



Photo: [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)

#### SOURCES

[www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is)  
[www.eurotourism.com](http://www.eurotourism.com)

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