

NATURE HIGHLIGHTS



1 Hveragerði - Geothermal park

Right inside the town of Hveragerði there is an area of hot springs from which the community derives its name (hver = hot spring). The hot springs of Hveragerði are among the most remarkable natural attractions of South Iceland. Visitors to the hot springs can learn about geothermal energy and the springs, which include Dykkur, spouting regularly, Ruláshver which has an interesting history, and many more.



2 Arnarkek - Cave

Arnarkek is an interesting cave in the Lettahraun lava field. A marked path leads from the information sign by the road to the cave, and a ladder has been placed at its opening. Take great care when inspecting the cave.



3 Þingvellir - National Park

At Þingvellir the national assembly was established around 930 and continued to convene there until 1798. Many crucial events in Icelandic history took place at Þingvellir and it is at the heart of Icelandic nationhood. No less remarkable is the geology of Þingvellir. Visitors can get an interpretation of the history and nature of Þingvellir and find hiking trails and camping grounds. Þingvellir is Iceland's oldest National Park and now on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is listed as a national park (since 1928) because of the special tectonic and volcanic environment. The continental drift can be clearly seen in the cracks or faults which are traversing the region, the biggest one, Almannagjá, being a veritable canyon. This causes also the often measurable earthquakes in the area.



4 Kerið - Crater

A 55 m deep volcanic crater, about 3000 years old. It is part of a group of volcanic hills called Tjarnahólar and it is now filled with water.



5 Þjórsárdalur - Valley

Þjórsárdalur valley was the site of a flourishing Settlement Age community that was later abandoned and then disappeared under ash in 1100, when the volcano Mount Hekla erupted for the first time in the history of Iceland.



6 Stöng and The Saga-Age Farm

Sites of about 40 buildings have been unearthed in the Þjórsárdalur valley and the best preserved and most remarkable is the farmhouse at Stöng excavated in 1939. Based upon the Stöng farmhouse a replica Saga-Age farmhouse was built in 1974 to mark the 1000th anniversary of the settlement of Iceland. Open to the public all summer.



7 Geyser

Geyser has lent its name to the English language in order to christen the phenomenon of the periodically spouting hot springs. You can walk around the Geyser area, a geothermal field where hot springs are in abundance, geysers explode and pools of mud bubble. Strokkur gives a performance every few minutes, shooting a tower of water and steam 30 metres into the air and Blei with water the colour of turquoise delights the senses.



8 Gullfoss - Waterfall

Gullfoss is actually two separate waterfalls, the upper one has a drop of 11 metres and the lower one 21 metres. The rock of the river bed was formed during an interglacial period. For thousands of years the river has followed its course delighting tourists with beauty and power.



9 Urriðafoss - Waterfall

Urriðafoss is a voluminous waterfall in Þjórsá river, where the river falls off the margin of Þjórsáhraun lava field (360 m²/m²) in beautiful and peaceful surroundings. Þjórsáhraun lava field is the greatest lava flow on earth since the ice age. The waterfall is located right off highway n. 1.



10 Hekla - Volcano

One of the most famous volcanoes in the world, Hekla is believed to have erupted at least twenty times since the settlement of Iceland, and five times in the 20th century. The last eruption was in February 2000.



11 Landmannalaugar - Volcano region

Landmannalaugar is a region near the volcano Hekla in the southern section of Iceland's highlands. The area displays a number of unusual geological elements, like the multi-coloured rhyolite mountains and expansive lava fields. The mountains in the surrounding area display a wide spectrum of colours.



Katla Unesco Global Geopark

Katla UNESCO Global Geopark covers 9% of Iceland (6542 km²). Characterised by active ice-capped central volcanoes, black sand from glacial outbursts and lava fields, Katla Geopark showcases the interaction between the rift zone and mantle plume. Diverse and frequent volcanic activity constantly changes the landscape, influencing the pattern of settlement.



12 Seljalandsfoss - Waterfall

Seljalandsfoss is just over 60 metres high in a lovely location, surrounded by cliffs and green slopes. A footpath leads behind the waterfall.



13 Gljúfrabúi - Waterfall

The waterfall (gljúfrabúi) tumbles down from the Gljúfrá River and is about two kilometres north of Tíollagi (Tíoll Gorge) Canyon in the heath Hamnabæðiheði. It is a spring-fed river and less voluminous than its neighbour Seljalandsfoss.



14 Merkjáfoss/Gullgafoss - Waterfall

The Merkjá River has several beautiful waterfalls, but the most outstanding is Gullgafoss or Windsor Falls (also known as Merkjáfoss). The upper half of the cliff is palagonite or ruff rock and the lower ledge is basalt. The river has formed tunnels and grooves through the soft rock and a series of 'windows' in the tunnels, thereby earning the name 'Gullgafoss'.



15 Þórsmörk - Valley

Þórsmörk is a beautiful woodland nature reserve surrounded by rugged and majestic mountains, glaciers and glacial rivers. Þórsmörk can only be reached all year round on 4 x 4 and scheduled buses during the summer. Two unique hiking paths lead to Þórsmörk; Laugavegur from Landmannalaugar and Fimmuráhlíð from Skógar.



16 Skógafoss - Waterfall

One of Iceland's most splendid waterfalls, Skógafoss tumbles 60 metres from the cliffs by Skógar. Before cascading off the cliffs as Skógafoss, the river flows through the Skógafjall gorge, which boasts more than twenty more waterfalls, each with its own charm.



17 Mýrdalsfjall - Glacier

Mýrdalsfjall's peak reaches 1493 metres and Katla Volcano inside the glacier erupts on average every 40-60 years. Seven eruptions have been recorded since the settlement of Iceland over 1100 years ago, the last eruption was in 1918.



18 Sólheimajökull - Glacier

Sólheimajökull glacier flows south of Mýrdalsfjall glacier in a U-shaped valley. It is about 8 km long and 1-2 km wide. The glacier advanced about 900 metres during the last few centuries, but retreated greatly from 1930 to 1964.



19 Dyrhólaey - Headland

Shear headland rising 120 metres out of the sea with a huge natural arch near Vík i Mýrdal. Freydisdagar sea stacks, Eldhraun lava fields and Mýrdalsandur sands are also magnificent sights. An amazing area of strength and beauty.



20 Hjörleifshöfði - Headland

Hjörleifshöfði is a 221 metre high headland made of ruff. For a long time after the last ice age it was an island, but by the time of the settlement it was an isthmus on the side of a fjord. Now it lies more than two kilometres from the sea.



21 Fjaðrárgljúfur - Canyon

Fjaðrárgljúfur is a magnificent and massive canyon, about 100 metres deep and about two kilometres long. The canyon has steep walls and is somewhat serpentine and narrow. The river Fjaðrá has its source in the mountain Geitlandshraun and falls off the heath edge in this stunning canyon until it makes it down into Skafía river.



22 Vatnajökull National Park

The national park includes the ice cap and its surroundings, with a total area of 13,952 km² or 14% of Iceland. Few places in the world exhibit such a wide range of natural phenomena. The battle between ice and fire still rages within the park boundaries. Vatnajökull - the world's most voluminous glacier outside of the arctic regions. The glacier seems so close to the people of Southeast Iceland that they sometimes refer to the ice as if it were part of their backyard. Each of the icefalls and glacier tongues flowing towards the lowlands possesses an individual character and offers a variety of scenes.



23 Lakagigar - Craters

Lakagigar (Laki Craters) lie in a row, 25 km in length, in Súðannafléttur in the Highlands. The craters stretch from the ruff mountain Hnula to the northeast through Mt. Laki (818 m above sea level), ending at Vatnajökull. Mt. Laki commands splendid views of the craters and the surrounding landscape. Lakagigar are a part of Vatnajökull National Park, the largest national park in western Europe.



24 Eldgjá - Eruptive fissure

In Skarfaningurfléttur in West Staðafellsfjall, close to Kirkjubæjarklaustur, the eruptive fissure Eldgjá is to be found. Eldgjá is an approximately 40 km long eruptive fissure, 600 metres wide in many places and up to 200 metres deep. When it was formed around year 934, there were probably eruptions along the whole extent of it. Eldgjá and its surrounding area is a part of Vatnajökull National Park.



25 Eldhraun - Moss covered lava field

In 1783 a huge lava flow streamed from Lakagigar in what became known as the 'Skafía Fires'. This is believed to have been one of the greatest lava flows in a single eruption in the history of the world. Its cubic measure is approximately 16km³ and the square measure around 580km². All around thick woolly fringes (Baccharis lanuginosa) forms a continuous layer which gives off a grey color when dry, but a beautiful green after rain. The moss is very sensitive for tramping so please stay on trails. It has taken the moss 200 years to grow and one step will make a scar into the layer which can take a decade to grow back.



26 Skafitfell and Svartifoss waterfall

Öafl is Iceland's most isolated district before the bridges to the west of it were completed in the early seventies. The natural contrasts are breathtaking: black sands below white glaciers, desolate wastes and green vegetation. Such a green oasis welcomes you at Skafitfell just beside the broad desert of the Skóglabandur sands and the aging Skóglabúi river. These contrasts and many more remind the visitor of nature's changeability.



27 Öræfajökull - Glacier

Extending south from the Vatnajökull ice cap and towering to 2110m, Öræfajökull is Iceland's highest mountain. Its height actually depends on the season and the depth of snow, since the peak itself, Hvannadalshnjúkur, is topped by ice which is thickest in spring and thinnest in autumn. Skafitfell / Öræfajökull is a part of Vatnajökull National Park.



28 Ingólfshöfði - Headland

At the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, Ingólfshöfði is a headland which is isolated by black sands and pebbles rivers from the rest of the mainland. However, it is home to thousands of nesting seabirds, especially puffins and the great sku. This historical cape is named after the first settler of Iceland, Ingólfur Arnarson, who spent his first winter there with his family after moving to Iceland, 874-875.



29 Jökulsárlón - Glacial lagoon

The size of the main lagoon, called Ókullalón, is about 20 square kilometres. In 1952 the same area was still covered by ice. Many species of fish are found there, as well as seals, which can number into the hundreds during winter.



30 Haukafell - Recreation area

In 1985 the local Forestry Society started planting saplings at Haukafell. Not only are the trees now becoming established, but there are bountiful berries to be picked every August. This pleasant outdoor spot also has a good campsite and washing facilities.



31 Heinaberg - Mountain

The Heinaberg area is part of the national park, and offers interesting sets of basalt columns in addition to the glacier tongue Heinabergsjökull and the lagoon. The valley Heinabergsdalur, 7 km long, reaches to Vatnajökull valley, which ice used to dam off and keep full of water. Nowadays, the view down into the valley is magnificent, since massive icebergs are often left stranded along its floor.



32 Lónsöræfi/ Staðafellsfjall - Wilderness

The Staðafellsfjall mountains, today also called Lónsöræfi, dominate the skyline east of Vatnajökull glacier and have long included one of Iceland's most extensive protected areas. Besides the deep, rugged canyons, the landscape displays a wide range of colours due to rhyolite and other attractive rocks. In contrast, there are lushly vegetated, sheltered valleys, and a good chance of spotting reindeer.



ABOUT SOUTH ICELAND

The South of Iceland is unique and it is the part of the country visited by far the greatest numbers of foreign travellers. Everything that makes Iceland interesting to visit can be found in South Iceland all the year round.

History surrounds you everywhere, both ancient and recent. Other highlights are creative art, culture, flourishing trade and endless possibilities to enjoy outdoor life in all seasons. But above all there is the awesome and rugged nature stretching from the mountains and down to the sea.

In all seasons of the year tourists can find something to their liking. In winter the sun is reflected on the pearly white snow, on long dark winter nights the northern lights dance around the starlit sky and the moon wanders through the clouds. At such times beauty, peace and quiet reign, unforgettable to those who experience it. Trips across the highlands as well as the lowlands are an indescribable adventure during both summer and winter.

The farmers mind their farms. All the year it is busy in the country, and in spring the land is covered with its summer foliage. Life outdoors and trips assume a new form: hiking tours, riding trips, angling in rivers and lakes. Nature takes on a new look: hot springs, lava fields, volcanoes, waterfalls, the highlands, glaciers, rivers and lakes. All life is reborn after the frosts of winter and the countryside is at its most beautiful.

Visit the southern countryside and take a look at the beauty, listen to the wind and the silence, discover the peace and quiet, and last but not least you may discover yourself.

Welcome to South Iceland, we'll be happy to see you.



www.south.is
Share your experience
www.facebook.com/southiceland
#southiceland



South Iceland



Free Tourist Map



Visit South Iceland
www.south.is
#southiceland