

“Colour abounds in the Fall from the shades of vegetation on the wind swept open countryside to the hue of the Blue Lagoon. From the vibrant colours of its craft work to the ever changing skies. In stark contrast there are black beaches around Vik and on higher ground gleaming white glaciers. “

ICELAND

A photographer's Paradise

Words: Janet Myers : Photography: Jonathan Myers.



Jokulsarlon glacier lagoon

"Iceland is absolutely one of the most beautiful and unusual places you could ever imagine"

Iceland

Islenska

A disabled photographer's paradise

If you have a desire to see boiling mud pools, geysers, icebergs, glaciers and giant waterfalls without travelling thousands of miles and spending thousands of pounds then why not consider a two and a half hours trip to Iceland. Throw in a chance to see the northern lights or the midnight sun and sample the best sushi and sashimi without visiting Japan and I guarantee that whether you have a professional camera, a digital compact or even a mobile phone you are guaranteed to bring home some wonderful photographs that you will treasure for ever.

The Flybus will take you from the airport into Reykjavik at a reasonable cost. It is about a 40 kilometre journey. The same company also offers tours including one to look for the northern lights. It operates when ever there is a chance of seeing them and offers free trips on subsequent nights should you fail to do so. You do not have to wait outside in the cold either as you may stay on the bus for as much of the time as you wish and either watch from the bus or get out for a short while.

The country is modern, sparkling clean and everyone speaks English. Everything is of a very high standard and wi fi is available every where. The capital is small and compact with many interesting features. Be sure however to check out the magnificent National Concert and Conference Centre down near the harbour and be sure to go inside. It is a crystalline



Whale watching

lattice of glass and steel with glass prisms which capture and reflect the light mirroring the day and seasons like a calendar of light. The graffiti park needs to be sought out and the Perlan. The latter is a glass dome which sits on top of six water tanks. A revolving restaurant sits above 4 other floors and from the viewing deck there is a fine view over the whole of the area. Always you will find a lift so you will never have to miss out, while all major attractions provide wheelchairs on site.

The city boasts a great cultural scene so you could easily find yourself caught up in something you might not have been expecting, like a film or music festival or the switching on of Yoko Ono's light of peace in memory of John Lennon which projects into the air from October to December every year.



Puffin with blueberry sauce

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Flights: Iceland air no longer has the monopoly and there are now other budget airlines which fly into Reykjavik including Easy Jet. All offer special help for disabled passengers. Kefalik International airport has won the award for the best European airport for two years running and its smaller size makes it easy to negotiate.

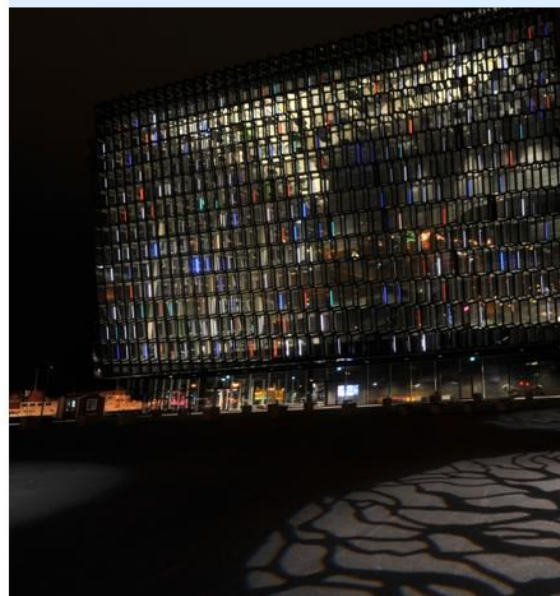
Car Hire: Good priced car rental is available at the airport. This is an excellent way to see the island at your own pace. Sat. nav. is available but there is only one major road around the island while cars have a GPS detection device which enables you to be found should you get into any difficulty!

Parking: Disabled parking is provided almost every where and you can use your disabled badge.

Hotels: All good hotels have excellent facilities, but the exact nature must of course be confirmed at the time of booking. Breakfast can be included which is a great asset.

Apartments: There are many apartments available and these enable you to take more down time and get your own meals, but be sure that there is a lift if you are not on the ground floor. They will not normally have the same special bathroom fittings or other refinements found in good hotels.

The concert and conference centre





The Blue Lagoon

The food will leave an impression as positive as the landscape. Try the Fish Market –a great up market option where Eastern cuisine meets West or Tapas Barinn where you can sample puffin with blueberry sauce and minke whale.

The Golden circle tour takes you to Thilligaer national park where the first parliament was formed and where the tectonic plates are constantly on the move as they rub together. Its on then to Geyser where you to can see plenty of thermal activity followed by the Gullfoss waterfall. If you are spending more than a few days then explore some of the other great thermal hotspots and visit other waterfalls. Their size will amaze you. One you can walk behind (although not recommended for the disabled) and one where each step closer reveals another rainbow until you can see three giant arcs.

Then there are the vast deep soft black beaches. Forget the Canary islands, these are the real McCoy. Some of the best are to found around Vik in southern Iceland. You won't be taking off your shoes as the waters are cold and there is often a strong wind blowing but even so you can feel its characteristic feel through your boots. Here too are the

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At any time of year you can experience the endless expanse of the steaming hot waters of the Blue Lagoon which seem to go on forever. ”

basalt formations, not unlike the giants causeway in Ireland. For those who love volcanoes you can see Eyjafallajokull which erupted in 2010. You can see it from the main road and experience a special presentation in a small centre there with excellent parking.

Summer also affords you an opportunity to see puffins by the thousand and up close while other birds –over 350 species, throng the cliffs all year round. Come Winter or Summer you can go out whale watching and more than not see the seals along with the icebergs at the Jokulsarlon glacier lagoon.

DISABILITY— ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

• **Language:**

English is spoken everywhere so there will be not be a problem in communicating. The people are warm friendly and eager to help.

• **Wheelchair provision:**

Icelandic law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities so getting around is not a problem. In fact it often exceeds provision made in the UK. Wheelchairs are available at all major tourist attractions and lifts are also provided whenever needed. You don't need to miss out on anything.

• **Communications:**

Wi Fi is available everywhere, often in the smallest of cafes so staying in touch with loved ones at home is easy. You will also be able to find plenty of trips and information on line but multiple brochures covering every attraction are also available everywhere.

• **Phones:**

If you are travelling to Iceland, taking a mobile phone that works in Reykjavik or any of the other areas you are visiting will provide you with peace of mind. Choose a roaming partner e.g. Vodafone or O2. No phone call within Iceland is regarded as long distance. **TV:** Most places provide satellite programmes in English.

• **Disabled toilets:**

Excellent facilities to be found at all major stopping points and at restaurants.

• **Medical facilities:**

Medical care is of a very high standard but can be limited outside the main urban areas. For emergency medical assistance anywhere in the country dial 112. For non-emergency medical assistance in the Reykjavik metropolitan area dial 544-4114 during business hours. Outside of normal business hours, dial 1770. Non residents are not covered for cost so your appropriate medical insurance must be in place.

Horses are to be found everywhere. They are small sturdy and friendly and if you are able to ride there are any number of opportunities. The Icelandic horse has an additional gait called the tolt which makes riding extremely comfortable while they are sure footed enough to handle the roughest terrain. The long haired sheep are abundant and their wool, called Lopi, knits into the warmest of sweaters and with Fair Isle in fashion this year they take on a new appeal.

The glaciers are amazing but a trip to the east coast to see the Vatnajökull glacier is something else. Here the ice breaks free into the lagoon and the landscape resembles that of the frozen ice caps of the Atlantic. A trip by boat around the floating icebergs puts you in awe as you are reminded that what you see is only one tenth of the whole thing. Shimmering and glistening in the sun they appear tinged with blue. A piece of multi faceted ice fished from the water is as clear, transparent and pristine as this white and blue wonderland. Only the bright orange of your life jacket adds a splash of bright colour. Don't worry about any disability as they provide ramps onto the boat and there is parking and a small café on site.

At any time of year you can experience the endless expanse of the steaming hot waters of the Blue Lagoon which seem to go on forever. Paint your face with its therapeutic white silicon or get a drink or ice-cream from the swim up bar –your wristband is swiped and you pay later. It is fully equipped for disabled visitors. Taking your own swimming costume and towel involves you in less expense. There is a restaurant here so you can stave off any hunger pains. One word of advise—make sure you leave yourself enough time as the time passes very quickly. They offer the usual disabled and carer discounts. The same applies in other places but there is no admission charge for any of the major national parks.

The weather can be very unpredictable and the Icelanders say 'just wait a moment and it will change' Quite true so you can expect to find flashes of sunlight on the duller days. You can expect strong winds but its volcanic nature means that is not as cold as many imagine. Even on a cold snowy day 'indoors' can be very invit-



Breath taking shots that you will want to capture

ing with so many cosy haunts and lights flickering from candles everywhere.

So whether you choose to take a trip to see the northern lights or the mid-night sun you will be astonished at what is on offer. (Not every activity is available through out the year so you will need to check before you go.) To be in with a chance of seeing both the icebergs and the northern lights you will need to choose either early October or the end of Springtime but however many days you decide to spend in this land of ice and fire you will wonder why you never found it before.

Your camera will have clicked so many times and you will have so many memorable photographs to show your friends and family that you might well like to consider other options to keep them alive.

You can turn them into a photographic book with the help of many first class on line sites (e.g. Blurb) offering anything from the very simple to the more complex. You could frame a picture for your wall or have one printed on canvas. Alternatively you may well consider entering a few photographic competitions. Use them as Christmas cards or upload them to make a calendar or simply invest in a digital frame so you can see them on a revolving basis. Use one as a wallpaper on your phone, laptop or ipad.

Whatever you decide to do, the wonders of Iceland will stay with you for a very long time for Iceland is absolutely one of the most beautiful and unusual places you could ever imagine.

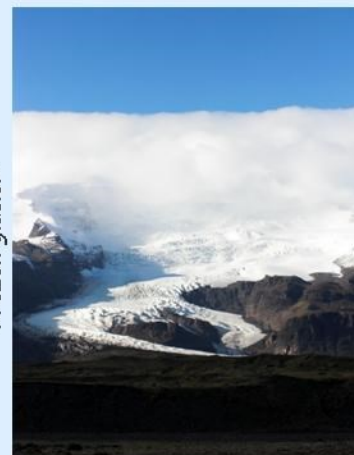
Graffiti Park - Reykjavik



Icelandic horse



Frozen glacier



Icelandic sheep



Marina hotel





Boiling mud pool



Northern lights at Vik



Skogafoss waterfall



DEVELOPING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC SKILLS

- Take lots of pictures and review them each night and discard all those you are not happy with. Professional photographers take multiple shots and still only keep a very small number.
- If your disability means that you cannot stand do not consider yourself disadvantaged. Being seated allows a different, often more exciting angle.
- If you have difficulty in holding your camera still just rest it on anything around you.
- The landscape will blow you away but one small tip, remember to include figures wherever you can as they will give some indication of the enormity of a waterfall or the sheer expanse of ice on a glacier.
- Don't put your camera away when the clouds roll in either or the snow falls for the weather can add great atmospheric effects. In Iceland they have a saying that if you don't like the weather wait a minute and it will change. This is quite true so if you want that blue sky with a touch of sunshine just wait a minute to take your shot.
- To give a feeling of depth remember to include an object in the foreground and although this land of ice and fire will have you enthralled don't forget to take pictures of yourselves.
- Consider some unposed shots from a more journalistic stand point. Remember emotion can play a big part.
- Then there are the horses and other wild life. Consider more than just the standard snap. Interaction with people, an unusual angle or a real close up can be much more exciting.
- Don't put your camera away when you go inside either. The inside of the Concert Hall and the Perlan will have you clicking away but consider those shots of faces lit by the flickering candles on the tables in the restaurants.
- Photographing in the mid night sun. Basically remember that the sun will be low on the horizon and you will need to make sure that it is not shining directly into the lens. The quality of light hitting the landscape is very unusual, and very spectacular so be sure to experiment. Remember to light your subject if you are taking pictures of yourself against a midnight sun background.

