

Reykjavík

Iceland

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Reykjavík is the world's northernmost capital, a small city ringed by mountains, sea, and lava fields. Most first-time visitors are surprised by how compact it is: the historic centre can be walked in an afternoon, yet it packs in geothermal pools, a lively music and art scene, and easy access to Iceland's glaciers, volcanoes, and northern lights. It suits travelers who want a city break with wilderness minutes away, not a long list of museums.

According to saga tradition, the Viking settler *Ingólfur Arnarson* founded the city around 874, making it Iceland's oldest settlement. Today its low, colourful rooftops and geothermal steam still give it a small, northern feel, even as it works as Iceland's main hub for flights, ferries, and road trips into the rest of the country.

When to visit

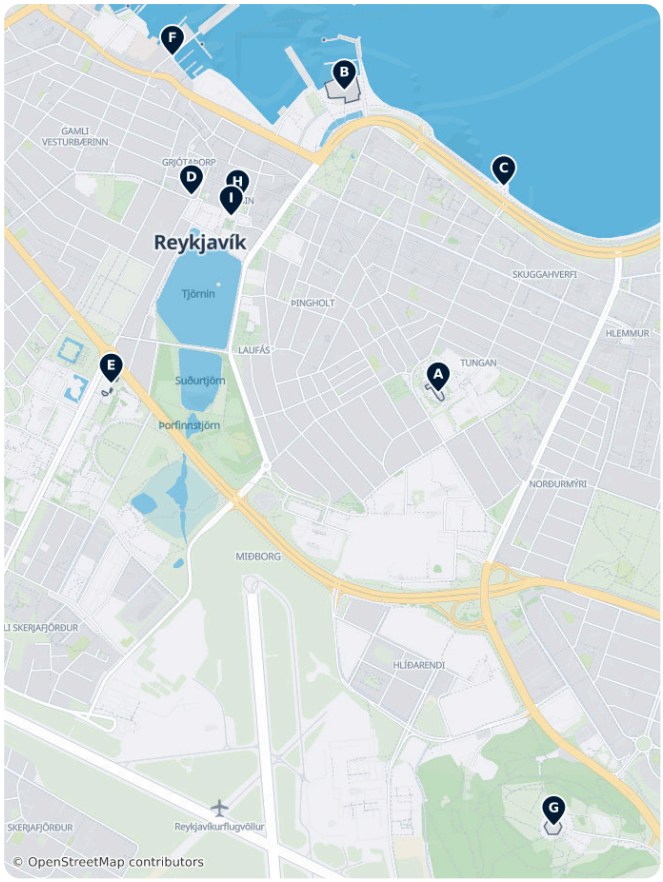
Summer (June to August) has nearly 24-hour daylight and the mildest weather, the easiest season for sightseeing and day trips. Winter (November to March) is cold and dark, but is the best time to see the northern lights and to warm up in the city's geothermal pools. Spring and autumn are quieter and cheaper, with fewer visitors.

Time a visit around Reykjavík Culture Night (Menningarnótt) in August, when the city closes streets for free concerts and art openings, ending with a fireworks display over the harbour.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for aurora viewing	1° / 7° Feels like -4°	-4° / -14°	19 rainy days · Dry air
February	Good Good for aurora viewing	1° / 7° Feels like -4°	-4° / -13°	18 rainy days · Dry air
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	3° / 8° Feels like -2°	-3° / -11°	19 rainy days · Dry air
April	Poor Poor for sightseeing	6° / 11° Feels like 2°	0° / -7°	18 rainy days · Dry air
May	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 14° Feels like 6°	3° / -2°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for hiking	13° / 17° Feels like 10°	7° / 3°	16 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
July	Fair Fair for hiking	14° / 18°	9° / 6°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
August	Fair Fair for hiking	13° / 17°	8° / 5°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
September	Poor Poor for hiking	10° / 14° Feels like 7°	6° / 1°	19 rainy days · Dry air
October	Fair Fair for aurora viewing	6° / 10° Feels like 2°	2° / -4°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for aurora viewing	3° / 8° Feels like -2°	-1° / -9°	17 rainy days · Dry air
December	Good Good for aurora viewing	1° / 7° Feels like -4°	-4° / -13°	18 rainy days · Dry air

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Hallgrímskirkja towers over the city centre at 74 metres and is Reykjavík's best-known landmark. A lift ride up the tower gives a panoramic view over the coloured rooftops to the sea and mountains beyond.
- Down by the water, B Harpa is a glass concert hall inspired by Iceland's basalt columns. Its lobby and café are free to enter, even without a ticket to a show.
- A short walk along the shore leads to C Sun Voyager, a steel sculpture shaped like a Viking ship that has become one of the most photographed spots in the city.
- D Reykjavík871±^{2} preserves the excavated remains of a Viking-age hall right under the city centre, dated to around 871 AD, close to Reykjavík's founding.
- E National Museum of Iceland covers Iceland's history from the first settlers to the present, and is a good stop for context before exploring the rest of the country.
- F Reykjavík Old Harbour is the departure point for whale-watching and puffin tours, and is lined with seafood restaurants and colourful fishing boats.
- On top of Öskjuhlíð hill, G The Pearl combines a glass dome, a planetarium, and a 360° observation deck with views over the whole city.
- The square H Austurvöllur Square sits beside I The Parliament House, Iceland's parliament building, and is the traditional gathering place for the city's public life and protests.

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What to experience

Reykjavík's daily rituals are built around hot water, not sightseeing.

- Soak in a hot pot at Laugardalslaug Geothermal Pool, the city's largest public pool, exactly the way locals unwind after work.
- Take an evening whale-watching trip from Reykjavík Old Harbour in summer, when minke whales and dolphins are regularly seen in the bay.
- On a clear winter night, watch for the northern lights from the shoreline path near Sun Voyager, away from the brightest streetlights.
- Take the short ferry to Videy Island to see Yoko Ono's Imagine Peace Tower, a light installation lit each year between October and December.
- During Reykjavík Culture Night in August, follow the free open-air concerts through the city centre and watch the fireworks over the harbour at midnight.

Day trips

Reykjavík is a natural base for exploring the rest of southwest Iceland, and several of the country's best-known sights are within a few hours' drive.

- Blue Lagoon, a geothermal spa in a black lava field, is about 45 minutes away by car or shuttle bus. Book a time slot in advance, since it regularly sells out.
- The Golden Circle combines A Thingvellir National Park, the geothermal area around the geyser Geysir, and the waterfall B Gullfoss. The three stops are roughly 45 minutes to 1.5 hours from the city and are usually seen together in a single day.
- The South Coast, with the waterfalls Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss and the black sand beach at Reynisfjara, is about 2 hours away by car and is worth a full day.
- C Snaefellsnes Peninsula, often called "Iceland in miniature" for its volcano, glacier, and coastline in one drive, is about 2 to 2.5 hours away and best done as a long day trip or overnight.



Where to explore

Reykjavík blends into its neighboring towns without a clear break, and a couple are worth a short trip of their own.

- Kópavogur, just south of the centre, is Iceland's second-largest town, home to a striking modern church and the country's biggest shopping centre.
- Seltjarnarnes, on the peninsula west of downtown, is a quiet residential town with a scenic coastal walk out to the Grótta lighthouse, a good spot to watch the northern lights away from city lights.

Getting there

- **By air**: Keflavík International Airport (KEF) is Iceland's main international gateway, about 50 km southwest of the city. The Flybus and other shuttle services take about 45 minutes to the centre; taxis cover the same distance but cost significantly more. Reykjavík Domestic Airport, in the middle of the city, handles mostly domestic flights within Iceland, plus a few routes to Greenland.
- **By bus**: Long-distance buses to other parts of Iceland leave from the BSÍ bus terminal, with routes to the south coast, the north, and the Westfjords.
- **By ferry**: The car ferry Norröna connects Iceland to the Faroe Islands and Denmark, arriving at Seyðisfjörður on the east coast, a long drive from Reykjavík.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: Strætó runs the city's yellow buses. Pay with the Klapp app or a Klapp card; drivers do not sell single tickets for cash. Strætó
- **Taxi**: Taxis are metered and usually called by app or picked up at a rank, rather than hailed on the street.
- **On foot and by bike**: The city centre is small and flat enough to see entirely on foot. Shared e-scooters and city bikes cover longer trips, and most main streets have adjoining cycle paths.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The city centre is compact and easy to explore on foot, with most top sights within a 20-minute walk of each other.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Dedicated cycle paths connect most neighborhoods, though wind and winter weather make cycling less appealing outside summer.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for the city itself — the centre is walkable and parking is limited. A car is worth it if planning to explore beyond the Golden Circle or South Coast independently.
- **Parking**: Most central parking is metered and paid via the EasyPark app or a meter; a few free zones exist farther from the centre.
- **Restrictions**: None of note — there is no congestion charge or low-emission zone in the city.

Food & drink

Reykjavík's food scene runs from simple street food to some of the world's most northerly fine dining. Icelandic staples worth trying include fresh fish, lamb, and skyr, alongside a wave of newer Nordic-influenced restaurants.

For something quick, join the queue at the harbourside hot dog stand on Tryggvagata that has fed locals and visiting celebrities alike for decades — order it "with everything" (raw and fried onion, ketchup, sweet mustard, and remoulade). For a wider spread, the food halls around the harbour and Hlemmur bring together several small kitchens under one roof, a good way to sample different styles in one visit.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Skyr
A thick, protein-rich cultured dairy product, technically a soft cheese, eaten plain or with fruit at any meal.

LUNCH

Lamb Soup · Kjötsúpa
A hearty lamb and root vegetable soup, a common home-cooked and café menu staple.

DINNER

Smoked Lamb · Hangikjöt
Lamb smoked over birch or dung, traditionally served at Christmas and often cold in sandwiches.

Fish Stew · Plokkfiskur
A creamy mashed mix of fish, potato, onion, and béchamel, classic Icelandic home cooking.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Rye Bread · Rúgbrauð
Dark, dense, slightly sweet rye bread traditionally baked slowly using geothermal heat.

Dried Fish · Harðfiskur
Wind-dried fish, usually haddock or cod, eaten as a chewy snack often with butter.

Icelandic Hot Dog · Pylsur
A lamb-and-pork hot dog served with raw and fried onion, ketchup, sweet mustard, and remoulade.

DRINKS

Brennivín
An unsweetened caraway-flavored schnapps, nicknamed 'Black Death,' traditionally drunk with fermented shark.

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Safety & health

Reykjavík is one of the safest capital cities in the world, with very low rates of violent crime. The most common issues are minor: pickpocketing in crowded tourist spots and unlocked bike theft.

Tap water is safe to drink everywhere in the city. The bigger safety risk in Iceland is nature, not the city: check road and weather conditions before any day trip, and take posted warnings at cliffs, waterfalls, and beaches seriously, since the Atlantic here is unusually powerful.

History

Reykjavík takes its name from the steam ("reykur") that Viking settler *Ingólfur Arnarson* reportedly saw rising from hot springs when he landed here around 874, making it Iceland's oldest permanent settlement. The remains of that early settlement are preserved at Reykjavík871±^{2}, where a Viking-age hall was excavated beneath the modern city centre.

For centuries afterward Reykjavík stayed a small farming settlement; it only grew into a real town in the 18th century, and became capital of a fully independent Iceland in 1944, after centuries under Danish rule. One of its more unusual modern chapters played out at Höfði house, where US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev met in 1986 for a summit widely seen as a turning point toward the end of the Cold War.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Iceland at a glance:

CURRENCY
ISK kr

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



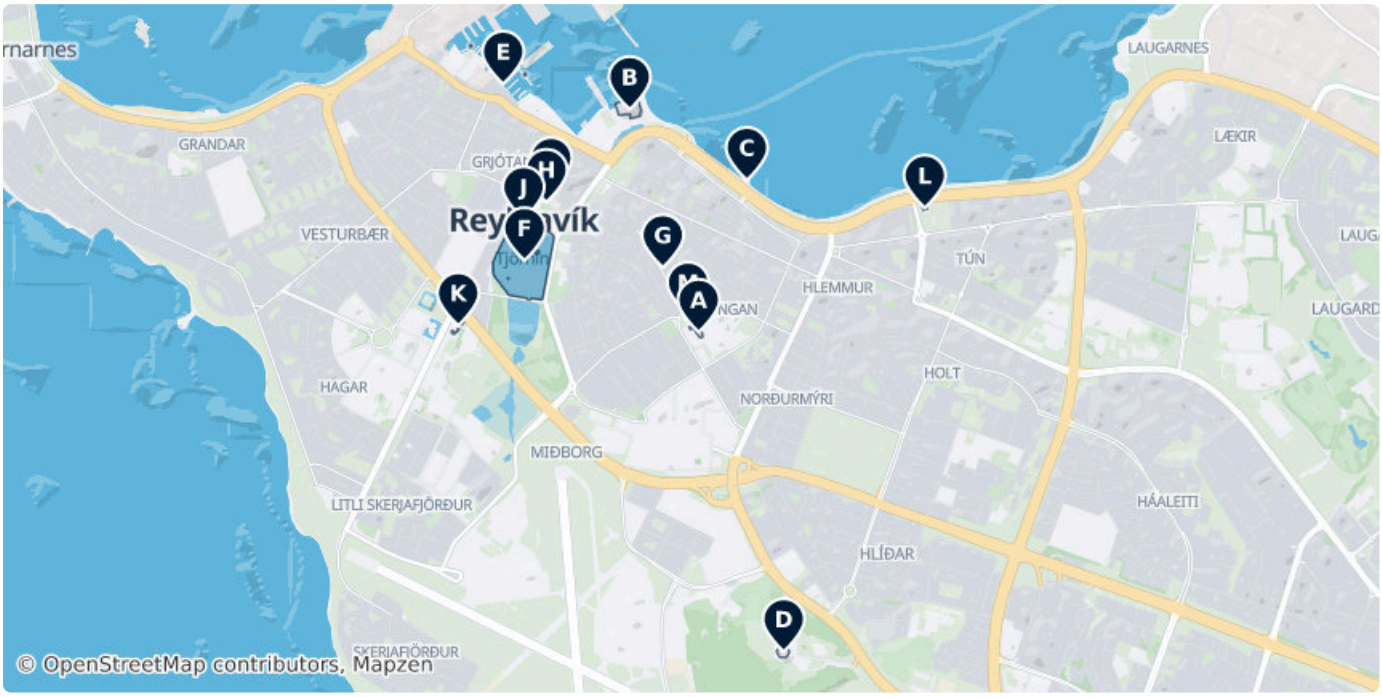
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Icelandic

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Reykjavík Essentials

Reykjavík's landscape is defined by architectural landmarks like the expressionist Hallgrímskirkja and the glass-faceted Harpa Concert Hall. This selection covers historical sites from the 19th-century Parliament House to Höfði House, the location of the 1986 Reagan-Gorbachev summit. Explore the city's natural setting at Lake Tjörnin and the hilltop Perlan, or walk the Old Harbour for maritime views. The list also features the National Museum's heritage collections and iconic public art, including the Sun Voyager sculpture and the Leifur Ericson memorial overlooking the city's main shopping streets.





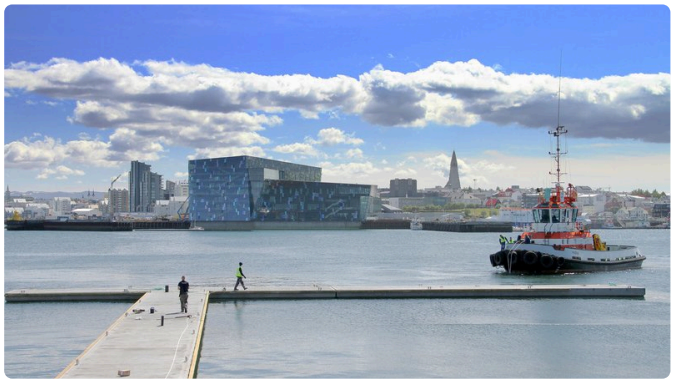
Ⓐ Church of Hallgrímur

Expressionist Lutheran church featuring a towering spire and panoramic city views from its lookout tower.

Hallgrímstorg 1, 101 Reykjavík (64.14169, -21.92657)

Mo–Sa	11:00–15:00
Su	10:00–15:00

hallgrimskirkja.is, +3545101000



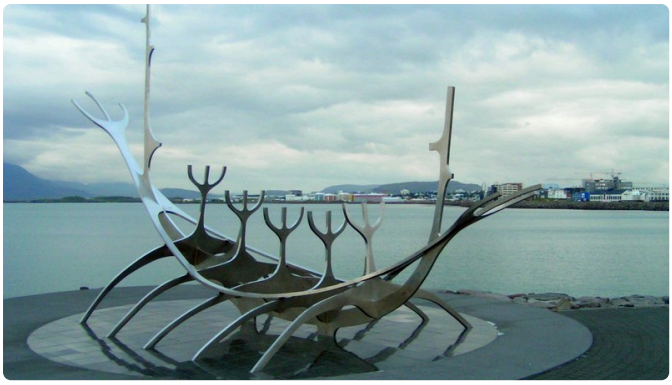
Ⓑ Harpa Concert Hall

Modern concert hall and conference center known for its distinctive glass facade and contemporary high-tech architecture.
It hosts symphony concerts, operas, cultural events, and exhibitions.

Austurbakki 2, 101 Reykjavík (64.15036, -21.93273)

Oct 01-May 31 Mo–Su	10:00–21:00
Jun 01-Sep 30 Mo–Su	09:00–22:00

harpa.is, +3545285050



C Sun Voyager

Stainless steel sculpture symbolizing a dreamboat and an ode to the sun, representing hope, progress, and exploration.

Sculpture & Shore Walk, Reykjavik, Iceland (64.14761, -21.92226)



D The Pearl

Perlan is a natural history museum in Reykjavík, Iceland. It is situated on the top of Öskjuhlíð hill.

Varmahlíð 1, 105 Reykjavík (64.12925, -21.91898)

Mo–Su 09:00–21:00

perlan.is, +354 562 0200

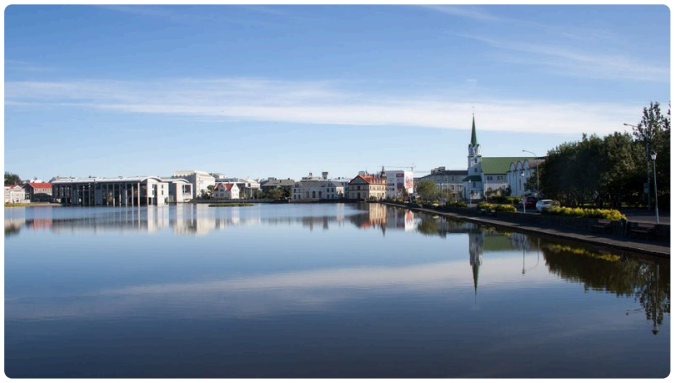


E Reykjavík Old Harbour

Historic harbor area known for whale watching tours and scenic boat rides offering maritime experiences and views from the sea.

Geirsgata, Reykjavík, Iceland (64.15135, -21.94403)

visitreykjavik.is



F Lake Tjörnin

Reykjavik is one of the lucky cities that have their own lake. And this one is even situated right at the city centre.

Reykjavík, Iceland (64.14448, -21.94213)



G Skólavörðustígur

This lovely street boasts old houses, shops, galleries and cafes. Even though many shops located here sell the usual kitschy items there are...

23 Skólavörðustígur, Reykjavík 101, Iceland (64.14420, -21.92978)



H The Parliament House

Alþingishúsið is a classical 19th century structure which stands by Austurvöllur in central Reykjavík, Iceland.

Kirkjustraeti, 150 Reykjavík, Iceland (64.14675, -21.94017)

+354 563 0500



I Austurvöllur Square

Austurvöllur is a public square in Reykjavík, Iceland. The square is a popular gathering place for the citizens of Reykjavík, and especially...

6 Thorvaldsensstræti, Reykjavík 101, Iceland (64.14721, -21.93975)



J Reykjavik City Hall

Reykjavík's City Hall is situated by the Tjörnin in Reykjavík. It houses the offices of the mayor of Reykjavík and a large 3D map of Iceland.

11 Tjarnargata, 101 Reykjavik, Iceland (64.14607, -21.94221)

reykjavik.is/stadir/radhus-reykjavikur, +354 411 1111



K National Museum of Iceland

The National Museum of Iceland was established on 24 February 1863, with Jón Árnason the first curator of the Icelandic collection,...

Suðurgötu 41, 101 Reykjavík, Island (64.14194, -21.94806)

Mo–Su 10:00–17:00

thjodminjasafn.is, +354 530 2200



L Hofdi house

Höfði is a house in Reykjavík, Iceland, best known as the location for the 1986 Reykjavík Summit meeting of President Ronald Reagan of the...

Félagstún 1, 105 (64.14652, -21.90637)



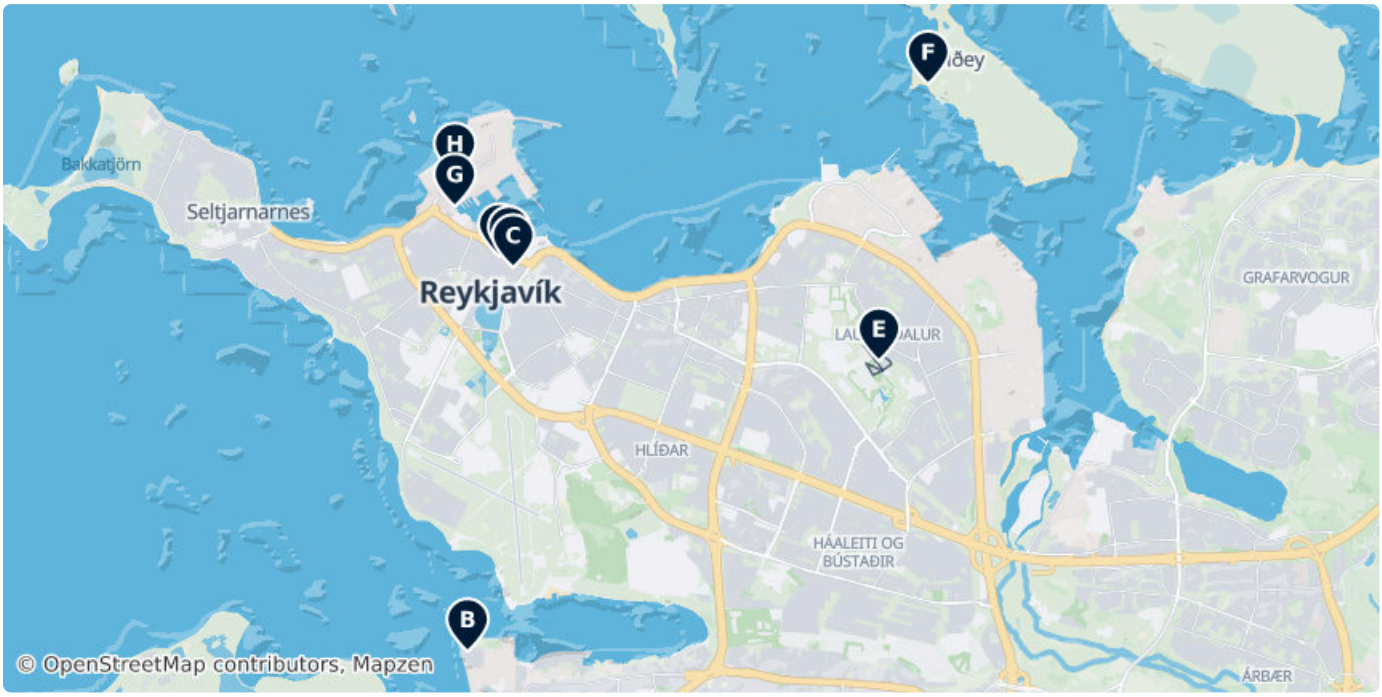
M Leifur Ericson

Leif Erikson, also known as Leif the Lucky, was a Norse explorer who is thought to have been the first European to set foot on continental...

46 Skólavörðustígur, Reykjavík 101, Iceland (64.14236, -21.92751)

Reykjavík Highlights

A hand-picked mix of Reykjavík experiences: a geothermal spa, the city's famous hot dog stand, an open-air market, gardens and a peace monument.





A Reykjavik Art Museum

Iceland's largest visual art institution, this museum showcases an extensive collection of Icelandic art across multiple galleries near the harbour.

Tryggvagata 17, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland
(64.14906, -21.94044)

listasafnreykjavikur.is, +354 411 6400



B Sky Lagoon

(64.11647, -21.94644)

Mo–Th	13:00–20:00
Fr	13:00–21:00
Sa	10:00–21:00

skylagoon.com



C Bæjarins Beztu Pylsur

Established in 1937, this historic harbour-side food stand serves traditional Icelandic hot dogs made with a distinctive lamb-based blend.

Tryggvagata, 101 Reykjavik, Iceland (64.14816, -21.93784)

Mo–We	09:00–01:00
Th	09:00–02:00
Fr–Sa	09:00–06:00
Su	09:00–01:00

bbp.is, +354 511 1566



D Kolaportið

Iceland's only flea market, held on weekends in an indoor venue near the old harbour, offering a lively local shopping experience.

19 Tryggvagata, Reykjavík 101, Iceland (64.14884, -21.93861)

Sa–Su	11:00–17:00

kolaportid.is

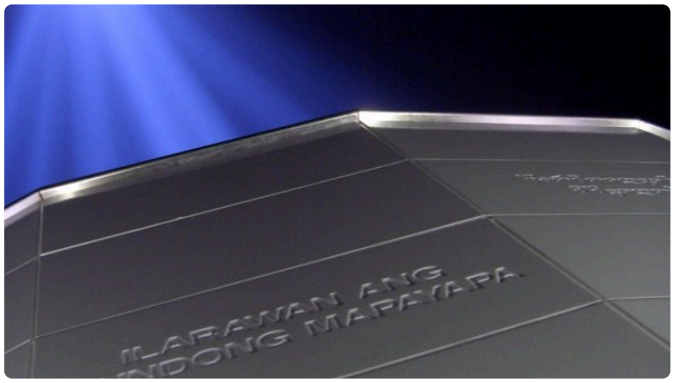


E Botanical Garden of Reykjavik

Established in 1961 in the Laugardalur district, this public botanical garden offers a peaceful green space featuring diverse plant collections with free admission.

Laugardalur, 104 Reykjavík, Iceland (64.14045, -21.86859)

+354 411 8650



F Imagine Peace Tower

Conceived by Yoko Ono as an outdoor memorial to John Lennon, this monument projects a luminous beam of light from Viðey Island into the sky across Kollafjörður Bay.

Iceland (64.16327, -21.85927)

imaginepeacetower.com



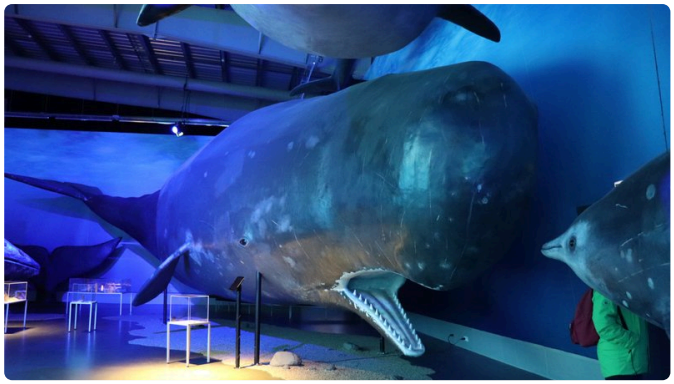
G Víkin Maritime Museum

Situated along Reykjavík's old harbour, this museum explores Iceland's seafaring heritage and fishing history through dedicated maritime exhibitions.

Reykjavík (64.15319, -21.94888)

Mo–Su 10:00–17:00

sjominjasafn.is, +354 411 6300



H Whales of Iceland

This natural history museum features 23 life-sized whale models alongside interactive exhibits on marine biology and conservation.

Fiskislóð 23-25, 101 Reykjavík (64.15571, -21.94884)

Mo–Su 10:00–17:00

whalesoficeland.is, +3545710077

Hidden Gems

Explore Reykjavík's unconventional side through a collection of specialized museums and striking public art. This list includes a punk music archive housed in a converted public toilet, a museum featuring 23 life-sized whale models, and the world's largest collection of phallological specimens. Architectural highlights range from the sculptural, recycled-metal "Raven's Nest" to the modernist Kópavogur Church. The selection is rounded out by the "Unknown Bureaucrat," a satirical bronze and volcanic rock sculpture located near the city center.





A Whales of Iceland

Located in the Grandi harbor area, this museum displays 23 life-sized, hand-painted models of whale species found in Icelandic waters. The exhibition includes interactive stations and underwater soundscapes focused on marine biology and conservation.

Fiskislóð 23-25, 101 Reykjavík (64.15571, -21.94884)

Mo–Su 10:00–17:00

whalesoficeland.is, +3545710077



B Icelandic Punk Museum

Housed in a former underground public restroom, this museum documents the evolution of Iceland's punk and new wave scenes from the 1970s. The compact space features photographs, posters, and musical memorabilia from the local movement.

Bankastræti 2 (64.14703, -21.93591)

Mo–Su 10:00–18:00



C The Icelandic Phallological Museum

The Icelandic Phallological Museum, located in Reykjavík, Iceland, houses the world's largest display of penises and penile parts.

Geirsgata 2, 101 Reykjavík (64.14847, -21.93576)

Mo–Su 10:00–19:00

phallus.is, +354 561 6663



D Kopávogur Church

Kópavogskirkja is a church in Kópavogur, Iceland. It is located on Borgarholt hill at the top of Kársnes and offers a great view over...

Hábraut 1a, Kópavogur, Iceland (64.11230, -21.91299)

kopavogskirkja.is, +354 554 1898



E Raven's Nest

A private residence and open-air studio created by filmmaker Hrafn Gunnlaugsson. The site is an extensive sculptural installation constructed primarily from recycled scrap metal, industrial parts, and driftwood along the coastline.

62 Laugarnestangi, Reykjavík 105, Iceland (64.15232, -21.88781)



F Unknown Bureaucrat

This 1994 sculpture by Magnús Tómasson depicts a man in a suit carrying a briefcase, with his upper torso and head replaced by a massive, unhewn block of volcanic rock. It stands near the Reykjavík City Hall.

3 Vonarstræti, Reykjavík 101, Iceland (64.14578, -21.94035)

DATA SOURCES

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