

# Iceland

Iceland is known for its unique culture and geology, including being

the site of the world's oldest parliament, having no McDonald's, and running almost entirely on renewable energy. It is also the "Land of Fire and Ice" due to its active volcanoes and large glaciers, and many people believe in elves.

## 1. Iceland Has No Forests

Iceland's landscape is famously treeless, as early settlers cleared most of the forests centuries ago. Volcanic activity has made regrowth challenging. Today, reforestation efforts continue, but the island's open vistas of moss, lava, and mountains remain a key part of its wild beauty.

## 2. More than 60% of Icelanders Live in Reykjavik



Reykjavik is not just Iceland's capital; it's where the majority of Iceland's population resides. This lively, colourful city is filled with museums, art, and a vibrant food scene. Travelers often base themselves here to explore both urban and natural attractions. Reykjavik truly feels like the heart of the nation.

## 3. Iceland Runs Almost Entirely on Renewable Energy

Iceland is a leader in green energy, with about 85% of its power coming from renewable sources, primarily geothermal and hydropower. Travelers can enjoy eco-friendly heating, electricity, and even naturally heated pools. Iceland's commitment to sustainability is truly inspiring.

#### 4. The Northern Lights Are Visible for Eight Months



One of the facts you didn't know about Iceland is that the Northern Lights are visible even from Reykjavik on clear nights. Best seen from August to April, they're most vivid in rural areas where there's no light pollution—making every viewing feel magical.

#### 5. Iceland Has No McDonald's!

Iceland has no McDonald's; the chain closed in 2008. Instead, locals enjoy lamb hot dogs and specialty burgers, offering a refreshing taste of homegrown flavours.

#### 6. Beer Was Banned Until 1989

Iceland legalized beer on March 1, 1989, after banning it due to concerns about its influence. Now, March 1st is celebrated as "Beer Day" with festivities nationwide. Iceland's thriving craft breweries make beer tastings a must for visitors.

#### 7. Iceland's Horses Are a Special Breed



The Icelandic horse is a national treasure, known for its strength, endurance, and unique five gaits. Brought over by Norse settlers, these horses have been kept pure through selective breeding. Riding them through Iceland's lava fields, beaches, and meadows offers an unforgettable experience.

## **8. Iceland Has No Army, Navy, or Air Force**

Iceland is one of the few countries without a standing army, navy, or air force. Despite this, it remains in NATO and relies on defence agreements. The peaceful environment makes it a safe, welcoming destination for travellers.

## **9. Iceland is Home to Europe's Largest Glacier**



Among the famous facts about Iceland, Vatnajökull stands out as Europe's largest glacier, covering 8% of the country. This massive ice sheet conceals volcanoes, lakes, and caves. Visitors can experience its grandeur through ice caving, hiking, or thrilling snowmobile tours.

## **10. Iceland's National Sport is Handball**

While football is globally popular, Icelanders are crazy about handball. The national handball team is highly respected and has performed impressively in international championships. If you visit during a major tournament, you'll find streets, cafes, and bars buzzing with excitement. It's a fun way to experience local spirit.

## **11. The Blue Lagoon was an Accidental Discovery**



Iceland's famous Blue Lagoon was formed by accident from runoff of a geothermal power plant in the 1970s. People soon discovered its healing properties, and today it's a top tourist spot. The steamy blue waters amid black lava fields create a surreal experience.

## **12. Icelanders Believe in Elves and Hidden People**

Many Icelanders believe in elves and "hidden people," who, according to folklore, live in rocks and landscapes. Construction projects often avoid disturbing their habitats. You can even join "elf tours" to explore these intriguing stories.

## **13. Iceland Has the World's Oldest Parliament**

Iceland's Alþingi (Althing) is considered the world's oldest parliament, established in 930 AD. Today, you can visit Þingvellir National Park, where the original assembly met under open skies. It's also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offering a glimpse into Iceland's rich political history.

## **14. Midnight Sun Makes Iceland Glow in Summer**

During the summer months, Iceland experiences almost 24 hours of daylight, a phenomenon called the Midnight Sun. This unique experience allows travellers to explore and sightsee late into the night. It's an extraordinary feeling to hike, photograph, or even have picnics under a sun that never sets.

## **15. Iceland Has 130+ Volcanic Mountains**



Iceland's nickname, "Land of Fire and Ice," reflects its 130+ active and inactive volcanoes. Sitting on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the island is geologically active. Famous volcanoes like Eyjafjallajökull and Hekla offer thrilling tours that showcase Earth's raw power.

## **16. Iceland Has More Sheep Than People**

Sheep farming is a vital part of Iceland's culture and economy. Astonishingly, the number of sheep in Iceland outnumbers its human population by nearly two to one. During the summer, sheep roam freely across mountains and valleys before being rounded up in the fall. You'll often encounter fluffy herds during your road trips.

## **17. You Can Swim in Geothermal Pools Year-Round**

No matter the weather, Icelanders love their geothermal swimming pools. These naturally heated pools offer relaxation, health benefits, and a social hub for locals. From small village pools to luxurious lagoons, there's always a warm place to take a dip—even during snowfall!

## **18. Iceland's Water is Some of the Purest in the World**

Iceland's tap water is some of the cleanest and freshest in the world, flowing directly from glaciers and springs, naturally filtered through lava rocks. Travelers are encouraged to refill bottles instead of using plastic. Drinking from a glacier-fed stream is a must-try experience!

## **19. Iceland Hosts an Annual Arctic Open Golf Tournament**

Golf enthusiasts might be surprised to learn that Iceland hosts an Arctic Open Golf Tournament under the Midnight Sun. Playing golf at midnight, with the sun still glowing, is a surreal experience. The tournament attracts international players seeking an unforgettable round of golf.

## **20. Iceland's National Dish is Fermented Shark**

Hákarl, or fermented shark, is Iceland's traditional delicacy. It's made by curing Greenland shark meat for several months and has a strong, ammonia-like smell. While many travellers find it challenging, tasting it is often considered a rite of passage when visiting Iceland.

## **21. Iceland Is One of the Safest Countries in the World**

Iceland consistently ranks as one of the safest countries for travellers. With low crime rates, a strong sense of community, and a welcoming culture, it's no surprise that people of all ages visit Iceland with peace of mind. Whether you're hiking in remote areas or enjoying the city, you're bound to feel safe and secure.

## **22. Iceland Has a Christmas Tradition Involving 13 Santa Clauses**

Forget one Santa Claus—Iceland celebrates 13 Yule Lads, mischievous brothers who visit children during the 13 nights before Christmas. Each Yule Lad has distinct

traits, from stealing food to playing tricks. The tradition blends folklore with festive fun and makes Christmas in Iceland extra magical.

### **23. Iceland's National Day Celebrates Independence and the Summer Solstice**

Iceland's National Day, celebrated on June 17th, marks its independence from Denmark in 1944. This day is celebrated with parades, performances, and festivities, but it also coincides with the Midnight Sun, creating an incredibly special atmosphere. It's an excellent time to experience Icelandic culture at its best.

**Suggested Read:** [20 Compelling Reasons to Visit Iceland – Explore the Land of Fire and Ice](#)

### **24. Iceland Has the Oldest Continually Active Volcano in the World**

Iceland is home to Mount Hekla, one of the world's oldest continuously active volcanoes. It has erupted over 20 times since the 9th century and is considered one of Europe's most dangerous. Trekking to Hekla offers stunning views and a firsthand experience of nature's raw power.

### **25. Iceland Is Famous for Its Spectacular Waterfalls**



Iceland boasts iconic waterfalls like Gullfoss, Seljalandsfoss, and Skogafoss. Formed by glacial rivers and volcanic terrain, they're easily accessible and breathtaking year-round. This is one of the top facts about Iceland that makes it a dream for nature lovers and photographers alike.