

Icelandic for Tourists

Your essential language companion for exploring the land of fire and ice. This guide provides practical phrases and pronunciation tips to help you navigate Iceland with confidence, from booking hotels to asking for directions on hiking trails.

Contents

- [Why Learn Basic Icelandic?](#)
- [About the Icelandic Language](#)
- [Pronunciation Basics](#)
- [Essential Greetings](#)
- [Basic Courtesies](#)
- [At the Hotel: Check-In](#)
- [Hotel Requests](#)
- [Hotel Problems](#)
- [At the Restaurant: Arrival](#)
- [Ordering Food](#)
- [Traditional Icelandic Dishes](#)
- [At the Restaurant: Finishing](#)
- [Booking Tours](#)
- [Popular Tour Types](#)
- [Tour Questions](#)
- [Getting Around: Transportation](#)
- [Using Public Transport](#)
- [Renting a Car](#)
- [Driving Terms](#)
- [Asking for Directions](#)
- [Understanding Directions](#)
- [Landmarks and Locations](#)
- [Distance and Time](#)
- [On the Hiking Trail](#)
- [Trail Features](#)
- [Weather on the Trail](#)
- [Safety on Trails](#)
- [Natural Landmarks](#)
- [Trail Etiquette](#)
- [Shopping Essentials](#)
- [Numbers for Shopping](#)
- [Icelandic Souvenirs](#)
- [Emergency Phrases](#)
- [Medical Emergencies](#)
- [Days of the Week](#)
- [Cultural Tips](#)
- [Useful Phrases Summary](#)
- [Quick Reference Card](#)
- [Enjoy Your Icelandic Adventure!](#)

Why Learn Basic Icelandic?

Connect with locals

Icelanders appreciate when visitors make an effort to speak their language. Even basic phrases can open doors to warm conversations and insider tips about hidden gems.

Navigate confidently

While many Icelanders speak English, knowing key phrases helps in rural areas, on hiking trails, and in traditional restaurants where menus might be in Icelandic.

Enrich your experience

Understanding basic Icelandic enhances your journey, helping you read signs, understand place names, and appreciate the unique culture of this remarkable island nation.



 Amazon.com



Reykjavík Day Trips: 10 Can't-Miss Routes: Golden Circle, ...

Amazon.com: Reykjavík Day Trips: 10 Can't-Miss Routes: Golden Circle, South Coast, Snæfellsnes, Reykjanes & More — Safe,...

About the Icelandic Language

Icelandic is a North Germanic language that has remained remarkably unchanged for centuries. It's closely related to Old Norse, the language of the Vikings. With about 350,000 speakers worldwide, it's one of Europe's smallest language communities.

The language uses the Latin alphabet with some special characters: Þ/þ (thorn), Ð/ð (eth), Æ/æ, and Ö/ö. These unique letters give Icelandic its distinctive appearance and sound. The good news? Icelandic pronunciation is relatively consistent once you learn the basic rules.

Pronunciation Basics

Þ/þ (thorn)

Pronounced like "th" in "think"

Example: **þakka** (THAK-ka) = thank

Ð/ð (eth)

Pronounced like "th" in "weather"

Example: **Maður** (MA-thur) = man

R sound

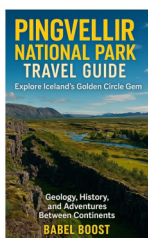
Rolled, like in Spanish

Example: **Reykjavík** (RAYK-ya-vik)

LL sound

Like "tl" combination

Example: **Halló** (ha-TLOW)



 Amazon.com



Pingvellir National Park Travel Guide: Explore Iceland's G...

Buy Pingvellir National Park Travel Guide: Explore Iceland's Golden Circle Gem: Geology, History, and Adventures Between Continent...

Essential Greetings

Halló

Pronunciation: ha-TLOW

Meaning: Hello (informal)

Góðan daginn

Pronunciation: GOH-than DAI-inn

Meaning: Good day (formal)

Bless

Pronunciation: bless

Meaning: Goodbye (casual)

Takk fyrir

Pronunciation: tahk FEER-ir

Meaning: Thank you



Basic Courtesies

Essential phrases

- **Já** (yow) - Yes
- **Nei** (nay) - No
- **Gjörðu svo vel** (GYUR-thu svo vel) - Please/You're welcome
- **Afsakið** (AHF-sak-ith) - Excuse me/Sorry
- **Ég skil ekki** (yeh shil EH-ki) - I don't understand

Quick tip

Icelanders often skip formal pleasantries and get straight to the point. Don't be offended by directness – it's cultural! A simple "takk" (thank you) goes a long way.

When entering shops or restaurants, a quick "halló" is appreciated but not always necessary.



 Amazon.com



Strokkur & the Great Geysir : A 90-Minute Micro-Guide f...

Amazon.com: Strokkur & the Great Geysir : A 90-Minute Micro-Guide for Safe, Spectacular Visits on Iceland's Golden Circle...

At the Hotel: Check-In

01

Ég er með bókun

Pronunciation: yeh er meth BOH-kun

Meaning: I have a reservation

02

Nafnið mitt er...

Pronunciation: NAHV-nith mitt er

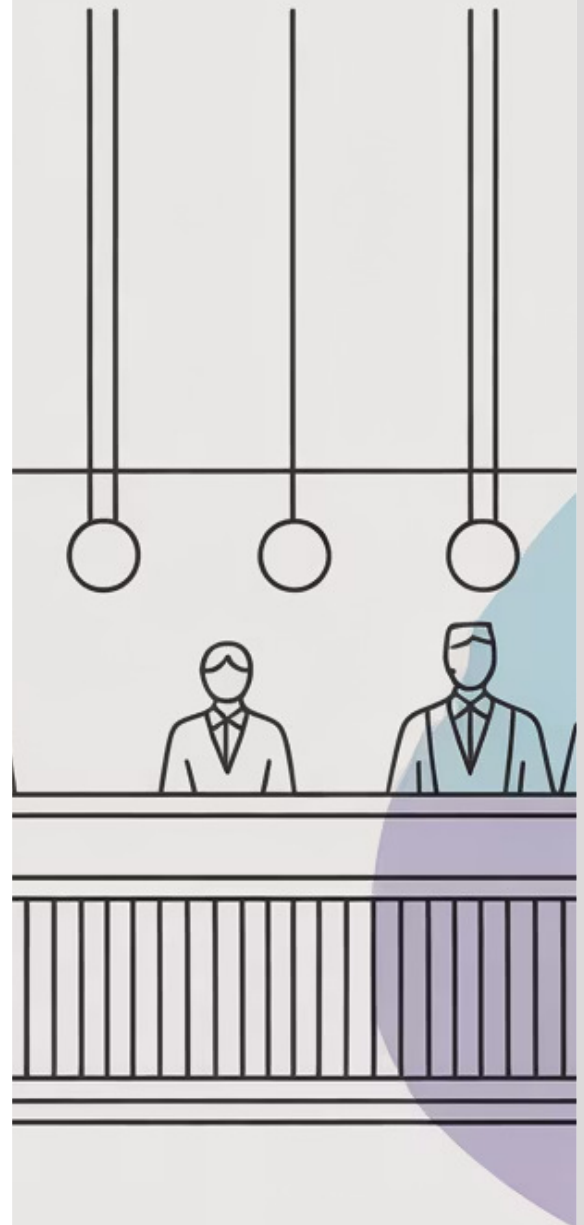
Meaning: My name is...

03

Hvenær er morgunmatur?

Pronunciation: KVEN-air er MOR-gun-ma-tur

Meaning: When is breakfast?



Hotel Requests

Room needs

- **Herbergi** (HER-ber-gi) - Room
- **Lykilkort** (LIH-kil-kort) - Key card
- **Handklæði** (HANT-klow-thi) - Towel
- **Þvottavél** (THVOT-ta-vyehl) - Washing machine

Common questions

Er WiFi ókeypis?

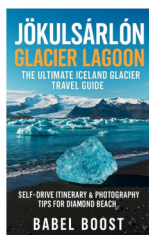
(er WEE-fee OH-kayp-is)

Is WiFi free?

Hvar er bílastæðið?

(kvar er BEE-la-stai-thith)

Where is the parking?



 Amazon.com



Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon: The Ultimate Iceland Glacier ...

Amazon.com: Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon: The Ultimate Iceland Glacier Travel Guide: Self-Drive Itinerary & Photography Tips for...

Hotel Problems

Reporting issues

Eitthvað er ekki í lagi

(AYT-kvath er EH-ki ee LA-yi)

Something is not working

Hitinn virkar ekki

(HIT-inn VEER-kar EH-ki)

The heating doesn't work

Það er of kalt

(thath er ohf kalt)

It's too cold



At the Restaurant: Arrival

1

Borð fyrir tvo

(borth FEER-ir tvo)

Table for two

2

Matseðill, takk

(MAT-se-thitl takk)

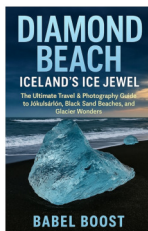
Menu, please

3

Hvað mælir þú með?

(kvath MAI-lir thu meth)

What do you recommend?



 Amazon.com



Diamond Beach: Iceland's Ice Jewel: The Ultimate Travel ...

Amazon.com: Diamond Beach: Iceland's Ice Jewel: The Ultimate Travel & Photography Guide to Jökulsárlón, Black Sand Beaches,...

Ordering Food

Making your order

Ég ætla að fá...

(yeh AIT-la ath fow)

I will have...

Er þetta með kjöti?

(er THET-ta meth CHUH-ti)

Does this have meat?

Ég er grænmetisæta

(yeh er GRINE-met-is-ai-ta)

I'm vegetarian

Vatn, takk

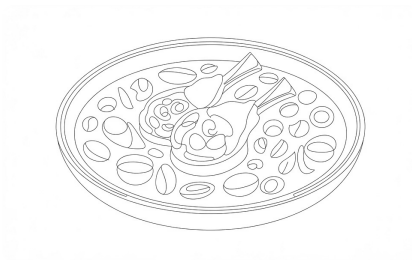
(vatn tahk)

Water, please

Dietary needs

- **Laktósaóþol** - Lactose intolerant
- **Glútenfrítt** - Gluten-free
- **Ofnæmi** - Allergy

Traditional Icelandic Dishes



Kjötsúpa

(CHUT-soo-pa)

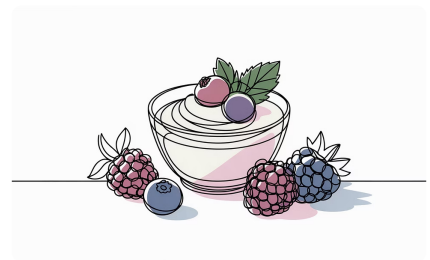
Lamb soup: a hearty traditional stew



Plokkfiskur

(PLOK-fisk-ur)

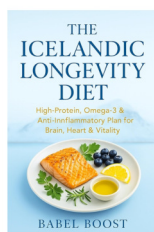
Fish stew with potatoes



Skyr

(skeer)

Thick yogurt-like dairy product



 Amazon.com



The Icelandic Longevity Diet: High-Protein, Omega-3 & A...

Amazon.com: The Icelandic Longevity Diet: High-Protein, Omega-3 & Anti-Inflammatory Plan for Brain, Heart & Vitality...

At the Restaurant: Finishing



Það var mjög gott

(thath var myohg gott)

That was very good



Reikninginn, takk

(RAY-king-inn takk)

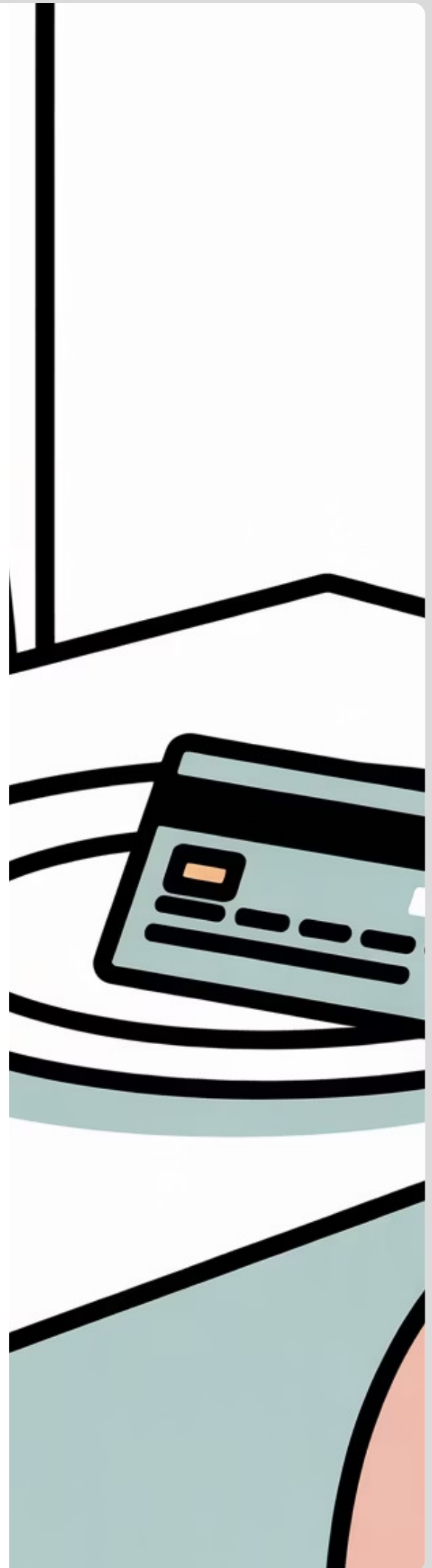
The bill, please



Get ég greitt með korti?

(get yeh GRAYT meth KOR-ti)

Can I pay by card?



Booking Tours

Essential tour phrases

Ég vil bóka ferð

(yeh vil BOH-ka ferth)

I want to book a tour

Hvenær fer hún?

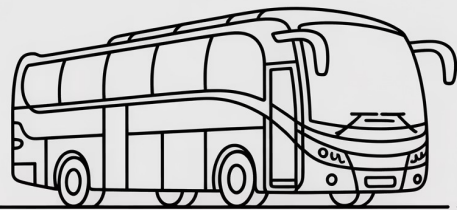
(KVEN-air fer hoon)

When does it leave?

Hvað kostar það?

(kvath KOST-ar thath)

How much does it cost?



Popular Tour Types



Golden Circle

Gullni hringurinn

(GUTL-ni HRING-ur-inn)

Iceland's most famous route



Northern Lights

Norðurljós

(NOR-thur-lyohs)

Aurora hunting tours



Glacier Walk

Jöklarganga

(YUH-klar-GANG-a)

Ice hiking adventure



Whale Watching

Hvalaskoðun

(KVA-la-skoh-thun)

Ocean wildlife tours

Tour Questions

Er þetta hægt fyrir börn?

(er THET-ta HAIKT FEER-ir burn)

Is this suitable for children?

Er matur innifalinn?

(er MA-tur INN-i-fal-inn)

Is food included?

Hvað á ég að taka með?

(kvath ow yeh ath TA-ka meth)

What should I bring?

Getting Around: Transportation



Strætó

(STRAI-toh)

City bus



Leigubíll

(LAY-gu-beetl)

Taxi



Bíll

(beetl)

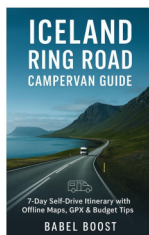
Car



Ganga

(GANG-a)

Walking



 Amazon.com



Iceland Ring Road Campervan Guide: 7-Day Self-Drive Iti...

Buy Iceland Ring Road Campervan Guide: 7-Day Self-Drive Itinerary with Offline Maps, GPX & Budget Tips (Iceland Attractio...

Using Public Transport

Bus travel phrases

Hvar er strætóstöðin?

(kvar er STRAI-toh-stuh-thin)

Where is the bus stop?

Fer þessi strætó til...?

(fer THES-i STRAI-toh til)

Does this bus go to...?

Hvenær kemur næsti strætó?

(KVEN-air KEM-ur NAIS-ti STRAI-toh)

When does the next bus come?

Useful info

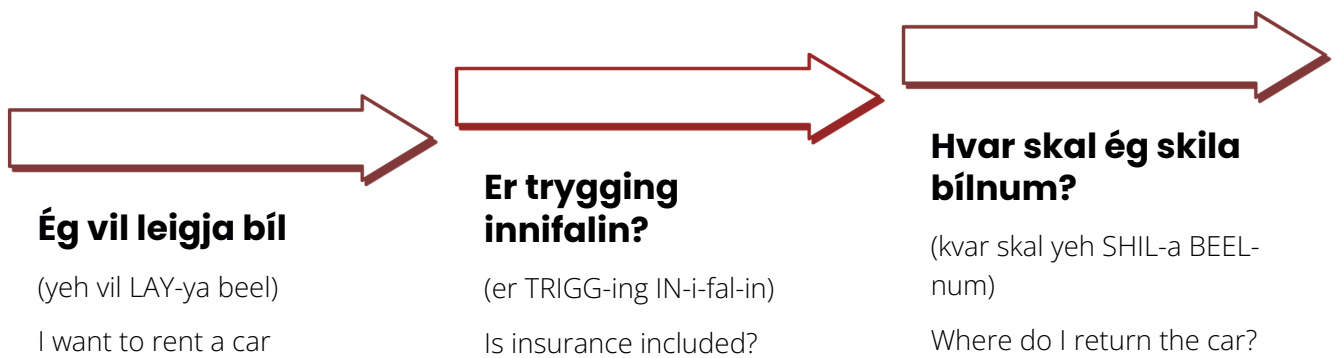
Bus fare: **Fargjald** (FAR-gyalt)

Ticket: **Miði** (MI-thi)

Downtown: **Miðbær** (MITH-bair)

Most buses in Reykjavik do not give change, so have the exact fare or use a card.

Renting a Car



Driving Terms

Bensín

(BEN-seen)

Gasoline/Petrol

Bensínstöð

(BEN-seen-stuth)

Gas station

Hraðatakmörkun

(HRATH-a-tak-mur-kun)

Speed limit

Vegavinna

(VEG-a-vin-a)

Road work

Asking for Directions

1

Afsakið, hvar er...?

(AHF-sak-ith kvar er)

Excuse me, where is...?

2

Er þetta langt hérað?

(er THET-ta langt HYEh-than)

Is it far from here?

3

Getur þú sýnt mér á kortinu?

(GET-ur thu sint mer ow KOR-ti-nu)

Can you show me on the map?

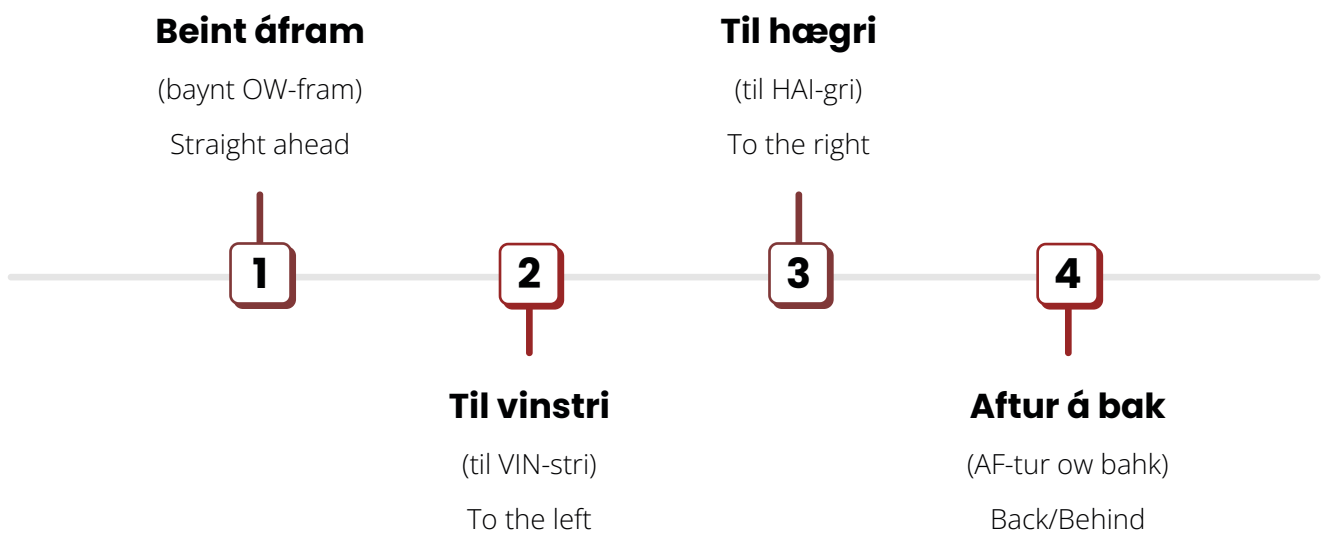
4

Ég er villtur

(yeh er VILT-ur)

I am lost

Understanding Directions



Landmarks and Locations

Key places

- **Miðbær** (MITH-bair) - Downtown
- **Kirkja** (KIRK-ya) - Church
- **Sundlaug** (SUND-loyg) - Swimming pool
- **Áfengisverslun** (OW-feng-is-vers-lun) - Liquor store
- **Sjúkrahús** (SYOOK-ra-hoos) - Hospital
- **Lyfjabúð** (LIF-ya-booth) - Pharmacy



Distance and Time

Nálægt

(NOW-laikt)

Close/Near

Langt í burtu

(langt ee BUR-tu)

Far away

Fimm mínútur

(fim MEE-noo-tur)

Five minutes

Hálflukkustund

(HOWLF-kluk-u-stund)

Half an hour

On the Hiking Trail

→ **Hvar er stígurinn?**

(kvar er STEE-gur-inn)

Where is the trail?

→ **Er þetta öruggt?**

(er THET-ta UR-ukt)

Is this safe?

→ **Hvað er langt að ganga?**

(kvath er langt að GANG-a)

How long is the hike?

→ **Er ég á réttri leið?**

(er yeh ow REHT-ri layth)

Am I on the right path?

Trail Features



Foss

(foss)

Waterfall



Á

(ow)

River



Hellir

(HET-lir)

Cave



Fjall

(fyatl)

Mountain



Vatn

(vatn)

Lake/Water



Dalur

(DA-lur)

Valley

Weather on the Trail



Weather terms

Hvernig er veðrið?

(KVER-nig er VETH-rith)

How is the weather?

- **Sól** (sohl) - Sunshine
- **Rigning** (RIG-ning) - Rain
- **Vindur** (VIN-dur) - Wind
- **Snjór** (snyohr) - Snow
- **Þoka** (THO-ka) - Fog

Safety on Trails

Hætta

(HI-ta)

Danger

Bjarga mér

(BYAR-ga mer)

Help me

Lokað

(LOH-kath)

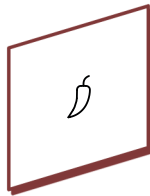
Closed

Neyðarnúmer

(NAY-thar-NOO-mer)

Emergency
number (112)

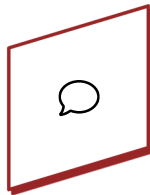
Natural Landmarks



Hver

(kver)

Hot spring



Goshver

(GOS-kver)

Geyser



Hraunið

(HROI-nith)

Lava field



Strönd

(strund)

Beach

Trail Etiquette

Respectful hiking

Má ég taka mynd?

(mow yeh TA-ka minth)

May I take a photo?

Gangi þér vel

(GANG-i thyer vel)

Have a good walk

Ekki ganga út af stígnum

(EH-ki GANG-a oot ahf STEEG-num)

Don't walk off the trail

Leave no trace

Iceland's nature is fragile. The phrase "**Verndum náttúruna**" (VERN-dum NOW-too-ru-na) means "Protect nature."

Always stay on marked paths and respect posted signs.

Shopping Essentials



Hvað kostar þetta?

(kvath KOST-ar THET-ta)

How much does this cost?



Tekur þú kort?

(TEK-ur thu kort)

Do you take card?



Ég er bara að skoða

(yeh er BA-ra ath SKOH-tha)

I'm just looking

Numbers for Shopping

Einn (ayn) - 1	Tveir (tvayr) - 2
Þrír (threer) - 3	Fjórir (FYOH-rir) - 4
Fimm (fim) - 5	Tíu (TEE-u) - 10

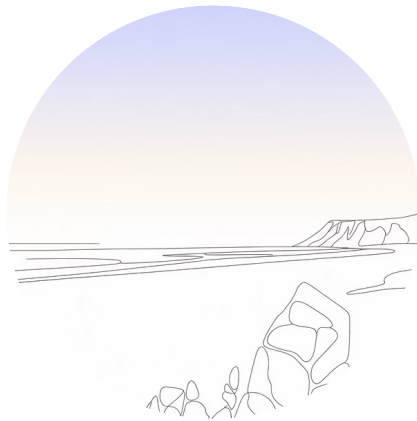
Icelandic Souvenirs



Lopapeysa

(LOH-pa-pay-sa)

Traditional wool sweater



Hraun

(hroin)

Lava rock items



Súkkulaði

(SOOK-u-la-thi)

Chocolate



Emergency Phrases

Hjálp!

(hyowlp)

Help!

Ég þarf hjálp

(yeh tharf hyowlp)

I need help

Hringdu í 112

(HRING-du ee ain-ain-tvo)

Call 112 (emergency)

Medical Emergencies

Health issues

Ég er veik/ur

(yeh er vayk/vay-kur)

I am sick (female/male)

Mér líður illa

(myer LEE-thur IL-a)

I feel bad

Hvar er sjúkrahúsið?

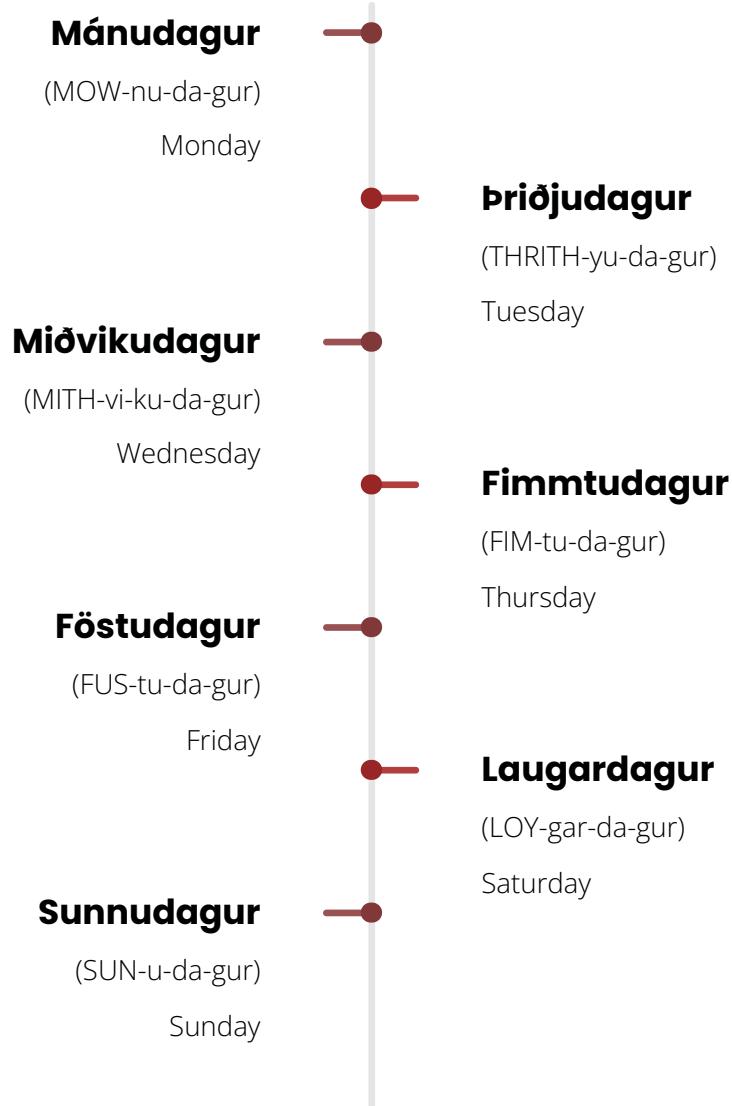
(kvar er SYOOK-ra-hoo-sith)

Where is the hospital?

Common conditions

- **Höfuðverkur** (HUH-vuth-ver-kur) - Headache
- **Magaverkur** (MA-ga-ver-kur) - Stomach ache
- **Hiti** (HIT-i) - Fever
- **Lyf** (lif) - Medicine

Days of the Week



Cultural Tips

Swimming pool etiquette

Icelanders take pool hygiene seriously. Always shower naked before entering. It's called **"að sturta"** (ath STUR-TA).

Tipping

Tipping is not expected in Iceland. Service charges are included in prices. Don't be offended if tips are refused.

Name customs

Icelanders use first names in all situations, even with doctors and officials. Last names are patronymic (based on father's name).

Useful Phrases Summary

01

Greeting

Halló (ha-TLOW) - Hello

Bless (bless) - Goodbye

02

Courtesy

Takk (tahk) - Thanks

Afsakið (AHF-sak-ith) - Sorry

03

Help

Hjálp (hyowlp) - Help

Já/Nei (yow/nay) - Yes/No

04

Questions

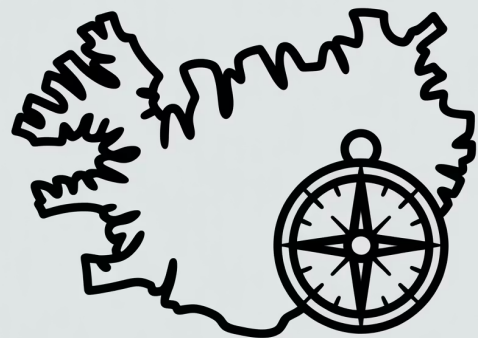
Hvar? (kvar) - Where?

Hvað? (kvath) - What?

Quick Reference Card

Top 10 tourist phrases

1. **Halló** - Hello
2. **Takk fyrir** - Thank you
3. **Hvar er...?** - Where is...?
4. **Hvað kostar þetta?** - How much?
5. **Reikninginn, takk** - Bill, please
6. **Ég skil ekki** - I don't understand
7. **Talar þú ensku?** - Do you speak English?
8. **Hjálp** - Help
9. **Bless** - Goodbye
10. **Já/Nei** - Yes/No



Enjoy Your Icelandic Adventure!

Now you're equipped with essential Icelandic phrases to enhance your journey through this incredible country. Remember, Icelanders appreciate any effort to speak their language, even if it's just a simple "takki" or "halló."

Don't be afraid to make mistakes - locals are friendly and patient with visitors learning their language. Use this guide as your companion, and you'll find that even basic phrases open doors to authentic experiences and warm connections.

Gangi þér vel! (GANG-i thyer vel) - Have a good trip!