Iceland's Ring Road in 10 Days: A Self-Drive Plan

A first-time driver’s route guide from Reykjavík and back.



Ben & Gab, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0

Route 1 connects the island in a paved 1,322-kilometre loop

The Ring Road links most Icelandic towns and villages; a self-drive takes at least seven days.

1,322 km

RING ROAD LENGTH

Equivalent to 820 miles around the loop.

At least 7 days

MINIMUM TRAVEL DAYS

Visit Iceland’s guidance; this plan uses ten.

2019

FULLY PAVED

All 1,322 km of Route 1 are paved.



Alexander Grebenkov, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0

Summer maximizes daylight and access, while conditions remain changeable

Only summer opens the whole island; the weather stays changeable in every season.

20–21 hours

JUNE DAYLIGHT IN REYKJAVÍK

July brings roughly 18–20; summer is the only season the whole country is open.

18 to 14.5 hours

AUGUST DAYLIGHT

Summer is the busiest season: rooms and rental cars often sell out months ahead.

4–5 hours

DECEMBER DAYLIGHT IN SOUTH ICELAND

Snow, ice and storms can close roads with little notice.



Andreas Tille, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

A suggested ten-day loop follows Route 1 through most regions

A practical sequence from Reykjavík and back; daily drive times and distances are not specified.

SUGGESTED DAYS	REGION	STRETCH	STOPS
DAYS 1–2	Southwest and South Coast	Reykjavík to Vík	Choose Golden Circle stops, then continue past Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss.
DAYS 3–4	Southeast	Vík to Höfn	Explore Skaftafell, Vatnajökull National Park and Jökulsárlón.
DAY 5	Eastfjords	Höfn to Egilsstaðir	Follow fjords and coastal villages; treat gravel shortcuts cautiously.
DAYS 6–7	North Iceland	Mývatn and Akureyri	Allow time for geothermal scenery and optional North Iceland detours.
DAYS 8–10	West and return	Akureyri to Reykjavík via Borgarfjörður	Return via Route 1; the exact daily allocation is a planning choice.

South Iceland pairs coastal waterfalls with glacier country



From the southwest eastward

Route 1 hugs the flatter southern coastline, where waterfalls and glacial scenery shape the drive.

Consider Þingvellir, Geysir and Gullfoss as a Golden Circle detour. Along the South Coast, Seljalandsfoss, Skógafoss and Dyrhólaey lead toward Skaftafell, Vatnajökull National Park and Jökulsárlón.

Selfoss, Hveragerði, Vík and Höfn offer distinct route bases.

The Eastfjords trade straight progress for fjord scenery

Höfn to Egilsstaðir

The Ring Road zigzags through fjords, revealing coastal villages and changing views around each turn.

Explore the Eastfjords rather than treating this stretch as a simple transfer. In summer, Route 939 Öxi is a gravel shortcut between Djúpivogur and Egilsstaðir.

The shortcut saves 68 km but has steep, winding roads.


Michal Klajban, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

North Iceland adds geothermal landscapes and a major loop detour



Mývatn and Akureyri

The northern Ring Road combines geothermal scenery, a regional city and access to coastal routes.

Visit bubbling geothermal areas at Mývatn and the city of Akureyri. Goðafoss lies along Route 1; the Diamond Circle connects Mývatn, Dettifoss, Ásbyrgi Canyon and Húsavík.

From Akureyri, the loop is about 310 km and over four driving hours before stops.

The western return runs inland through Borgarfjörður

Route 1 connects the westbound return to Reykjavík, but it does not tour all of West Iceland.

- **Inland route:** The Ring Road passes inland through Borgarfjörður, bypassing the Snæfellsnes Peninsula and the Westfjords.
- **Distance:** North Iceland lies about 390 km, roughly a five-hour drive, from Reykjavík; the stretch can get busy, especially in July.
- **Stops:** Borgarnes, Hvammstangi and Blönduós offer museums, local pools and restaurants.
- **Weather:** The Holtavörðuheiði pass is prone to storm and wind closures, sometimes even in summer.
- **Detours:** The Westfjords Way and Snæfellsnes Peninsula need separate detours.

A ten-day loop follows Route 1; additional western regions require extra routing.

Safe driving depends on current checks and conservative choices

SITUATION	GUIDANCE	WHY IT MATTERS
WEATHER AND ROADS	Check vedur.is, road.is and SafeTravel before each driving day	Wind, storms and closures can change conditions fast.
SPEED LIMITS	90 km/h on rural paved roads, 80 km/h on rural gravel, 50 km/h in towns	Road signs may set a different limit.
GRAVEL TRANSITIONS	Slow down before the surface changes from paved to gravel	Tyres can lose grip and the car can spin out.
FATIGUE AND SHEEP	Rest after an overnight flight; slow down near livestock	Sheep, and sometimes horses or cows, wander on or by the road.
SINGLE-LANE BRIDGES	Slow to 50 km/h before crossing	The car closer to the bridge has right of way; watch the other driver.

Use SafeTravel for closures, wind, traffic and webcams; never drive off marked roads.

Highland F-roads require an open route and a capable 4x4

1

Wait for opening

Many F-roads open in late June or early July; timing varies.

2

Match the vehicle

Highland travel requires a suitable 4×4 with good ground clearance.

3

Check conditions

Snow cover decides most openings; conservation areas can delay some. Check road.is or call 1777.



Official charges vary by site, vehicle and effective date

CHARGE	PUBLISHED AMOUNT	TERM OR SCOPE
VAÐLAHEIÐARGÖNG TOLL	2,216 ISK	One trip; under 3.5 tons; pay within 24 hours before or after the trip; valid from 2 March 2026.
ÞINGVELLIR PARKING	1,000 ISK	Passenger car with five or fewer seats; day of payment.
REGIONAL FEE: SKAFTAFELL OR JÖKULSÁRLÓN	1,110 ISK	Passenger car with five or fewer seats; valid until midnight on the date paid.
LODGING TAX	800 ISK / 400 ISK	Per unit from 1 January 2025: hotels and guesthouses licensed in categories II–IV / campsites and motorhome sites.

Amounts as published on the official pages, read on 22 November 2026.

Follow the loop, flex with conditions

Check road and weather conditions before each driving day.