

## Travel blog

# A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO ICELAND'S GOLDEN CIRCLE

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Adventure awaits at the top of the world. Iceland's rugged beauty and natural wonders offer travelers a chance to hop off the beaten path and discover the great outdoors like never before. Come see the very best of these dreamy landscapes on a 186-mile loop with geysers, lagoons and waterfalls known as the Golden Circle.

## REYKJAVIK

The capital city is just east of the circle, but no trip to this volcanic island would be complete without some time in Reykjavik. While nature may be religion to Icelanders, they are not without their cosmopolitan delights. Posh restaurants and cozy bakeries, art galleries and local pubs give everyone a chance to relax and refuel.

## THINGVELLIR NATIONAL PARK

Here, visitors can stand on what appears to be solid ground but is actually the spot where the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates are slowly pulling apart, centimeter by centimeter. It's the place where one day Iceland will be separated in two. For thousands of years the world's oldest Parliament, the Alþingi, met here to govern Iceland. Visitors can explore the picturesque ravines and creeks that are easily accessible from the park's many hiking trails.

## GULLFOSS

A bit further on is the Golden Falls waterfall which is fed by glacial melt water. Stand beside this deep gorge where the river Hvita plunges into the falls on a sunny day and the water takes on a shimmering golden shine.

## HAUKADALUR

In Medieval times Iceland was thought to be the entrance to the underworld. One visit to this geothermal region, where lava fields spew fire and geysers bubble up from hot underground springs, and you'll soon know why. Visitors stand amazed as dozens of hot springs and steam vents erupt, hurling stones and mud high into the sky.

## SKALHOLT CHURCH

It was here in this simple white cathedral that the last of Iceland's Catholic bishops was executed in the mid-1500s, clearing the way for the Lutheran Church. The important structure has been part of the country's history since its founding in 1056.

## THE SECRET LAGOON

Weary travelers can end their tour of the Golden Circle with a dip in the geothermal waters of the Secret Lagoon. Built atop a natural hot spring, this public pool stays a near constant 100 degrees. While bobbing in the hot water, swimmers can watch as a small geyser erupts every five minutes. During the winter months there is a good chance of seeing the Northern Lights flash overhead.

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