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How to Drive in Iceland

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Winter

Foreign tourists who drive around Iceland often find themselves in conditions that they are not used to. Therefore, it is important to realise what can be expected and how to handle these conditions – how to drive in Iceland.

Beautiful scenery

The landscape in Iceland is beautiful and can draw the driver's attention away from the road. It is important to stay focused while driving but also to not slow down too much as it can create dangers for others. Of course it would be ridiculous to stop the car in the middle of the road to take pictures but sadly many such accidents have happened in Iceland. If you want to admire the landscape and take pictures, find a safe spot to stop the car outside of the road and enjoy the scenery.



Weather and road conditions

Make sure you look up weather and road conditions and drive in accordance with these conditions. You can look up weather conditions on most weather apps and you can look up road conditions here: www.safetravel.is/conditions. Also make sure you check www.safetravel.is for special weather alerts.

Driving on icy roads can be very challenging, especially for drivers inexperienced in such conditions. It is best to avoid such situations if possible, but if you must drive on icy roads, make sure you choose your speed in accordance with what you can handle. In icy conditions and bad weather, the regular speed limit doesn't apply as it only applies in the best conditions.



Closed means closed

If you see a road marked with a Closed sign, please do not continue. We don't close roads unless it is necessary and continuing will most likely cause you to get stuck in snow which means you will waste precious time (your own and others') and money getting people to help you get unstuck.



Single lane bridges

There are many single lane bridges in Iceland, both on and off the Ring Road. The rule is that the car closer to the bridge has the right of way but it is wise to slow down and assess the situation, see what the other driver intends to do, before driving across.





General traffic laws and rules in Iceland

- Drivers and all passengers must wear a seatbelt, no matter where they are seated.
- Children under 135 cm must use a car seat fitting their age, height and weight.
- Headlights and taillights must be turned on at all times, all year round. Auto-setting might not be enough.
- All usage of smart devices (phones included) is strictly forbidden while driving, unless used hands free.
- The BAC limit in Iceland is 0,2‰ which means you can't drive, even after one alcoholic drink
- The speed limit is 50 km/h in urban areas, 80 km/h on rural gravel roads and 90 km/h on rural paved roads, unless road signs state differently.

Roundabouts



There are quite a few roundabouts in Iceland.

Note that the inner lane has the right of way when exiting the roundabout so the outer lane has to give way.

Risk of falling asleep at the wheel



In the winter time you can have 24 hours darkness which can make you more tired than usual. Take care of getting a good night's sleep.

If you fly overnight to Iceland, as is common when coming from America, make sure that you are not too tired to drive when you land and try not to drive too far before your first sleep. You can get a room at a hotel near the airport and rest for a few hours in the morning for a discount price. Please see www.napandgo.is for more information.

Off-road driving is illegal



In Iceland it is strictly forbidden to drive off-road. The flora in Iceland is very sensitive and such driving can cause damage which nature may never repair. It doesn't matter if you don't see vegetation - e.g. on sand or wasteland - it is forbidden to leave a trace on unspoilt land.

Note that driving on F-roads and gravel roads is not off-road driving – but when you drive off them, it is.