

# The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

## Our top 15 Insider Tips



### INSIDER TIP Icelandic design

At Kirsuberjatréð in Reykjavík you'll not only find knitted pullovers, but also off-beat creations in felt or organza. Accompany these with elegant necklaces made of bits of hosepipe and pearls (photo, top) → p. 28

### INSIDER TIP Ornithology in stone

Artworks of a very special nature: the stone eggs by artist Sigurður Guðmundsson in Gleðivík, lined up along the little coast road in all colours and sizes → p. 53

### INSIDER TIP Underwater experience

Daring divers can plunge deep down between the continental plates in Þingvallavatn → p. 41

### INSIDER TIP Pompeii of the North

Fascinating excavations on Heimaey: what will be discovered in the houses underneath the ash? Some hope to re-discover long-lost mementoes → p. 44

### INSIDER TIP Quiet and with a view

The Vínland guest house is functional and tastefully furnished. The place to come for true luxury: peace and quiet and the view of Lögurinn from the terrace → p. 56

### INSIDER TIP One night in August

Reykjavík on Culture Night is one giant event, with music, readings and firework displays. Every year, the programme swells to include new offerings, so there's always something interesting to discover → p. 99

### INSIDER TIP Close-up on birds

You can study at leisure the birds which live on and around Mývatn lake in the museum on its banks → p. 64

### INSIDER TIP Glacier in a glass

American artist Roni Horn has collected glacier water; see for yourself at her Library of Water at Stykkishólmur that there's more to Iceland's ice than meets the eye → p. 73

### INSIDER TIP Winter sport

Iceland in winter is more than just shopping in Reykjavík – there are a number of great winter-sport venues, too. The wide expanses of the northwest in particular and around Mývatn are ideal for cross-country skiing. If you like things a little faster, hop on a Ski-Doo snowmobile (photo, bottom) → p. 93

### INSIDER TIP On the glacier

A night in the Kirkjuból hut on Langjökull has its own special appeal. From here, you can walk across the Langjökull glacier, even without special equipment, since it is fairly even and has few crevasses → p. 87

### INSIDER TIP In Gunnar's valley

The attractive Fljótsdalur valley was the downfall of the heroic figure of Gunnar. So in love with the landscape – from here you have a particularly beautiful view – he remained on his farm and was killed by his enemies. A plaque tells the story → p. 48

### INSIDER TIP Make yourself at home

Borgarnes B&B is an old house with prettily furnished rooms – friendly atmosphere included. Its proximity to the sea and the large garden are its special bonus points → p. 70

### INSIDER TIP On the subject of seals

They gaze up at you with their big round eyes. At the Icelandic Seal Centre in Hvammstangi you can find out how and where they live → p. 97

### INSIDER TIP Dream on

The Atlavík campsite on Lagarfjót lake is a wonderful spot for day-dreamers. In the middle of a wood, whose trees are over 100 years old and up to 12m/40ft tall, you'll find plenty of idyllic corners → p. 56

### INSIDER TIP Camping for all

The Camping Card is ideal for families or couples – and helps to make your Iceland holiday a little cheaper. The list of participating campsites gets longer every year. The card is available via the Internet → p. 103



# BEST OF ...

## GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

### ● **Down on the farm**

The ruins of the 11th-century longhouse *Stöng*, which can be visited for free, give a vivid impression of the size and layout of farms back then. Route 32 is worth a detour on the way to the highlands → p. 50

### ● **Iceland in bloom**

The *Botanical Garden* in Akureyri is a freely accessible, rambling site and home to all of Iceland's native plants – plus a great many more from elsewhere. From Greenland to the Mediterranean, if it's green and/or bears flowers, it's here → p. 61

### ● **Sculpture garden**

Einar Jónsson was the country's first sculptor of note, and consequently many of his works are to be found all over the Iceland. You can also admire an interesting selection of them in the garden adjoining his studio, which is permanently open to visitors → p. 35

### ● **Get pally with the puffins**

To see puffins really close up, you usually have to take an organised boat trip. On the steep coast at *Látrabjarg* the comical cliff-dwellers come up close enough for you to count the rings on their bills – for free (photo) → p. 73

### ● **What's geothermics all about?**

Get an answer to this question during a free visit to the geothermal power plant *Hellisheiðarvirkjun*. At the visitor centre, various information points with touch-screens take you through the energy-generating process, and you can learn a lot about the region at the same time → p. 47

### ● **Romantic spot for a dip**

The little pool at *Selárdalur*, which you can visit for free, has a charm all its own. It lies on an idyllic river, and in autumn is lit up by the Northern Lights as well as candles → p. 56

● ● ● Dots in guidebook refer to 'Best of ...' tips

# ONLY IN ICELAND

Unique experiences

### ● **Great knits**

The traditional Iceland pullover is an ideal piece of outdoor kit, and at *Vikurprjón* in Vík they have a huge selection of hand-knitted models with the typical pattern around the neck → p. 29

### ● **Cultural heritage: sagas**

The preserved manuscripts of the Icelandic sagas are considered natural treasures on the Iceland. They are displayed in a specially darkened room in Reykjavík's *Culture House*. Moreover, almost every region of the country has its own heroic figures whose exploits can be tracked back in time → p. 36

### ● **Environmentally friendly energy**

The Iceland of *Heimaey* is a prime example of how the consequences of nature's menacing power can be turned to man's advantage: the hot lava heats the water; the ruins and excavations are tourist attractions → p. 43

### ● **Cascading waters**

Iceland is synonymous with waterfalls; there are thousands of them, many marvelled at daily, others completely hidden from view. The finest is probably the fan-shaped *Dynjandi* (The Thundering One), in the northwest (photo) → p. 72

### ● **Seething earth**

In some places on Iceland the earth's crust is relatively thin, hence the bubbling, hissing and steaming going on everywhere. If there's also an element of sulphur involved, then you're in for an aromatic experience, as at *Námaskarð* near Mývatn → p. 64

### ● **Warm baths**

As early as the Middle Ages, people had cottoned on to the delights of bathing in warm water. Since the 20th century, natural baths are a ritual in almost every town or village, whereby a cosy chat in a hot pot is an indispensable element. The oldest pot can be looked at – but not used – in *Reykholt* → p. 71

### ● **Lava deserts**

Iceland is a land of volcanoes which erupt regularly – as we were reminded in 2010. Ash clouds and lava flows are the result. The beautiful lava deserts, for example *Ódáðahraun* in the highlands, have evolved over centuries → p. 81



# ONLY IN

# THE PERFECT ROUTE

## IN THE HOT POT & TO THE WATERFALL

Take the plunge into the waters of the **1 Blue Lagoon** → p. 39 and recover from your flight. Via Grindavík you now follow the mountain road (Rte. 427) leading along the coast as far as Rte. 38 which takes you to Hveragerði. Neighbouring **2 Selfoss** → p. 48 is an ideal starting point for short trips in the vicinity, e.g. to Gullfoss and Geysir. At the same time, you can get to know a typical, small Icelandic town.

The Ring Road (Rte. 1) takes you on eastwards to Hvolsvöllur, where you can find out about the Njál's Saga, past **3 Skógafoss** → p. 51 (photo, left) and the first glaciers.

## BEACHES, WOODS & GLACIERS

Near Vík, below the glacier **4 Mýrdalsjökull** → p. 50, lies what is probably Iceland's prettiest beach – worth a walk in any weather. Then drive across the wide sandar plain, which is either blue or green, depending on the season, on account of the masses of lupins growing there. At the foot of Iceland's largest glacier, Vatnajökull, immerse yourself in the world of **5 Skaftafell** → p. 59 with its glacier snouts and woodlands. On **6 Jökulsárlón** → p. 59 you'll see drifting

blue and black icebergs, which you can marvel at over coffee and cake at the restaurant

Jökulsárlón. The rest of the route is a real showstopper, thanks to the nearby glacier and the captivating sight of its ice sparkling in the sunlight.

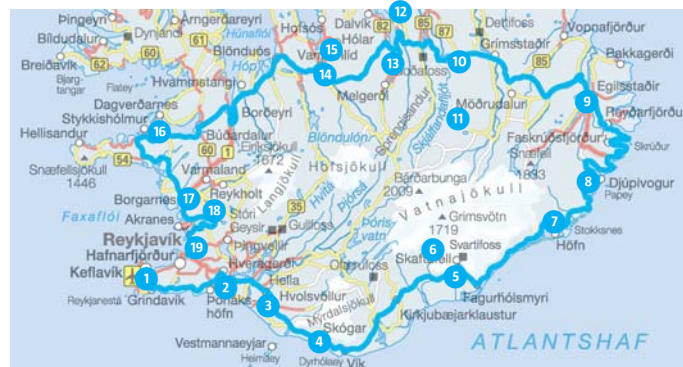
## FJORDS & SEABIRDS

From **7 Höfn** → p. 57 the route takes you into the uplands, that is, on the coast road along the eastern fjords. These are dotted with charming little villages such as **8 Djúpvogur** → p. 53, a fantastic place for a spot of bird-watching. Follow the coastline along Rte. 96 which later joins Rte. 92. A detour to Reyðarfjörður lets you take a look at one of Iceland's largest industrial sites.

## LAKES, VOLCANOES & WHALES

From **9 Egilsstaðir** → p. 54 there are opportunities to head off for the highlands and the Hálsón reservoir or to the picturesque harbour of Seyðisfjörður. The next stage of the journey to the lake, **10 Mývatn** → p. 64, skirts the edge of the highlands – time and again you will be rewarded with thrilling views of this extraor-

Experience the many facets of Iceland on a round trip taking in geysers, harbours and lakes



dinary landscape, shaped by volcanic eruptions. A bus trip into the highlands to the **11 Askja** → p. 81 is a further highlight. Whale fans should make a detour to **12 Húsavík** → p. 65 for a visit to the Whale Museum.

## CITY STROLL & HISTORY LESSON

After these imposing natural spectacles, it's off to the jewel in the North's crown, **13 Akureyri** → p. 60, to immerse yourself in 'city' life once more. The journey through the mountains is followed by the opening up of a gently undulating landscape around **14 Varmahlíð** → p. 66, green and, above all, agricultural in character. The region boasts several historically significant sites, for example, the former bishop's seat of **15 Hólar** → p. 67.

## ON THE WATER & TO THE CAPITAL

Now, continue southwest, and take the chance to visit the **16 Snæfellsnes Peninsula** → p. 68 (photo, right), combined with a boat excursion from Stykkishólmur or even a foray onto the glacier. First of all, you follow Rte. 59, then Rte. 60 and Rte. 54 which bring you to **17 Borgarnes** → p. 68. Here, you can find out more about another literary gem, Egil's Saga, and set out for historic **18 Reykholt** → p. 71. From Borgarnes, either drive through the tunnel or take the prettier option of Rte. 47 along the Hvalfjörður to **19 Reykjavík** → p. 32.



1900km/1180mi. Driving time: 38 hours.  
Recommended trip length: 10–14 days.  
Detailed map of the route on the back cover, in the road atlas and the pull-out map.