

1

How to Drive in Iceland

How to Drive in Iceland



Summer

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.



Gravel roads

There are many gravel roads in Iceland, especially in rural areas away from the Ring Road. It is especially important to slow down before switching from paved roads on to gravel as the tires can lose grip and if you drive too fast you can easily lose control of the car. The speed limit on gravel roads is 80 while on paved roads it is 90.

Gravel roads can be narrow and hilly with quite a few sharp turns. These sharp turns call for extra caution and reduction of speed as the road grip is not the same as on paved roads. Blind hills (where you can't see the road beyond the hill) can be quite dangerous, especially on narrow roads. In such situations it is important to slow down and go as far to the right as is safe, in case you pass another car on the top of the hill.



Risk of falling asleep at the wheel

In the summer time you can have daylight 24 hours a day. This can mess with your internal clock causing the body to not realise that it's tired until it suddenly crashes. Take care of getting a good night's sleep every night.

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.





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.

Livestock on the roads



In Iceland you can expect livestock on or by the road. These are usually sheep but you might also encounter horses or cows. This of course calls for extra caution as it can be difficult to work out what the animals intend to do. When you see a lamb on one side of the road and another sheep on the other side, drive very carefully as it is likely that the lamb will run to its mother or the other way around when cars approach.

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.

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.

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.