



## The Southwest

The South-western area reaches from Selvogur west of Þorlákshöfn to the east of the town of Hella, along the seaside, and in to the highlands. The area is as vast as it is diverse; there is a wide variety of attractions such as Þingvellir National Park, Gullfoss and Geysir, which together comprise the golden circle, the highland areas of Kerlingarfjöll, Kjöflur, Sprengisandur and Landmannalaugar, Langjökull glacier and the Hekla volcano with its surrounding area, to name a few.

The area is rich in culture and history and offers a wide variety of activities such as horseback riding, jeep safaris, glacier tours, sailing, salmon and trout fishing, golfing, hiking and various other interesting activities. We encourage all our visitors to be mindful of the environment and treat our nature with the utmost respect; our natural treasures are sensitive and we intend to preserve it for generations to come.

The South-western area has a rich food culture and has a longstanding history of producing dairy products, meat and vegetables. There is a wide range of local restaurants and some of them even offer the experience of having food served straight from farm to table. The area's natural geo-thermal energy has also been a source for innovation and inspiration when it comes to food and you may find some of the restaurants use the hot springs to actually cook some of the food.

The area is rich in artistic and natural resources; a considerable amount of hand-made products can be found in the area, ranging from items made of wood to wool and glass. There is also to be found an array of greenhouses, an abundance of green energy, including geothermal energy, hydropower energy and wind power energy.

The South-western area is rich in agriculture. Some of the country's largest horse breeding farms and horse rentals are situated in the area. You can take a guided tour in a dairy farm as well as farms that have been designed for tourists to visit. In addition to all this, the area is famous for its rich birdlife and there are many locations that offer an easy access to bird-watching.



## The Icelandic Horse

The Icelandic horse is famous for its unique qualities: a sweet demeanour, its five gaits and its small stature. The horse has been the icelander's sturdy companion for hundreds of years and saved our lives. Horse rentals are a popular destination for many visitors and a guided tour on horseback is highly recommended since it is the perfect way to experience our tremendously beautiful nature and a wonderful way to get to know the nation's best friend, the Icelandic horse.



## Geothermal Energy

Hot water wells up from soil in cracks and springs and flows forth in creeks and simmers in pools in the South-western area. The abundance of geothermal energy in this area is a blessing, which provides homes with warmth in the bitter wintertime, and a luxurious dip in a warm pool will warm even the coldest heart. Several areas provide a good view of the geothermal energy reaching the surface, restaurants offer food cooked in the hot water springs, natural baths are available and a visit to one of the areas wonderful swimming pools, which are heated with geothermal energy, is a must.



### 1 Reykjafoss in the Botanical Garden in Hveragerði

The Botanical garden in Hveragerði is in the center of the town. Since 1983 it has given people the chance to relax and enjoy nature amongst the trees and the wonderful river Varmá with the waterfall Reykjafoss right next to the garden. Further along the river a hiking trail goes past ruins of an old wool factory and ruins of a hydro-electric powerplant surrounded by colourful hot-spring areas. **GPS N64°00'04.2"; W21°11'13.6"**



### 2 Geothermal Park Hveragerði

At the Geothermal Park visitors are invited to take a self guided walk around the hot springs and learn about the geology and history of the unique area. Visitors can experience first hand the benefits of therapeutic clay while enjoying a clay bath for their hands and feet. Visitors can also enjoy a bite of delicious bread baked using the geothermal heat and/or an egg boiled in the park. **GPS N64°00'04.2"; W21°11'13.6"**



### 3 Raufarhólshellir

There are many caves in the lava fields in Ölfus and the largest being Raufarhólshellir by road no. 39. A journey into Raufarhólshellir is a unique experience and a great opportunity to witness the inner workings of a volcanic eruption as one walks in the path of lava that flowed during the Leitastraun eruption, which occurred east of the Bláfjöll mountains about 5200 years ago. The cave is a popular location for many films and i.e. the film Noah (2014) was partly shot in the cave. Daily tours are available in Raufarhólshellir. **GPS N63° 56.367; W21° 23.807"**



### 4 Hafnarnes lighthouse and viewpoint

Hafnarnes is the surroundings by the lighthouse in Þorlákshöfn with a viewpoint. From the viewpoint you can see the volcanic mountain range of Hekla, Eyjafjallajökull and Katla. You can also walk around the cliffs, listen to the ocean and watch the surfers ride the waves. Hafnarnes is one of the top ten surfing spots in the world. **GPS N63° 51.218; W21° 21.912"**



### 5 Strandarkirkja

Strandarkirkja church is in Selvogur (Seal Cove) was originally built in the 12th century. The story relates that during one night when a group of sailors tried to navigate back to Iceland in a storm. The southern coast of Iceland is notorious for its hidden reefs and rough coast. The distressed sailors prayed to God for a safe return and vowed to build a church wherever they landed. When they ended their prayer an angel, seemingly made of light, appeared before their bow. The angel guided them through the rough surfs and led them into a bay for safe landing. The sailors kept their promise and built a wooden church at the site and named it Strandarkirkja. **GPS N63° 50.141; W21° 42.327"**



### 6 Arnarker

Arnarker is a cave in the Leitastraun lava field, north of the old road leading from Þrengslí towards Selvogur. A marked path leads from the information sign by the road to the cave, and a ladder has been placed at its opening, down some 16 meters. The cave is about 516 meters long. It goes from the opening 100 meters south and 400 meters north. For exploring Arnarker you need good hiking gear and head lights. **GPS N63° 53' 34.757"; W21° 29' 42.237"**



### 7 Stóri Hellir - Hellisskógur

The cave was formed at a latter glacial period by sea erosion. Sea levels have been higher than now several times and signs of sea erosion can be seen on more cliffs in the area which are made of around 0.7 - 3, 1 million year old basalt. The cave was previously used to store hay in the back and as a sheepcote in the front. It was once believed that the cave was haunted by a ghost wearing a blue scarf. The story tells of a young man who was broken hearted and hung himself in the cave using a long blue scarf. **GPS N63° 57.286; W20° 59.954"**



### 8 Flóááveita

Flóááveitan are canals that run through the entire Flói region, from Ölfusá in the west to Þjórsá River in the east. This monumental construction consisted of 300 km long canals and 900 km of embankments. The Flói irrigation system reached over 12 thousand hectares of land and became a major transition in farming and production in the area at the time. The construction of Flói irrigation system began in 1922 and irrigation began its activities in 1927. When the irrigation was inaugurated in 1927 it was one of the greatest structures in Europe and to this day it plays an important role in transferring water between farms. Beside the sluice gate you will find an information board with more details about the Flói irrigation system. To the east of the sluice gate is a marked hiking trail along Hvítá (about 4.4 km, one way). **GPS N63° 56' 33.235"; W20° 49' 0.936"**



### 9 Urriðafoss

Urriðafoss is a waterfall in Þjórsá River. Þjórsá is Iceland's longest river, 230 km, and Urriðafoss is the most voluminous waterfall in the country. This mighty river drops down (360 m/sec) by the edge of Þjórsárhraun lava field in beautiful and serene surroundings. Þjórsárhraun lava field is the result of the greatest lava flow on earth since the Ice Age. Located right off highway 1. **GPS N63° 55' 28.731"; W20° 40' 19.063"**



### 10 Íslenski bærin

At Austur-Meðalholt is the Icelandic Turf House exhibition and where one of Iceland's best preserved turf farms can be found. It is a great example of houses built using natural materials, a subtle and almost seamless extension of nature itself. The farmhouse tradition embodies an important element of Icelandic history and the Icelandic way of life over the centuries. **GPS N63° 52' 55.171"; W20° 54' 25.081"**



### 11 Baugsstaðir

The creamery was established by local farmers in 1905 and operated until 1952. Its products were butter and cheese. The Baugsstaðir creamery was powered by a water wheel and is the only one of Iceland's creameries that still retains its original equipment. A little to the west are the ruins of the creamery's storage, which was an icehouse and used to store products before they were transported to market. The creamery's main markets were in England as well as in Iceland. Open on request for groups. **GPS N63° 55' 28.731"; W20° 40' 19.063"**



### 12 Knarrarósviti

Built in 1938-1939, the lighthouse was the first one in Iceland to be built out of reinforced concrete. The lighthouse is the tallest building in South Iceland, 26.2 metres (86 feet) high. It was designed by the engineer Axel Sveinsson as a blend of functionalism and art nouveau (jugendstil). **GPS N63° 55' 28.731"; W20° 40' 19.063"**



### 13 Eriðland í Flóa

Northwest to the town of Eyrarbakki, is a wetland area rich in birdlife. The reserve has walking paths and a bird hide, and idel spot for bird watching. The Flói Bird Reserve is listed in the Bird Life international Association. **GPS N63° 55' 28.731"; W20° 40' 19.063"**



### 14 Þingvellir / Thingvellir

Now a protected historical site, Thingvellir is revered in the hearts and minds of Icelanders. It was the site of the founding of Althingi, the Parliament of Iceland, in the year 930, and a great number of the most remarkable events in Icelandic history occurred there. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the year 2004, the Thingvellir National Park is among some 800 sites of cultural and natural significance that are considered to have unique value on a global scale. **GPS N64° 16' 47.504"; W21° 5' 17.149"**



### 15 Geysir

Doubtless the best-known geyser in the world, Geysir has lent its name to the English language in order to christen the phenomenon of the periodically spouting hot spring. Historical sources back to the 13th century mention Geysir, whose activity has varied through time and often changes as a result of earthquakes. When Geysir was at its most active, its eruptions spouted scalding geothermal water streams some 60 – 80 m into the air. **GPS N64° 18' 49.512"; W20° 17' 58.160"**



### 16 Gullfoss / The Golden Falls

Gullfoss is actually two separate waterfalls, the upper one with a drop of 11 metres and the lower 21 metres. For thousands of years the river has followed its course delighting tourists with beauty and power. Sigridur Tómasdóttir the farmer's daughter in Brattahlott by Gullfoss was born 1871. She often accompanied visitors to Gullfoss, many of whom had travelled great distances to catch sight of it. At the turn of the 19th century efforts began to acquire the rights to waterfalls in Iceland for industrial and hydroelectric purposes, often by agents for foreign enterprises. When Gullfoss came into the possession of such agents Sigridur, rose up to fight against several of the most powerful men in Iceland. **GPS N64° 19' 38.220"; W20° 7' 8.135"**



### 17 Skálholt

Skálholt is an ancient manor farm and bishopric whose history dates back to the year 1056. For centuries the school that was operated there, Skálholtskóli, was the leading educational institution in Iceland. Skálholt occupies position of well-deserved dominance in the history of Mediaeval Icelandic books and manuscripts, for it was there that the books and manuscripts currently found in library collections were written and preserved. **GPS N64° 7' 36.996"; W20° 31' 24.14"**



### 18 Keríð – Crater

Keríð, is a 55 m deep volcanic crater, about 3000 years old. It is a part of a group of volcanic hills called Tjarnarhólar, and is now filled with water, creating a lake whose steep circular slopes resemble an ancient amphitheatre. **GPS N64° 2' 27.611"; W20° 53' 5.599"**



### 19 Þjórsárdalur / Thjórsárdalur valley

In the days of the old Commonwealth the valley of the River Þjórsá was grassy and flourishing with about 20 farmsteads, but in 1104 the valley was laid waste by an eruption from Mt. Hekla. The farms that were buried under a layer of volcanic ash have been a goldmine for archaeologists. Sites of about 40 buildings have been unearthed in Þjórsárdalur and the best preserved and most remarkable is the farmhouse at Stöng excavated in 1939. Based upon the Stöng farmhouse a replica Saga-Age farmhouse was built in 1974 to mark the 1100 anniversary of the settlement of Iceland. The replica farmhouse stands at the mouth of the valley, together with a replica of an early church. **GPS N64° 7.114; W19° 49.325"**



### 20 Fossabrekkur

It's the source of Ytri Rangá where the water comes out from the ash layers from Hekla. The area is green and is different from everything else in the area. This is the same river as runs through village Hella. **GPS N64° 4.401; W19° 45.257"**



### 21 Þjófafoss waterfall

Þjófafoss or Thieves' waterfall in the river Þjórsá is thought to be named because thieves used to be thrown into the waterfall, but little else is known of the story origin. Þjórsá is the longest river in Iceland, around 230 km from source to sea. **GPS N64° 3.410; W19° 52.176"**



### 22 Landmannalaugar

The spring site is without a doubt one of the most beautiful, colourful and popular tourist attraction in Iceland. The site is reasonably accessible in the summer and there are quite good summer roads leading to it. **GPS N64° 3.410; W19° 52.176"**



### 23 Laugavegur hiking trail.

Laugavegur is a famous trekking route in the highlands of south Iceland. It leads from the hot springs of Landmannalaugar to Börsmeörk. It is noted for the wide variety of landscapes that are experienced in just 55 km. The route is typically completed over 2-4 days with potential stops at the mountain huts at Hrafninnusker, Álfvatn, Hvanngil and Emstrur. **GPS N63° 59.681; W19° 3.604"**



### 24 Ægissíðufoss

Beautiful waterfall that is close to the village Hella. There is a hiking path along Ytri-Rangáriver that leads you to the waterfall. It's a hike worth walking! **GPS N63° 49.119; W20° 25.184"**



### 25 Oddi á Rangárvöllum

Oddi, is a major historic site. It first became famous around the middle of the 11th Century, when a church was built there, and thus is one of the oldest church sites in Iceland. In the year 1078, Sæmundur the Learned became priest of Oddi. He had studied for the clergy in France (at the Sorbonne) Sæmundur established a school at Oddi, which is believed to have stood for two centuries. **GPS N63° 46.608; W20° 23.170"**



### 26 Keldur

At Keldur at Rangárvellir is a unique whole local and outhouses from the past. Town houses are made of the oldest preserved turf houses, where the front door on both sides of the farm door facing the long side of the ramp. This varying look has remained all media. As well as farm buildings and church there are warehouses, workshop, mill hut, cowshed, stables, sheep pen, tunnels etc. As generally happens on the turf building the houses have been rebuilt, but the form has been stored. Keldur farm is built from lava rock from Hekla. **GPS N63° 49.341; W20° 4.721"**

## Welcome to South Iceland



The Icelandic nature is magnificent, but fragile. The vegetation is easily breached. It suffers greatly from too much trampling and its wounds are slow to heal.

Police regulation for municipalities in South Iceland states:



*"It is forbidden to stay the night in tents, campers, caravans, collapsible campers, tent trailers and other compatible equipment, outside of designated camping areas."*

! Please be considerate of our beautiful and fragile nature and only camp over night in designated camping areas.

Enjoy your travels - drive safe!

More information on camping in South Iceland: [south.is/camping/winter-south.is/camping](http://south.is/camping/winter-south.is/camping)

You can find more information about South Iceland in these regional tourist maps.



Do you need information about accomodation, activities, dining and culture in South Iceland?

Visit us at: [www.south.is](http://www.south.is)



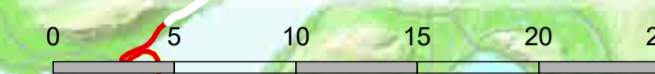
Visit South Iceland

Published by Visit South Iceland and the municipalities 2019. Photos: Páll Jökull Petursson, Aðberg Amþórsdóttir, Eiríkur Vilhjálm Sigurðsson, Hótel Geysir, Pétur Reynisson, Sigurds Líja Guðjónsdóttir, Sveitarfélagið Arborg, Sveitarfélagið Ölfus, Hólaeyggjur and others. Design and layout: Páll Jökull Petursson. Map: Hans H. Hansen. Printing: Prentsmiðjan Oddi.





- Legends**
- Swimming pool
  - Camping
  - Information centre
  - Fuel station
  - Charging station
  - Fuel and Charging station
  - Health care
  - Lighthouse
  - Airfield
  - Nature highlights
  - Ford
  - Road number
  - Ring road
  - Main road
  - Secondary road
  - Track
  - Ferry
  - National park
  - Nature reserve
- Other symbols:**
- Skýringar
  - Sundlaug
  - Tjaldsvæði
  - Upplýsingamiðstöð
  - Eldsneytissala
  - Hléslustöð
  - Eldsneytissala/Hléslustöð
  - Heilsugæsla
  - Viti
  - Flugvöllur
  - Áhugaverður staður
  - Vað, óbrúuð á
  - Vegnumer
  - Hringvegur
  - Aðalvegur
  - Annar vegur
  - Vegslóði
  - Ferja
  - Þjóðgarður
  - Fríðland



**safetravel.is**  
The official source for safe adventure in Iceland

**Useful telephone numbers**

- Road Conditions: 1777
- Weather Information: 902-0600
- Emergency Number: 112

**Special driving & traffic information**

**Speed limits**  
The speed limit in urban areas is normally 50 km per hour. Outside towns, it is 90 km, on paved roads and 80 km on gravel roads.

**Warning**  
Domestic animals are often close to, or even on, country roads. Drivers who hit animals may be required to pay for the damage.

Check weather and road conditions tel. 1777 or at [www.road.is](http://www.road.is)

Travellers intending to explore out-of-the-way areas are encouraged to use the Travellers Reporting Service ICE-SAR, tel. 570-5900

- BLINDHÆÐ**  
Blind rise
- EINFÆRNI VEGUR**  
Difficult road. Negotiable only by jeeps. I.e. vehicles which are higher than ordinary private cars and have 4-wheel drive.
- NÝLAGÐ KLIFING**  
Newly-laid road surface
- EINFÆRNI STÍLA**  
Single-width surface
- ÓBRÚÐAR Á**  
Unbridged river
- EINFÆRNI BRÚ**  
Single-width bridge
- MÁLUR ENDAR**  
End of tarred road
- SLYSASVÆÐI**  
Accident risk area

- 1 Reykjafoss.
- 2 Hveragerði.
- 3 Raufarhólshellir
- 4 Hafnarnes.
- 5 Strandarkirkja.
- 6 Arnarker.
- 7 Helliskógur.
- 8 Flóaáveitan.
- 9 Urriðafoss.
- 10 Íslenski bærin.
- 11 Baugsstaðir.
- 12 Knarrarósviti.
- 13 Fuglafriðlandið.
- 14 Óxarfoss waterfall.
- 15 Strokkur geothermal.
- 16 Gullfoss waterfall.
- 17 Skálholt.
- 18 Kerí crater.
- 19 Hjalparfoss waterfall.
- 20 Fossabrekkur.
- 21 Þjófafoss waterfall.
- 22 Landmannalaugar.
- 23 Laugavegurinn hiking trail.
- 24 Ægisdúfoss waterfall.
- 25 Oddi church.
- 26 Keldur, old Icelandic farm.