



## 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 overnight in designated camping areas.

Enjoy your travels - drive safe!



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

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



## Katla UNESCO Global Geopark and Vestmannaeyjar

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

Katla UNESCO Global Geopark – a dynamic destination.

Katla UNESCO Global Geopark is within the Eastern Volcanic Zone, which is one of the most active volcanic areas in Iceland. The geographic region is characteristic with central volcanoes, eruption craters and fissures, lava fields, SW-NE trending hyaloclastite ridges and tuff mountains (tuyas). The glaciers are prominent in the landscape as they cover the highest mountains, and volcanoes, in the area. Active volcanoes under ice sheets (jökull) produce gigantic glacier outburst floods (jökulhlaup) and have formed outwash plains (sandur) in the lowlands (Skógasandur, Sólheimasandur, Myrdalssandur, Mælfellssandur, Markarfljótsaurar and Landeyjar).

Code of conduct

- Traveling on F-roads: These roads are only for 4x4 cars. Take note of [www.en.vedur.is](http://www.en.vedur.is) for weather forecast days prior to entering the highlands and F-roads as rivers swell in the days after heavy rain.
- This area is vast and wild and poses many natural hazards. Please use common sense at all times, and respect safety restrictions when provided.



### 1 Eldgjá

Eldgjá is an old tectonic graben that was reactivated in a huge eruption around the year 939. The Eldgjá vents form a discontinuous 75 km long volcanic fissure extending from the Katla volcano in the west to Vatnajökull in the east. The 939 eruption takes its name from a spectacular 150 m deep and 8 km long chasm called Eldgjá (fire fissure) that occupies the central part of the vent system. Part of the fissure is under protection of the Vatnajökull National Park. There you can take a walk along the bottom of the fissure and witness the sheer scale of it. An easy hike takes you from the car park (with WC facilities) along the bottom of the fissure to Ófærufoss waterfall. **Getting there: you need a 4x4 and the area is only accessible in the summer.** This is a site of international geological significance. Ófærufoss is a distinctive two-tiered waterfall cascading into the fissure Eldgjá.

### 2 Álfavergigar

Álfavergigar is a protected natural phenomena of international geological significance. An area of rootless cones (pseudocraters) formed by the Eldgjá lava flowing over wetlands around 939 A.D. (A side road south of the ring road no.1 takes you to a panoramic spot with information panels. There is an easy hike along the signed sand track to Dyrjalakjasker geosite, a former shelter for travellers crossing the sands of Myrdalssandur on foot or on horseback before the time of automobiles. Another nice place to experience these cones is in a farmed area at Þykkvabæjarklaustur.



### 3 Landbrotshólar

Landbrotshólar is the largest area of pseudocraters in Iceland, covering an area of 60 km<sup>2</sup>. Formed when Eldgjá lava in 939 flowed over wetlands. The numerous craters range from 2-40 m high, and 5-450 m wide. Part of the crater area is now buried beneath the Laki lava and it may originally have covered 150 km<sup>2</sup>. The cones are now covered in moss and heath vegetation. An easy hiking trail takes you into the luring landscape, starting from the ÖB-petrol station at Kirkjubæjarklaustur, crossing the river Skaftá by foot and following the signs into the unusual landscape. Another hike starts at "Hotel Laki".

### 4 Lakagígur

Lakagígur crater row was formed during a major eruption in 1783. The Laki vent system (27 km) consists of 10 SW-NE trending volcanic fissures, which together host more than 140 vents. The eruption had effects well beyond Iceland, pumping huge amounts of sulphur-rich plumes over the Eurasian continent and north into the Arctic. There is an array of paths where you can witness the rare beauty of the landscape and craters and the scale of the Laki eruption. The Laki craters are under protection of the Vatnajökull National Park which provides information and basic facilities. **Getting there by road F206 you need a 4x4 for crossing numerous rivers, and is only accessible during the summer.**



### 5 Langisjór, Fögrufjöll, Grænifjallgarður

Part of Vatnajökull National Park. Langisjór is a long narrow lake wedged between unique hyaloclastite ridges which were formed by fissure eruptions under the Ice Age glacier. These ca. 40km long ridges were created by the same type of eruption as Lakagígur and Eldgjá (fissure eruption along the rift zone), but produced long mountain ridges of palagonite tuff (möberg) under the thick ice. **To get there you need a 4x4 crossing numerous unbridged rivers, the area is only accessible during the summer.** This is an area of international geological significance.

### 6 Dverghamrar

Dverghamrar (Dwarf Rocks), just east of Foss, are peculiar and beautiful formations of columnar basalt. On top of the columns there is cube-jointed basalt. The landscape is thought to have been moulded at the end of the Ice Age. The sea level was higher at that time and it is believed that the waves caused the peculiar look of the rocks. Dverghamrar are a protected natural monument. Columnar basalt is formed when lava flow gets cooled and contraction forces build up. Cracks then form horizontally and the extensive fracture network that develops results in the six sided formation of the columns.

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

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



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### 7 Fagfirfoss

Fagfirfoss is a scenic 80 m high waterfall in Geirlandis River. Basaltic pillows occur in the vicinity of the waterfall which cascades from 140m thick hyaloclastite deposits. Fagfirfoss is situated on the F206 road to Laki craters, a rugged road with rivers that can be treacherous to cross if the water level rises due to rain and thaw. A 4x4 vehicle is needed and the area is only accessible during summer.



### 8 Fjaðrárgljúfur

Fjaðrárgljúfur is a 100 m deep canyon with steep walls of beautifully water-eroded palagonite tuff formed during the Ice Age about two million years ago. The river Fjaðrá flows from the highland heath forming this stunning canyon and merges with Skaftá river on the lowlands. A 1 km long marked path with 3 viewing platforms takes you along the edge of the canyon and offers spectacular views. From the upper parking area, a wheelchair accessible path leads to the third viewing platform.



### 9 Þykkvabæjarklaustur

Þykkvabæjarklaustur is a present and historic church site snuggled in the Álfavergigar rootless cone area. In medieval times this was the location of a catholic monastery, which was founded in 1168 and remained active until the reformation in the mid-16th century. Recent archaeological findings (2015) show that there used to be a large building, with about 1800 m<sup>2</sup> ground floor. It was a rich convent of monks with large farm and a school.



### 10 Kirkjugólf

Kirkjugólf or "the church floor" is an 80 square meter expanse of columnar basalt stone slabs which have slowly eroded during the time when sea covered the area. The hexagonal "tiles" look every bit as if they were man-made flooring but there has never been a church or any other building on the site. The protected natural monument is located just a few hundred meters east of the village of Kirkjubæjarklaustur.



### 11 Skaftáreldahraun

Skaftáreldahraun lava was produced by the Laki eruption and is one of the two largest basaltic lava floods in historical times, the other is from Eldgjá. Today the lava is in large parts covered by 200 years old *Racomitrium lanuginosum* moss and lichens forming Stereocaulon lava heath, endemic to Iceland and particularly vulnerable to trampling. The top 5 cm are the only living part of the moss, which grows 1 cm per year. **Please do not walk on the moss.**



### 12 Systravatn, and geosites along the Klaustur trail

Systravatn (Sister's lake) is located above Kirkjubæjarklaustur, at the edge of a mountain ridge. From Systravatn, Systrafoss (Sister's Falls) cascades down into the Fossárgill canyon above Kirkjubæjarklaustur. Gullmollinn, or the gold nugget, is an environmental artwork by the artduo Yótt&Zetta. The Gold nugget, which is next to the Systravatn lake, aims to remind people of the small hydro-electrical power plants in Iceland, which many were made in this area. There is a hiking trail that leads to the nugget. The nuns of the Kirkjubær convent often went up to the lake to bathe. One day, two of them saw a hand emerge from the lake, wearing a fine golden ring. They seized hold of the hand and were dragged down into the depths.



### 13 Laufskálavörða

Laufskálavörða is a lava mound by the road side, covered by cairns at the eastern part of Myrdalssandur flood plain, midway between the villages Vík and Kirkjubæjarklaustur. It is believed that an outburst flood, due to the 894 eruption in Katla, laid waste to the lush farm- and woodland that was there. From then onwards, travellers crossing the desert for the first time would pile a rock-cairn to bring them good fortune on their future journeys over the risky flood plain of Katla (Myrdalssandur). WC facilities are at the site.



### 14 Sólheimajökull

Sólheimajökull glacier is an 8 km outlet glacier of Mýrdalsjökull (covering Katla volcano) with a small lagoon in front of it which runs into the glacial river Jökulsá. Surrounded by glacial formations this is a fantastic location to witness the effect of climate change. Easy to access, there is a path from the car park taking you on an easy walk towards the glacier with magnificent views. Never go on a glacier without proper training or a guide and adequate equipment for glacier hiking.



### 15 Dyrhólaey

Dyrhólaey, a protected bird reserve and until the 1918 eruption of Katla, the southernmost point of mainland Iceland, is a 120-meter high headland with a lighthouse on its highest point. Formed in an Surtseyan submarine eruption, the rock shows well-bedded tuff, capped by compound pahoehoe lava displaying glacial cube-joints and glacial erosion, intense weathering from the North Atlantic Ocean has eroded much of the island leaving a doorway in the towering cliff. In ideal weather conditions Vestmannaeyjar and Surtsey can be seen offshore to the southwest. Enjoy a hike across the headland and keep an eye out for the puffins from late April to early September.

### 16 Reynisfjall

The village of Vík is huddled along eastern side of Reynisfjall Mountain (340 m). There is a path leading up the mountain where you can enjoy a beautiful view over Vík to the east, Reynisdrangar rock formations to the south and Reynisfjara beach and the Mýrdalur valley to the west.



### 17 Reynisdrangar and Reynisfjara

The famous "black beach" with basalt columns and magnificent sea stacks. The waves here are deceiving and have caused the death of a number of visitors in recent years, even in the best of weather. Please take great care and keep a good distance from the sea. The car park is equipped with good facilities, a restaurant and WC.



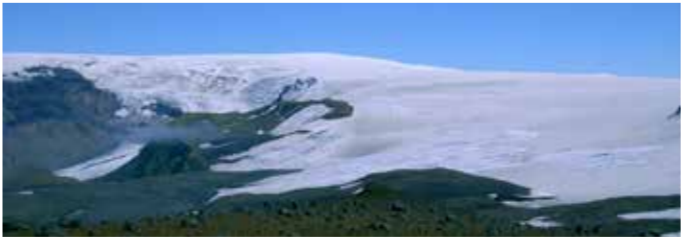
### 18 Hjörleifshöfði

A 220 meter tall tuya that stands alone on the outwash plain of Myrdalssandur. The tuya was originally formed offshore, but has since been partially buried by the advancing Myrdalssandur sand plain. A large jökulhlaup from Katla buried the fjord of Kerlingarfjörður, probably in 1179, and subsequent jökulhlaups have driven the shoreline several kilometers into the sea, the last one occurring in 1918. Easy to reach during summer, you can hike to the top from west side where one of the first settlers is believed to be buried as well as the last farmers from the headland. There is also a large sea eroded cave on the south side and enjoy the nesting fulmar in the cliffs.



### 19 Höfðabrekkuheiði, Þakgil

A breathtaking 16 km drive from the ring road no. 1 to Þakgil campsite and hiking area. A gravel road, surrounded by black sand and a glacial river, crosses the heath of Höfðabrekka. Höfðabrekka is a tuff ridge, between the rivers of Múlavísi and Kerlingadalás, and was formed during the last ice age in subglacial eruptions. The road is closed during the winter. The vegetation in this area is extremely vulnerable to trampling, please keep to trails at all times.



### 20 Katla, Mýrdalsjökull, Mýrdalssandur

Are all geological features of international significance. Katla is the dominating volcano in the Geopark and erupts on average twice a century. The caldera of Katla is a 600-750 m deep and 10 km wide and is covered with up to 700 m thick ice, the glacier Mýrdalsjökull. Eruptions within the caldera of Katla are most common, where fissures tend to open up beneath the ice. Myrdalssandur, the outwash plain east of the glacier, used to be home to a fertile farming community but has been laid to waste by successive glacial outbursts from Katla over the centuries. The last eruption in Katla occurred in 1918 causing a flood which extended the coastline east of Vík by several kilometers with its jökulhlaup flood deposits. **Public safety: Katla volcano poses a real threat in the area and is under constant monitoring. A warning (text message) will be sent to every mobile telephone in the area in the case of an eventual outbreak and rescue shelters positioned along the main road will be opened.**

### 21 Seljalandsfoss

Seljalandsfoss is an impressive 65 m high waterfall which cascades over ancient sea cliffs into a pool below. It is possible to walk behind the waterfall and come out the other side. There is a short stroll along a path to the neighbouring waterfall *Gjúfrabúi*, 40 m high, tucked into the cliff. There is a certain mystique over the waterfall and if entering the narrow opening in the cliff utmost caution is advised.



### 22 Drangurinn í Drangshlíð

Drangurinn í Drangshlíð is a characteristic tuff rock formation that stands alone on the grazing land of Drangshlíð farm, at the foothills of Eyjafjöll. A folktale tells of a strong man named Grettir Ámundsson who was showing off and ripped the giant boulder right out of Hrutafell cliff, leaving a chasm which is now above Skarshlíð. In these rocks there are caves and passages to which additional buildings have been added throughout the centuries, some of which are still standing. The site has been used in the filming of Icelandic movies and in various documentaries. Drangurinn, and its immediate surroundings, is a protected natural site and is on private land.



### 23 Skógafoss

Skógafoss, a protected monument, is a 60 m high majestic waterfall. A path leads to the top of the former seacliff to Skógagil ravine, where over 30 smaller waterfalls grace the river Skóga. This is also the starting point of Fimmvörðuháls hike to Þórsmörk. The Legend of Skógafoss tells of a man named Thrasí Thórólfsson, the first settler at Skógar who hid his chest full of gold behind the waterfall. Repeated glimpses of the chest eventually enticed three men to make an attempt to retrieve the chest from behind the water. The men managed to get hold of one of the handles, but as they tried to drag the chest to land, the ring broke off and the chest disappeared once again behind the falls, putting an end to their efforts. It is said that the ring once served as a handle on the church door at Skógar Church and can be seen today on the entrance door at Skógar Folk Museum. When the sun shines on Skógafoss you can still see a glimmer of gold appearing in the waterfall.



### 24 Þórsmörk

Þórsmörk is a nature reserve, carved out by glacial rivers, offering huts and accommodation. A favourite among hikers, with multiple hiking trails in beautiful volcanic landscape, with views over the three subglacial volcanoes; Eyjafjallajökull, Mýrdalsjökull and Tindfjallajökull. This wild spot is protected from harsh weather and is often warmer and drier than nearby areas. Þórsmörk may seem relatively close to the ring road but it is only accessible by super-jeeps or a bus due to unbridged rivers.

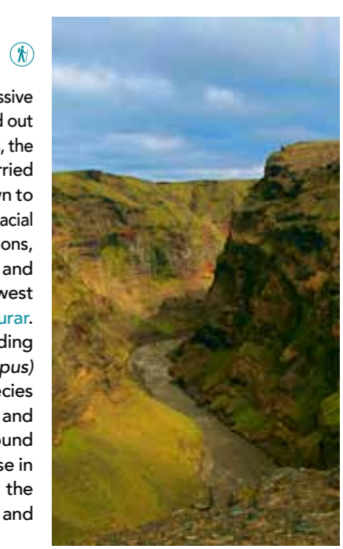
### 25 Rútshellir

Rútshellir in mount Hrutafell is a protected cave with a newly renovated sheep pen attached in front of it. Said to be the largest man-made cave in Iceland, Rútshellir has two parts. The upper half contains an adjoining cave, which is so high that at one time a 2nd floor was installed making this a double storey cave. Further in, there is a ledge that was undoubtedly used for sleeping. Many legends are connected to this cave. One involves a man called Rútur who lived in the cave but his slaves intended to kill him. They carved a hole under the ledge where Rútur slept, so they could kill him with spears while he was sleeping. One night on arriving home and preparing to sleep, Rútur discovered their plot. He chased the slaves into the mountains and killed them all.



### 26 Markarfljótsgljúfur/ Markarfljótsaurar

East of Tindafjallajökull Glacier lies the impressive 200 m deep Markarfljótsgljúfur gorge carved out by one of South Iceland's largest glacial rivers, the 100 km long Markarfljót. Markarfljót has carried millions of tons of sand and sediment down to the lowlands and out to sea, mostly during glacial outburst floods created by subglacial eruptions, creating the flat lowland areas in front of and west of Eyjafjallajökull. The deposit area west of Markarfljót is known as Markarfljótsaurar. This is an internationally important breeding ground of Whimbrel (*Neumenius phaeopus*) as nowhere else in the world does the species nest in such high density (34 pairs/km<sup>2</sup>) and numbers. This is also a dense nesting ground for graylag goose and white fronted goose in spring and autumn (10-15% and 10% of the Icelandic population respectively in 2014) and is protected by local legislation.



### 27 Steinahellir

A protected cave on the ring road no. 1 by the bay of Holtós. It is thought to be a natural cave in the grassy slopes that was later enlarged by man to make it more habitable, now 6 m wide and 4 m high. An outstanding feature of the cave is the ferns that grow on the cave ceiling. The mouth of the cave faces south and has been closed with wooden panels as in older times. The cave was used as an assembly place for the local population from 1820 to 1902.



### 28 Fimmvörðuháls

The famous Fimmvörðuháls hiking trail is between Skógar and Þórsmörk. The hike requires good equipment as it is 22 km long (14 mi) and involves 1,000 m (3,300 ft) of climbing and due to extreme weather conditions is only accessible between mid-June and late August.



### 29 Gluggafoss

Gluggafoss is a waterfall in the Mörkjá River. The river has several beautiful waterfalls, but the most outstanding is Gluggafoss or Window Falls. The upper half of the cliff is palagonite tuff rock and the lower ledge is basalt. The river has formed a tunnel through the soft palagonite rock and a series of "windows" in the tunnel, thereby earning its name. At the very top of the falls, the river passes under a stone arch.

### 30 Nauthúsagil

Nauthúsagil is a ravine carved into the side of Eyjafjöll mountains. Jointed lava and pillow lava are more resistant to erosion and many peculiar formations can be seen in the area where these are dominant. The ravine is locally known for the rowan tree (*Sorbus aucuparia*) that grows on its ridge and whose multiple trunks lean over the ravine, its age is unknown. The tree is said to be holy and it is considered bad luck to cut it. Although the ravine is deep and narrow, you can walk along the river while keeping your feet relatively dry until you come to a 2-3 meters high waterfall. If you continue your way, there is another larger waterfall. You can also walk along the western edge of the ravine where you have a good view of the ravine and a third, beautifully shaped waterfall.



### 31 Eyjafjallajökull

The ice capped volcano Eyjafjallajökull (1651 m) is located at the borders of the South Icelandic highlands. It featured prominently in world news in 2010 when ash from its eruption halted air traffic in Europe. An ice cap with several outlet glaciers covers the caldera of Eyjafjallajökull with a crater diameter 3-4 km wide. The outlet glaciers, Steinhótsjökull and Gígijökull, descend from the main glacier and can be visited by 4x4 trucks along the F-road to Þórsmörk. The area between the glaciers Eyjafjallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull with volcanic craters, Magni and Móði, created in the first stage of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in April 2010.



### 32 Vestmannaeyjar - Skansinn

Skansinn is close to the harbor with easy access and a gratee place to visit. It is both historically important and has many interesting things to see. The reconstructed Stave church blends nicely into the lava backdrops from 1973 and the view to the cliff Heimaklettur is spectacular. From this point there are easy walking trails to the Volcano Museum Eldeimar and to the Volcano Eldfell.



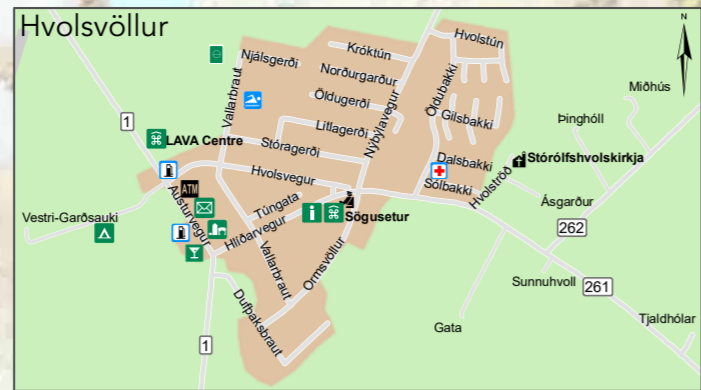
### 33 Vestmannaeyjar - Herjólfssalur

Herjólfssalur is green and grassy, sheltered by an extinct volcano, and was the home of Vestmannaeyjar's first settler, Herjólfur Barðursson. Excavations have revealed remains of a Norse house where a replica now stands. The island's campsite is also here.



### 34 Vestmannaeyjar - Eldfell

Hiking to the top of the volcano Eldfell is one of the most popular trails on Heimaey. This volcano was created in the eruption in 1973 which lasted for about six months and during that time nearly one-third of all the homes and buildings on Heimaey had burned or been covered under the lava and ash. The volcanic museum, Eldeimar tells the story of the eruption and is very nice to visit prior to hiking up the volcano.



- 1 Eldgjá.
- 2 Álftaversgar.
- 3 Landbrotshólar.
- 4 Lakagigar.
- 5 Langisjór, Fögrufjöll, Grænfjallgarður.
- 6 Dverghamrar.
- 7 Fagnífoss waterfall.
- 8 Fjaðrárgljúfur canyon.
- 9 Þykkvabæjarklaustur church.
- 10 Kirkjufólf.
- 11 Skaftáreldhraun.
- 12 Systravatn.
- 13 Laufskálavörða.
- 14 Sólheimajökull.
- 15 Dyrhólaey.
- 16 Reynisfjall.
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- 20 Katla, Mýrdalsjökull.
- 21 Seljalandsfoss waterfall.
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- 24 Þórsmörk.
- 25 Rútshellir.
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- 32 Vestmannaeyjar, Skansinn.
- 33 Vestmannaeyjar, Herjólfssdalur.
- 34 Vestmannaeyjar, Eldfell.

**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

<b>BLINDHÆÐ</b> Blind rise	<b>SVIÐLAUS</b> Difficult road. Negotiable only by jeeps. I.e. vehicles which are higher than ordinary private cars and have 4-wheel drive.	<b>NYJÓLÖG</b> Newly-laid road surface
<b>ENNAR EITLA</b> Single-width surface	<b>UNBRIDGED RIVER</b> Unbridged river	<b>ACCIDENT RISK AREA</b> Accident risk area
<b>ENNAR EITLA</b> Single-width bridge	<b>END OF TARRED ROAD</b> End of tarred road	



**Skýringar**

- Sundlaug
- Tjaldsvæði
- Upplýsingamiðstöð
- Upplýsingar
- Bilastæði
- Hleðslustöð
- Eldsneytissala/Hleðslustöð
- Heilsugæsla
- Hringvegur
- Aðalvegur
- Annar vegur
- Vegarslóð
- Gönguleið
- Ferja
- Katla jarðvangur
- Þjóðgarður
- Meginleðstöð
- Sandur úr jökulvötnum
- Jökull
- Eldgjárhraun frá 934
- Skaftáreldhraun, frá 1783-84
- Hraun og móberg, ísöld, 0,8-3,3 m.ára.
- Súrt gosberg, ísöld, eldra en 11.000 ára
- Mórbergs hryggir, Ísöld, yngra en 0,8 m.ára.
- Ár og vötn
- Gerviggar
- Lakagigar, frá 1783-84
- Eldgjá, frá 934

**Legends**

- Swimming pool
- Camping
- Information centre
- Information
- Parking
- Charging station
- Fuel station/Charging station
- Health care
- Ring road
- Main road
- Secondary road
- Track
- Walking trail
- Ferry
- Katla geopark
- National park
- Caldera volcano
- Sandur, outwash plain
- Glacier
- Eldgjá lava, year 934
- Laki lava, year 1783-84
- Lavas and hyaloclastites. Ice age, 0,8-3,3 m.y.
- Acid extrusives, ice age, older than 11.000 years
- Hyaloclastite ridges. Ice age, younger than 0,8 m.y.
- Rivers and lakes
- Pseudocraters / rootless cones
- Lakagigar craters, year 1783-84
- Eldgjá volcanic canyon / fissure, year 934