

What should I wear in Iceland?

The first thing to remember is that the weather in Iceland varies greatly, so in any season layering is the way to go. Even in winter, if you dress like an Eskimo, you could be uncomfortably hot or perfectly fine! In summer there are times when short trousers and a T-shirt are good but five minutes later you need to insulate yourself against a bitter wind and/or heavy, bone-chilling rain. Following the packing tips below will keep you comfortable.

Layering for Icelandic Weather:

1. Base layer – Regular underwear and t-shirts. Wear thermal underwear for that extra warmth.
2. Middle layer – Light fleece jacket or wool sweater.
3. Outer Layer – Weatherproof jacket. Expect wind, rain & snow!
4. Pants – Outdoor/hiking Pants, something lightweight – Jeans are definitely a big no-no!

What to pack for Winter (September to May)

- Base layer of long thermal and socks (wool or synthetic)
- Middle layer, warm wool sweater, fleece or synthetic top
- Hiking trousers (synthetic track suit pants can be worn, NOT jeans)
- Warm waterproof jacket with hood
- Waterproof trousers
- Warm hat, scarf, two pairs of gloves and scarves
- Down jacket or extra fleeces or wool sweaters
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Walking boots and plenty of socks - see more info below
- Walking poles if you use them
- Bag pack for extra layers, snacks, drink, swimwear, towel etc.
- Swimsuit, quick-dry towel and waterproof bag
- Toiletries, medicines, first aid kit and personal items
- Everyday clothing items - guest houses, hostels and hotels are well-heated
- Camera, tripod and batteries/power pack

What to pack in summer (June to August)

- Sleep mask if you don't sleep well in bright light
- Normal underwear and T-shirts (see extra items for camping/highland hiking)
- Fleece or wool sweaters
- Hiking trousers which zip off to become shorts are ideal, NOT jeans
- Lightweight waterproof jacket with hood (rainproof shell)
- Lightweight waterproof trousers
- Hat scarf and gloves for hiking or boat trips
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Walking boots and plenty of socks - see more info below
- Walking poles if you use them
- Bag pack for extra layers, snacks, drink, swimwear, towel etc.
- Swimsuit, quick-dry towel and waterproof bag
- Toiletries, medicines, first aid kit and personal items
- Everyday clothing items
- Camera, tripod and batteries/power pack

Extra items for summer camping/highland hiking or trekking

- Wool or synthetic long underwear
- Torchlight end of July to middle of May
- Down jacket or similar
- Extra wool sweater or fleece tops
- Warm wool socks or camp slippers

• Footwear for walking, hiking and adventure activities

- Good strong hiking boots which cover the ankle give the best support. These should be worn in and worn with suitable wool or synthetic socks. Any good outdoor equipment store can advise you. Hiking boots are absolutely essential if you intend glacier hiking because the ice crampons provided cannot be fitted to any other kind of footwear. If you do not plan on hiking you still need to consider the terrain outside of the city. Footwear needs to have good grip and be suitable for rugged surfaces, lava fields, beaches, ice, snow and wet conditions. Sneakers are not suitable.

• Being comfortable:

- Wool, fleece or other synthetic layers should be worn, cotton is a very poor insulator, particularly when wet. On rare warm summer days shorts and cotton tops are great to keep you cool but wool or fleece layers should always be carried with you. Your day pack needs to be large enough to carry extra layers, waterproof jacket and trousers, swimsuit and towel, food, drinks as well as anything else you need/want to have with you.

• City style and nights out

- Icelandic people dress very practically when the occasion demands it, when they go out on the town they really put on the style. Walking into any city restaurant, bar or nightspot you will see that Reykjavík folk are a seriously style and fashion-conscious bunch of people. Wearing hiking boots and a fleece you will certainly stand out as a tourist! Reykjavík has some really unique design and fashion shops to tempt you.

• Swimwear and pool culture

- Swimming pools and amazing natural hot spring pools are a big part of Icelandic life. If you carry your swimsuit and a quick dry towel you need never miss an opportunity. A waterproof bag is useful, either to keep your dry items dry, or to hold your wet swimming things.

• The weather in Iceland

- Rapid changes can happen, and you do not have to travel very many kilometers for the weather to be totally different. The average winter temperature in the lowlands of Iceland is around 0 °C (32 °F), usually between -5 °C and 5 °C (23-41 °F). However, even in Reykjavík temperatures around -10 °C (14 °F) are recorded most winters. Last November the city was quite wet but unusually warm, often around 10 °C (50 F). In the Icelandic Highlands the winter average

is -10 °C (14 °F) but the thermometer can drop as low as -25 °C to - 30 °C (-13 °F to - 22 °F).

- The summer average is 10–13 °C (50–55 °F), although, on the warmest days the thermometer can climb to 20–25 °C (68–77 °F). Some summers these temperatures are reached a few times, other years the mercury never rises to 20 °C (68 °F). These are summer averages, lower temperatures happen, with 4 °C (39 °F) being unusual but not record-breaking in June, July or August. The highlands can be warm, or the temperature can drop sharply, even in high summer, snow is unlikely but possible.

• The windchill factor in Iceland

- The windchill factor in Iceland is something to consider when choosing clothing, because this measures how cold it actually feels. Very cold Icelandic winds are often also very powerful, these forceful winds will penetrate more deeply, very fast. If you are not used to this, start with more layers than you think you could possibly need and remove some if you feel warm. It is best to avoid becoming chilled, being cold depletes your energy, and it takes a while to warm up!

• The sun in Iceland

- The sun is powerful in Iceland and it is certainly possible to get badly burned, particularly on the glacier or when skiing. Using sunscreen on exposed skin is advised. Sunglasses are needed, particularly for driving in winter when the sun is low in the sky, reflected light from the ocean and/or snow is very intense and often totally blinding.
- So, to sum up - stay warm, stay dry and stay fashionable and I hope you will enjoy your visit to Iceland!
- If you need more inspiration, check out our "What to wear in Iceland" board on [Pinterest!](#)