



MAXIM MAN

## 5 UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURES YOU MUST EXPERIENCE IN ICELAND

This is bucket list-level stuff.

KEITH GORDON · AUG 25, 2017



*(Photo: powerofforever/Getty Images)*

# 1. EXPLORE THE ARCTIC

Iceland's landscapes are some of the most stunning in the world, and with the right guide (not to mention vehicle), the [white-hot travel destination](#) is an absolute explorer's paradise. Perhaps the most popular adventure is a tour of the Golden Circle, a 186-mile loop in southern Iceland.



The Pearl Tour (\$450), led by [Mountaineers of Iceland](#), takes you to the standard stops on the Golden Circle—Thingvellir National Park, the thermal waters at Geysir Hot Springs, and Gullfoss Waterfall—and includes a snowmobile journey across Langjökull Glacier, the second-largest glacier in the world.

The company also offers a number of seasonal outings to catch the northern lights. The Top of the World tour (\$655) also travels to Langjökull, where visitors ride snowmobiles through the dark, guided only by headlights—and the aurora borealis.



If the Golden Circle is too "beaten path," Iceland's south coast is just as striking but far less trodden. [Superjeep](#) offers a south coast tour with a stop at Eyjafjallajökull Volcano (\$380).



Centered around the recently dormant volcano (you may remember the 2010 eruption that disrupted air travel throughout Europe), the trip stops at a black sand beach and lets you explore the outer reaches of the volcano itself, where heat radiates from the earth underfoot. It also visits two of Iceland's most awe-inspiring waterfalls, Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss.



*(Photo: PEDRE/Getty Images)*

For the budget-conscious traveler, [Sourced Adventures](#) offers many of the most popular excursions at an affordable rate. Its Golden Circle outing starts at just \$89, while its 10-hour Southern Iceland tour begins at \$115 and includes Sólheimajökull Glacier and Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss waterfalls.





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AUGUST 9



The company also offers full-package trips including airfare and hospitality; travel from cities like New York, Chicago, and San Francisco plus five days in Iceland goes for around \$1,000.



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MAY 29



Iceland's wonders don't stop above ground; some of the most spectacular sights are under the ice. Enormous glaciers such as Langjökull, Vatnajökull, and Mýrdalsjökull form a large part of Iceland's topography, and they include miles of ice tunnels. [Glacier Guides](#) specializes in navigating the crystal palaces.



*(Photo: Peter Adams/Getty Images)*

The Crystal Ice Cave tour (\$190) brings visitors inside the Vatnajökull glacier, while the Into the Glacier tour (\$190) explores the ice caves that naturally form each winter as the glacier freezes and retreats, leaving unique cavities within the ice.

In the Blue Ice glacier hiking tour (\$240), guests strap on a pair of crampons and head out onto Sólheimajökull Glacier, where they can climb its many formations, crevasses, and ice caves.





*(Photo: Johann S. Karlsson/Getty Images)*

[Extreme Iceland](#) offers airborne tours with striking views of Iceland's natural beauty. Tours include a trip to the highlands (\$600) and a "moon safari" flight (\$310) that takes visitors over a landscape formed by volcanic and glacial activity.



*(Photo: Chalermkiat Seedokmai/Getty Images)*

For a more serene tour, go engineless and soar over the Icelandic countryside in a paraglider (from \$330).



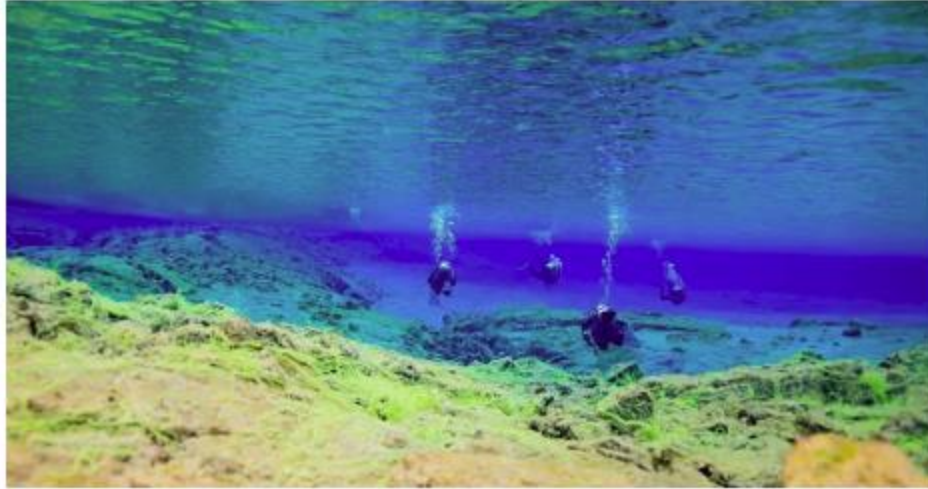
*(Photo: Raimund Linke/Getty Images)*

## 2. UNDERWATER ACTION



*(Photo: wildestanimal/Getty Images)*

Tucked within Thingvellir National Park is one of Iceland's most incredible natural wonders. The Silfra fissure is a crack that formed between the North American and Eurasian continental plates, and it's filled with some of the clearest and cleanest water on the planet. It's also a bucket-list item for any serious scuba diver.



*(Photo: bywildestanimal/Getty Images)*

The fissures formed when the two plates moved away from each other 150 million years ago at a rate of around two centimeters per year. At the Silfra fissure, the water is so clear that divers can see clearly for 100 meters or more.

A natural current "cleans out" any disturbed sediment and discourages animal life, leaving only the unusual algae that provide splashes of blues and greens. At certain spots divers can actually touch both walls, connecting the two continents with their hands.



### 3. THE KINGDOM OF THE NORTH



*(Photo: HBO)*

If you're a [Game of Thrones](#) fan, you're already well acquainted with Iceland, even if you don't know it. Not only is one of the show's iconic characters an Iceland native ("The Mountain" is played by former World's Strongest Man contestant [Hafþór Júlíus Björnsson](#)), but many of the series' most recognizable locations are found here as well. Several local tour companies can take you to them.



*(Photo: Friðbjófur M./Getty Images)*



*Thrones* fans might recognize Grjótagjá lava cave near Lake Mývatn, which served as the secret love nest for future "King in the North" Jon Snow and his former love interest, Ygritte. Vatnajökull National Park, home to the largest glacier in all of Europe, served as the setting for the area north of the Wall. Thingvellir National Park is also a popular stop on the *GoT* route; it was used as the location for the wildling camp.

For the full experience, we recommend the [Game of Thrones: Beyond the Wall](#) tour by Iceland Travel (starting at \$865). The five-day trip visits all of the filming locations, and it's led by local expert Jon Thor Benediktsson, who served as a guide for the film crew.

Beware the White Walkers in comfort and style with luxury travel company Zicasso, which offers a customizable *Game of Thrones* Season Seven tour, beginning at \$4,390 for a seven-day excursion.

## 4. OFF-ROAD AWESOMENESS



(Photo: Arctic-Images/Getty Images)

To explore Iceland, you need the right wheels. Not any vehicle will do—the country's brutal terrain can inflict more damage than your supplemental liability insurance can cover. To reach Iceland's wonders, a more rugged ride is needed: the Super Jeep.



*(Photo: Arctic-Images/Getty Images)*

Complete with suspension, tires, and powertrain designed for the toughest terrain (volcanic rock, ice fields, etc.), the Super Jeep, which is offered by many of the country's guided tour facilitators, can take you to the top of a volcano or the base of a glacier in relative comfort. The term applies not only to Jeeps, as heavily modified [Land Rover Defenders](#) and [Toyota Land Cruisers](#) are also included in this category of adventure vehicles.

## 5. HELICOPTER HEAVEN



*(Photo: Per Breiehaugen/Getty Images)*

Before overfishing put an end to its proud run, Siglufjörður was known as the herring capital of the world. Today, this tiny burg of some 1,200 hardy souls near the Arctic Circle is considered one of the best places on the planet for heli-skiing. Climb into a chopper and be at the summit of a pristine 5,000-foot peak in less than five minutes. In late spring, the sun shines—and the skiing continues—until nearly midnight.



*(Photo: Ross Woodhall/Getty Images)*

Up here on Iceland's Troll Peninsula, where local folklore has it that Iceland's last living troll was killed by an angry farmer in 1764, the snow also lasts longer than it tends to elsewhere. This means you can ski all the way down to the black volcanic beach at the base of the mountain well into June. (The season starts in March.) There are a number of outfitters in town; [Arctic Heli Skiing](#) and [Viking Heliskiing](#) offer packages lasting from two to seven days. Virgin snow awaits.

— *With Justin Rohrlich*