

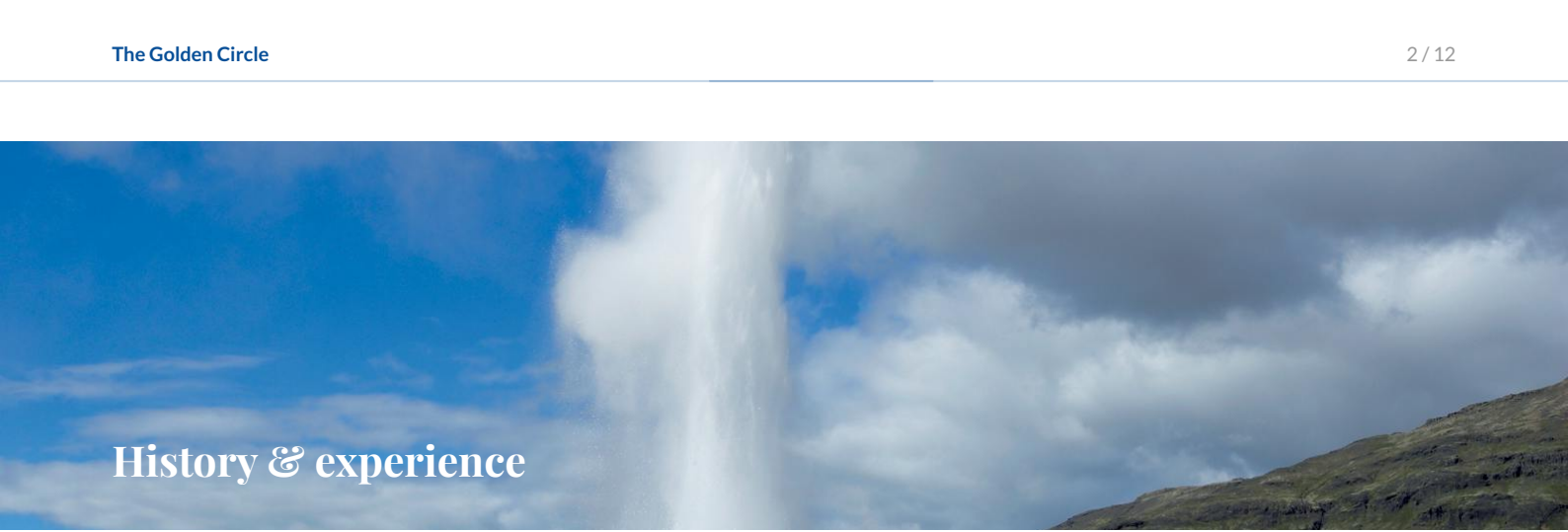


VISIT GUIDE 2026

The Golden Circle

Reykjavik · From 88.02€

<https://golden-circle-iceland.visit-tickets.com/en/> · Skip-the-line tickets & rates



History & experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

A Modern Circuit of Ancient Forces

GOOGLE **4.7** ★★★★★ 126 reviews

TIQETS **4.8** ★★★★★ 23 reviews

The Golden Circle is not merely a tourist route; it is an **open-air laboratory** for geologists and history enthusiasts alike. This 300-kilometer circuit, known locally as Gullni hringurinn, groups together Iceland's most significant natural and historical landmarks into a single, cohesive narrative of Earth's dynamic forces. Unlike ancient trade routes or pilgrimage paths, this specific loop is a modern invention designed to showcase the raw power of nature and the depth of Icelandic heritage in one convenient sweep.

At its heart lies **Pingvellir National Park**, a UNESCO World Heritage site that serves as both a geological marvel and a political sanctuary. It was here, in the Almannagjá canyon, that the world's oldest parliament, the Alþingi, convened from 930 AD until 1789. The rift valley visible today is where the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates are literally pulling apart at a rate of two centimeters per year, creating a landscape that feels alive and constantly shifting under your feet.

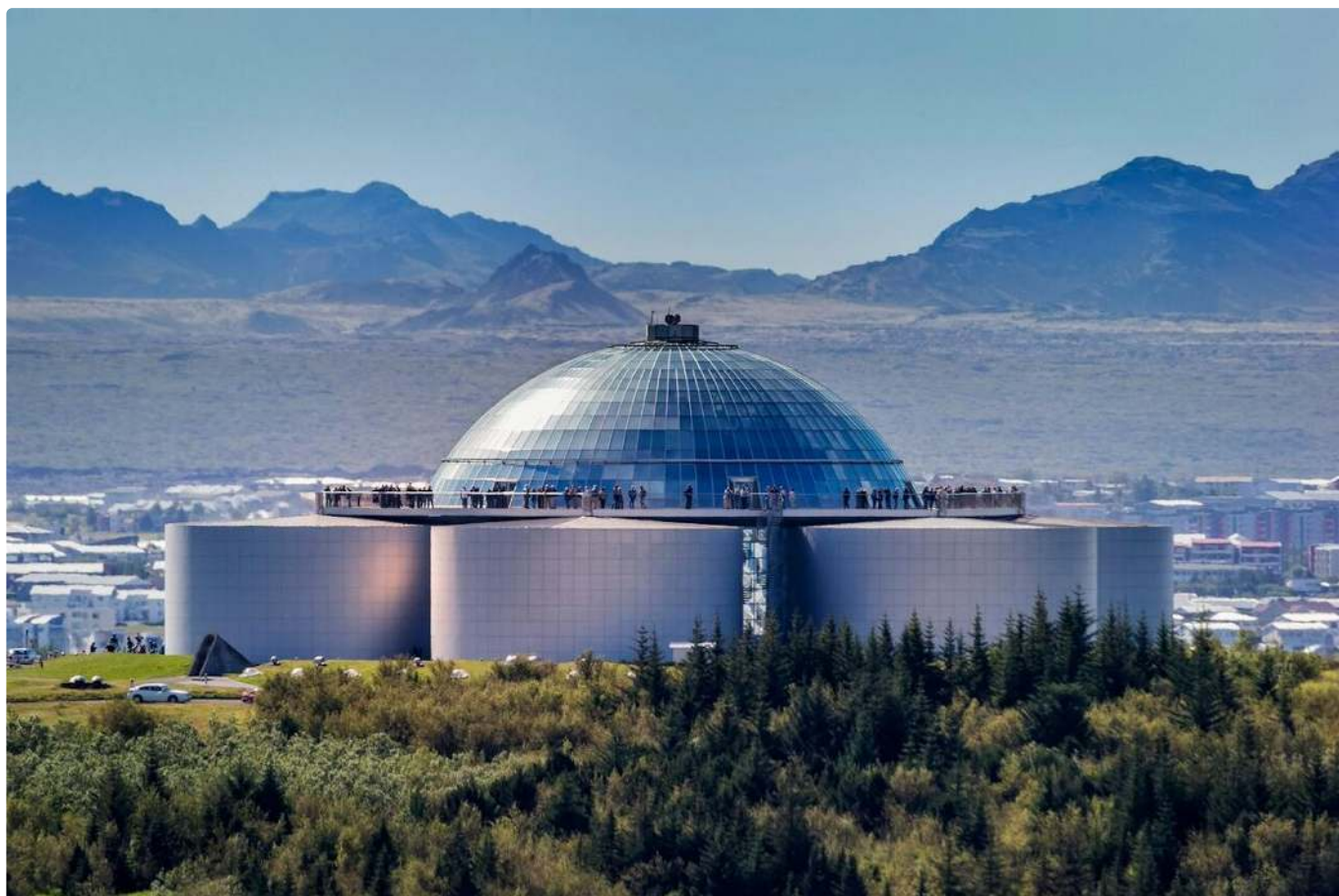
The journey continues to the Haukadalur geothermal field, home to **Strokkur Geyser**. While the original Great Geysir gave its name to all geysers worldwide, it is now largely dormant. Strokkur, however, puts on a reliable show, erupting every six to ten minutes with boiling water shooting up to 30 meters into the air. This area demonstrates the intense volcanic activity beneath Iceland's crust, where magma heats groundwater to explosive temperatures.

Finally, the circuit culminates at **Gullfoss Waterfall**, often called the 'Golden Falls'. Fed by the Hvítá river from the Langjökull glacier, this double-tiered waterfall plunges 32 meters into a narrow canyon. The sheer volume of water—approximately 100,000 liters per second—creates a perpetual mist and rainbow that has captivated visitors for generations. Together, these sites form a trilogy of geological and historical wonders that define the Icelandic experience.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping out at **Pingvellir**, you are immediately struck by the silence broken only by the wind whistling through the rift valley. The landscape is stark yet vibrant, with moss-covered lava fields stretching toward the deep blue waters of Þingvallavatn lake. It feels less like a park and more like walking through the pages of a history book written in stone and water.

As you approach **Gullfoss**, the ground begins to tremble slightly with the force of the falling water. The mist hits your face, cold and refreshing, carrying the scent of wet earth and glacier ice. The roar is deafening yet harmonious, a primal sound that connects you directly to the raw energy of the planet.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS 300 km road circuit. Departure from Reykjavík via Route 1.	OPENING HOURS Free access to natural sites. Tourist bus schedules vary by season.
PRICES Free sites except parking at Kerið. Guided tours from 88,02 €. {promo}.	VISIT DURATION Allow at least 6 to 8 hours for the complete circuit with stops.
PHOTOS Tripods allowed. Beware of constant mist on the geysers and spray.	AUDIENCE All audiences, but walking is required for Kerið and trails are slippery in winter.

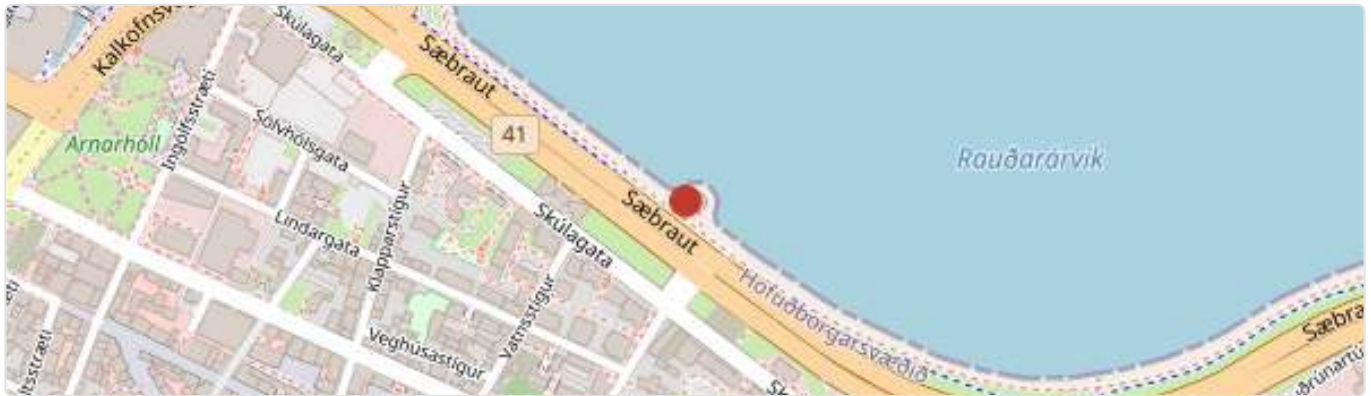
HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

	Car Train Station (16 min) · Reykjavik Airport (10 min)
	Bike Train Station (21 min) · Reykjavik Airport (12 min)
	On foot Reykjavik Airport (26 min) · BSÍ Bus Terminal Reykjavík (16 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve The Golden Circle ?



Reykjavik

64°8.857' N, 21°55.349' O



ORGANIZATION

Planning Your Geological Journey

Geological Essentials

Focus strictly on the three main sites: Þingvellir, Geysir, and Gullfoss. This is the fastest route, ideal for those with limited time or who want to minimize driving fatigue while maximizing iconic photo opportunities.

The Classic Complete Circuit

Includes the three main sites plus **Kerið Crater**. The turquoise water of this volcanic crater adds a striking visual contrast. Allow extra time for the 15-20 minute descent to the bottom if open.

Golden Circle and South

For the adventurous traveler, combine the Golden Circle with stops on the South Coast like Seljalandsfoss or Skógafoss. This transforms a day trip into an epic two-day geological expedition.

ACCESSIBILITY



Disabled Access

Limited access to main viewpoints, stairs required for key sites.



Families

Ideal for families, but bring warm clothes and waterproof shoes.



Audio guide

English, Icelandic



Must-sees

SELECTION

The Three Pillars of Iceland

01

UNESCO World Heritage Site

Pingvellir National Park

Walk along the **Almannagjá** rift valley where tectonic plates are visibly separating. This is not just a park but the birthplace of Icelandic democracy and a dramatic geological fault line.

💡 In 1944, Iceland declared independence from Denmark here, linking its modern identity to this **ancient parliament** site.

02

Haukadalur Geothermal Field

Strokkur Geyser

Witness the only reliably active geyser in this area. It erupts every **6 to 10 minutes**, shooting boiling water up to 30 meters high. Stand on the upwind side for safety and clarity.

💡 The term 'geyser' comes from the nearby Great Geysir, which is now mostly **dormant** but still occasionally spouts.

03

Hvítá River Canyon

Gullfoss Waterfall

Known as the 'Golden Falls', this two-tiered waterfall plunges **32 meters** into a narrow gorge. The spray is constant, creating rainbows on sunny days and requiring waterproof gear.

💡 A farmer's daughter reportedly threatened to throw herself into the falls if her father sold the land to foreign investors, saving it for **Iceland**.

04

Volcanic Crater Lake

Kerið Crater

A collapsed volcanic crater filled with striking **turquoise water**. The red moss-covered slopes provide a vivid contrast to the deep blue lake below. Accessible via a short walk.

💡 Kerið is approximately 3,000 years old, making it significantly younger than the surrounding **volcanic system**.

05

Pingvellir National Park

Silfra Fissure

A unique underwater rift where you can dive or snorkel between two continental plates. Visibility exceeds **100 meters**, offering an otherworldly experience in glacial water.

💡 Silfra is part of the Golden Circle but requires a separate specialized tour for **diving activities**.

06

Geothermal Area

Hveragerði Hot Springs

A town built on geothermal energy, featuring natural hot springs and greenhouses. It offers a unique opportunity to see **bananas growing** in Iceland's cold climate.

💡 The ground here is so hot that steam vents can reach boiling temperatures right at the **surface level**.

07

Historic Bishop's See

Skálholt Cathedral

A modern church built on ancient grounds where bishops resided for centuries. It features a striking **concrete structure** and beautiful stained glass windows.

💡 The current cathedral is the fifth to stand on this site, each reflecting the architectural style of its **era**.

08

Tomato Farm

Friðheimar Greenhouse

A working greenhouse powered by geothermal energy where you can eat tomatoes straight from the vine. It provides a warm, delicious **lunch break** option.

💡 The warmth required to grow tomatoes in winter is provided entirely by **geothermal water**.

TIPS

Essential Tips for the Trail

TIMING

Start early: Arrive at Strokkur or Gullfoss before the big buses for more space and fewer crowds. The morning light also offers a dramatic contrast with the steam, ideal for crowd-free photos.

BILLET

Yes, booking is highly recommended, especially during high season and for guided tours. Bus seats fill up quickly. Natural sites are free, but Kerið may require a small parking fee.

PARCOURS

Don't rely on distance: 300 km seems short on a map but takes an entire day with stops. Actual travel time is often underestimated by visitors who do not plan for photo breaks and necessary observation.

PHOTO

Tripods allowed. Beware of constant mist on the geysers and spray at Gullfoss which can obscure lenses quickly. Keep a microfiber cloth handy.

PAUSE

Suggest classic stops such as Hveragerði or Friðheimar if included in your circuit. These places offer a warm break and allow you to regain strength before the freezing afternoon.

ENFANTS

Ideal for families, but bring warm clothes and waterproof shoes. Walking is required for Kerið and trails are slippery in winter. Keep an eye on children near steam vents.

AUDIOGUIDE

Available in English and Icelandic at Þingvellir. It provides deep historical context about the Alþingi parliament that enriches the visual experience significantly.

CONFORT

Waterproof shoes are essential for Gullfoss due to constant spray and muddy trails at Þingvellir. Even in summer, a wet shoe freezes quickly if you take a break by the water or in the wind.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book the Golden Circle in advance?

Yes, booking is highly recommended, especially during high season and for guided tours. Bus seats fill up quickly.

Are the natural sites paid?

Access to Þingvellir, Strokkur and Gullfoss is free. Only the entrance to Kerið crater may require a small parking or access fee.

Can I cancel my booking?

Conditions depend on the provider. For tours from Reykjavík, check for the free cancellation policy often included up to 24h before.

How long does the circuit actually take?

The drive alone takes 3-4h, but allow 6 to 8 hours with stops. The distance of 250-300 km is underestimated by many.

Is the Geysir geyser active?

No, the original Geysir is unpredictable. It is Strokkur that offers the regular show every 6 to 10 minutes. Accept visual uncertainty.

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

A Recent Marketing Name

The term 'Golden Circle' is a tourist creation with no historical basis. It is a modern invention to group major sites under the Icelandic name Gullni hringurinn, thus facilitating **tourism promotion**.

The Original Geysir

While Strokkur puts on the show, the Great Geysir is the one that gave its name to all geysers. It is currently unpredictable and rarely erupts, making **Strokkur** the reliable star of the field.

Northern Lights Possibility

It is possible but not guaranteed. It requires darkness and few clouds, which is difficult in summer. In winter, it is more likely but cold. Bring a **power bank** as cold drains batteries fast.

Winter Conditions

Snow tires are mandatory if driving independently. The lower paths at Gullfoss may be closed due to ice, making certain viewpoints inaccessible without appropriate **equipment**.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Before or after your main stops, consider a detour to **Hveragerði**, known as 'The Town of Hot Springs'. Here, geothermal energy powers greenhouses that grow bananas and tomatoes in Iceland's harsh climate. It offers a warm, cozy break with excellent cafes. For history buffs, the historic bishop's see at **Skálholt** is nearby, featuring a modern church built on ancient grounds. If you have extra time, extend your trip to the South Coast for black sand beaches and more waterfalls.



Walking the Golden Circle is not just about seeing sights; it is about feeling the pulse of a young Earth. From the **tectonic silence** of Þingvellir to the thunderous power of Gullfoss, every step reminds you of nature's grandeur. It is an experience that lingers in your memory long after the last photo is taken.