



A Visit to Iceland



Mini Page photo

At 11 o'clock at night, the sun has set, but the sky is not dark. Even in August, the air is cool, and breezes sometimes whip up into strong winds. At every turn, a new natural wonder meets the eye.

The Mini Page visited Iceland this summer! Let's learn more about this fantastic island in the North Atlantic Ocean.

Mixed-up names

Iceland's name might lead you to believe that it's covered with ice. And Greenland might sound like a lush, green paradise.

Actually, Iceland's coasts don't freeze during the winter because of a warm current in the North Atlantic Ocean. Most of the country's 330,000 people live in or around Reykjavik (REH-kyuh-vick), the capital on the southwest coast of the island. The coldest areas are the highlands in the central part of Iceland. (By contrast, most of Greenland is covered by the Greenland Ice Sheet.)

The first democracy?

Iceland was settled by Norsemen, or Vikings, between 870 and 930. Most of the settlers were farmers from Norway looking for new land.

Around 930, Icelanders established an assembly, or parliament. At these springtime meetings, men met to discuss and make laws and share them with others. Some Icelanders believe their system is the world's oldest parliamentary democracy.

Mini Fact:

While most Icelanders speak Icelandic, English is widely spoken on the island.

Natural beauty

The Mid-Atlantic Ridge between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates runs right through the middle of Iceland. As a result, the island has several volcanoes and many geysers.



Mini Page photo

Strokkur, a geyser in southwest Iceland, erupts about every 10 minutes.

Dramatic waterfalls dump water from three large glaciers and several smaller ones.

Animals

As you explore Iceland, you'll see many people wearing beautifully knitted wool sweaters. Icelandic wool comes from Icelandic sheep. These sheep are descended from those brought to Iceland by settlers from Norway.



Mini Page photo

Icelandic sheep are shorn, or shaved, in the spring so that their coats can keep them warm all winter.

The Icelandic horse was developed on the island from ponies brought by Norse settlers. It is smaller than most horses and comes in many colors. Some sheep farmers use the horses to round up animals.



Mini Page photo

Language

Because many of Iceland's original settlers came from Norway, the language developed from Nordic languages.

The Icelandic alphabet has 32 characters (the English alphabet has 26). There is no C, Q, W or Z in the Icelandic alphabet.



Can you pronounce these Icelandic words?

Names

Your last name is probably the same as your parents' last name. In Iceland, your last name would be based on your father's first name. For instance, if your dad's name is John, and your name is Elizabeth, your name would be Elizabeth Johnsdóttir (John's daughter) in Iceland. Your brother Sam would be Sam Johnsson.

School

School in Iceland would seem familiar to you. Kids start school around age 6. Classes begin in August or September, and summer vacation begins in May or June. Students learn English and Danish, along with other languages.

Resources



On the Web:

- kids-world-travel-guide.com/iceland-facts.html

At the library:

- "Iceland" by Barbara A. Somervill
- "Iceland" by Jonathan Wilcox
- "Iceland (Country Explorers)" by Jennifer A. Miller

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of Iceland are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

ASSEMBLY, GEYSERS, GLACIERS, HIGHLANDS, HORSE, ICELAND, ISLAND, LANGUAGE, NORWAY, PARLIAMENT, PLATE, REYKJAVIK, RIDGE, SHEEP, TECTONIC, VOLCANO, WATERFALL, WOOL.

W T D N A L E C I S G M K W S
P E E H S G E S D E Y I A R E
O C B G D S L N Y L V T E N G
N T H I R A A S B A E I O J A
A O R O N L E M J R C R L P U
C N H D H R E K F A W Q L L G
L I M G S S Y A L A V A Z O N
O C I Y S E L G Y C T X G O A
V H P A R L I A M E N T U W L



Cook's Corner

Kooky Couscous

You'll need:

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 cup couscous (whole-wheat or regular)
- Sprinkle of salt
- 1/4 cup dried apricots, chopped

What to do:

- Bring water to boil. Add couscous and stir. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 2 minutes.
- Remove couscous from heat. Allow to stand for 5 minutes to absorb all water.
- Fluff couscous with fork; sprinkle with salt to taste.
- Add dried fruit, chickpeas and orange juice; stir gently.
- Top with sliced almonds. Makes 4 servings.

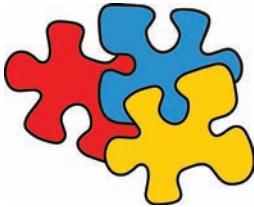


- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds

* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of Iceland.



lecragi _____
kvyjeakri _____
sbylsame _____
eygres _____

Answers: glacier, Reykjavik, assembly, geyser.

Mini Jokes



Greg: Where do geologists like to go for entertainment?
Gary: Rock 'n' roll concerts!

Gillian: What's a geologist's favorite form of transportation?
Glen: A rocket!

Eco Note



Oregon researchers say they have developed a new strain of seaweed that has twice the nutritional value of kale and also tastes like bacon. One form of the seaweed is in strips that can be fried like regular bacon. It's rich in protein, vitamins and antioxidants. Eat up!

For later:

Find Iceland on a world map. Look on the Internet for satellite photos of Iceland's glaciers.

Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html

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