

DRIVE IT

ICELAND

ICELAND IS COMMONLY REFERRED TO as the land of ice and fire – but a 4x4 expedition proves there's much more in between. As well as being Europe's largest icecap, Iceland also features our continent's most powerful waterfall, its highest geyser, one of the most densely-populated puffin colonies and its biggest volcano. At the size of England, but with a population of only 250,000 people, Iceland offers space, wilderness and breathtaking 4x4 tracks. As specialists in Icelandic expeditions, we asked OneLife Adventure for some practical advice on driving there.

GETTING THERE

The best way to get to Iceland is via a North Atlantic Cruise. Danish company Smyril Line operate weekly ferries from Scrabster in the north of Scotland, which sail to Iceland in approximately 36 hours via the Faroe Islands. Why not take time to explore Torshavn, the Faroe Islands' capital city, on the way. Once on-board you can treat yourself to some North Atlantic culinary specialities or sip a relaxing cocktail before your adventure really begins.

GETTING IN

Customs are fairly straightforward and even if you do encounter unexpected difficulties, English is widely spoken. You'll need your passport and the V5 document for the car, and before you go you should also check with your insurance company that you're covered to drive in Iceland. It's worth knowing that you can only take in 3kg of food and no fresh meat is allowed.

GETTING AROUND

Off-road driving is forbidden in Iceland; however, with the exception of the ring road, the majority of what they class as roads are actually made up of gravel, sand, rocks and lava. As such, the 'off-road' driving is fantastic. The sights in Iceland are hugely diverse: you could spend the morning soaking in a hot pool beside the Arctic Ocean, explore ice caves in the interior in the afternoon and take a whale-watching cruise in the evening. The scenery changes every few hundred metres, so you won't be short of photographic opportunities or driving challenges. Roads are well-signposted, but watch out for your tyres on the lava.

As a race, Icelanders are friendly and very helpful, despite looking down on our 'small' 4x4s – which is easily done when they're sitting in Arctic supertrucks with 44-inch tyres! Most of the classic interior routes, such as the F35, will take you past the Vatnajökull or Langjökull icecaps, over remote lava fields or alongside the striking black sand dunes. If you get fed up driving on bumpy rocks then it's possible to take a snowmobile right across the huge Vatnajökull icecap to the volcano in its centre.

If this has whet your appetite for exploration, OneLife Adventure runs regular expeditions to Iceland and other countries around the world.

For more information, visit www.onelifeadventure.co.uk or call 01612 655799.



TRAVEL NOTES

Central African Republic (CAR)

Despite the acronym, CAR is one of the most inhospitable African states for 4x4 users and the north-west border with Cameroon should not be approached – even with a police/military escort. But the brave few who safely venture down south will be rewarded with spectacular rainforests and National Parks full of elephants, lions, leopards and rhinos.

■ Since its independence from France in 1960, CAR has been dominated by severe political instability. Rebel forces are particularly active in the Vakaga province in the north-east – road routes are no longer safe to use here or in the areas surrounding Cameroon and Chad. A convoy was attacked as recently as September 2006

■ The border with Sudan has been closed since April 2006

■ When travelling outside the capital, Bangui, always check the current situation – even despite elections in 2005, armed groups are rife in many parts of the country

■ With an 80% unemployment rate, theft and robbery are both commonplace in cities and isolated, poorer towns. Keep jewellery hidden

■ The nearest British High Commission is located in Yaoundé, Cameroon and help may not be easily accessible

■ Due to strikes by tanker, bus and taxi drivers, petrol is in short supply. Always keep a private stash with you

■ Roads are poorly maintained and will nearly always require a 4x4. For this and obvious safety reasons, it is recommended that you don't travel after dark

■ Always keep ID on you – without it you risk being detained by the police

■ Ask before taking photos in public places, particularly in cities, as permission is often required

■ Make sure you get a visa and yellow fever jab beforehand – you may need to show proof of both

■ Top-level health insurance is a must. With limited medical facilities and high levels of malaria, HIV, meningitis and water-borne diseases, CAR is one place you have to be vigilant and well-prepared

To keep informed on the latest travel information, visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's online advice guides at www.fco.gov.uk