



Iceland Offroad

Simple step-by-step guide to safe 4x4 driving in Iceland!

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Do you dream of visiting Iceland?

Do you dream of taking your own 4x4 or renting a 4x4 to discover the hidden gems the country is famous for?

But did you know that off-roading in Iceland is not for everyone! In fact no off-roading is allowed ANYWHERE, except on deep snow or ice, where the ground is protected (and that is best left to the locals).



You can still do an amazing tour with a normal 4x4 – and that is revealed in this report 😊

I suggest you print out a hard copy of this eBook to take it with you when you make the trip!

Iceland's delicate nature



Iceland is an arctic country with short summers. It is also geologically a young country - as you may recall from the Eyjafjallajökull (try to say THAT aloud) volcanic eruption where ash deposits stopped all transatlantic flight for a few days.

The soil is loose from all the ash and easily disturbed. Vegetation and animal life is sparse and the growing season is short. A single track off roads can break the vegetation cover and cause severe damage. Water and wind erosion easily follow. Such wounds take a long time to heal, sometimes even decades.



The Icelandic nature offers a lot for travelers to experience. You may not catch a burning volcano, but you are sure to see hot springs geysers, magnificent waterfalls, huge ice caps, black sands and lava formations. During special times of the year you may see the northern lights flashing the night sky or the never ending summer nights.

No driving off roads!

No driving outside roads or trails is allowed. Damage to the environment is not popular with the authorities. The Icelandic nature is easy to damage – this applies to the soil, vegetation and geological formations. Creating new

tracks, whether on vegetated land or not, is not allowed. No matter if the damage is permanent or temporary.

Show respect for the environment and follow these simple rules:



Dangerous dirt roads

Iceland is full of danger and obstacles that can get in your way. Loose gravel, bumpy roads, narrow bridges, mud and snow. None of these justify off road driving but should be considered a part of the experience.

Iceland Offroad

If your vehicle loses grip you must try and keep calm and not hit the brakes too hard and handle the steering wheel without sudden movements. If the wheels lock you could lose control of the 4x4. Try to steer in the direction of the road and decouple the driveline if you can.

Don't drive too fast!



You must take special care when crossing un-bridged rivers. Vehicle height varies and your 4x4 may not be all that well equipped for river crossing. Your everyday family car is never comparable to a real 4x4 with low range - even if it has four-wheel-drive.

Never trust that a stream is passable even if you can see tracks leading to it from both sides. The water can grow and the bottom can change in an instant. Glacial rivers are especially dangerous. If you don't like the looks of a river don't try and cross it - especially if you are traveling on a single 4x4. Stick around for another vehicle.

Let someone who knows the river show you the correct way. Driving downstream is often best for the engine (ignition, air-intake, fan). Find a shallow part of the river with a solid bottom and a lowered opposite bank. Drive in the lowest gear so you don't make a wave in front of the 4x4.

What are the roads like?

Major roads have non-slippery surface. Other roads are dirt and gravel roads with much lower standards of quality. Even though the speed limit is 80 km/hour you should not drive that fast – especially if you don't want to roll your 4x4 over!

The road may look just fine, but it can be slippery, narrow and with loose gravel and tricky bumps and there are plenty of single-width bridges and hills and turns where you only get a limited view of the road ahead.



One tourist driving a 4x4 on the pavement and then on to the gravel road made about 100 meters before ending up in a ditch with a surprise look on his face and a heavy bill from the rental company!

Most of Iceland is uninhabited highland area. Highland roads are generally closed during the winter and only a portion of them are maintained during the summer as the snow melts away and the roads dry. The Public Roads Administration publishes a map that shows which routes are open at a specific time. The maps are freely available at gas stations, tourist information centers and on-line at the web site.

Communication and Service

Iceland is getting pretty well covered by GSM mobile reach. Even up in the highlands you can often get a decent signal. CB and VHF radio channels are not monitored.



If you use a mobile while driving you must use hands-free equipment.

Fuel and car service on the highlands is scarce. A few places provide gas and lodging. Plan your trip accordingly and write a short note of it in guest books where you stay.

It is a great idea to have extra fuel cans for those long stretches!

Many trails on the highlands are hard to navigate and often have very few or even no road signs. Get a GPS system and gather information on your intended routes, weather forecast and road conditions before you make way into the unknown.

Tour info sheet

For major trips it is a good idea to make a **Tour Info Sheet**. Be sure to include the most important details of the trip:

- **Name** – Give the trip a descriptive and memorable name. This makes it easier to talk about and remember later.
- **Description** – A general description of the terrain and things to consider as well as the reason for the trip.
- **Route** – How to find the correct way to go and perhaps a list of important GPS points or even a full track.
- **Schedule** – When will the trip start and estimated arrival times at destinations.
- **Maps** – A printed map (or even a digital copy of a map) of the area would be nice to have.
- **Travelers** – A list of 4x4s and drivers with mobile phone numbers, email and more if needed.
- **Equipment** – Special equipment or stuff to take along. This could be keys for mountain huts, camping gear and sleeping bags etc.

- **Other things to note** – Phone numbers in case of an emergency, estimated fuel consumption or length of driving between gas stations etc.

Leave this information with someone who stays at home and is not going.

Local Law

In Iceland, you can expect to lose your driver's license and receive heavy fines for violation of traffic laws and environmental laws. In some cases, the car may be confiscated!

- **Speed limits**

On paved roads in rural areas the speed limit is 90 km/h, but only 80 km/h on gravel roads. In urban areas, the speed limit is often 50 km/h unless otherwise marked.

- **Drinking and driving** is strictly forbidden!

- **Seat Belts**

Drivers as well as all passengers in a car are required to wear seat belts. Children have to be in a safety seat or use other safety equipment according to their age and weight.

Help on the road

Information about road conditions is available during the summertime at tourist information centers and gas stations.

- **Emergency:**

- Tel: **112** – the national emergency number



- **Safetravel.is**

- Leave your travel plan and lots of information for travelers.



- **Weather:**

- belgingur.is
- vedur.is



- **Road Conditions: Public Roads Administration**

- www.road.is
- Tel.: 1777



- **FÍB Assistance**

- www.fib.is
- If you are a member of a national FIA club and need assistance, you can call **00354 5 112 112**.



The FÍB Assistance service can be called day and night, all year round, throughout the country.

Members of FIA clubs have to show their club membership card to the patrolman.

Some clubs of FÍB's foreign sister clubs offer their members free breakdown assistance in Iceland, then the member has to call their club and the club send a guarantee to FÍB Assistance for the payment.

Rent a 4x4 in Iceland

Self-drive off-road adventure!

You can now rent a 4x4 truck in Iceland through our secure booking system. - See more at: <http://rent.4x4offroads.com>

Rent a 4x4 in Iceland!



From the tiny Jimny...
...to 38 inch Land Rover :)

4x4OffRoads.com

4x4OffRoads has made a contract with a few rental companies that rent out 4x4s here in Iceland.

Please note that the rental service will have special rules that you must follow – or you may risk invalidating the insurance!

ISAK
4x4 RENTAL



[Land Rover Defender on 38 inch tires](#)

Modified Land Rover Defender on 38-inch tires, with snorkel and all the extras to venture deep into the Icelandic highlands. Fully equipped with VHF long range radio with private channels to enable clear communication between our cars.



[Jeep Wrangler Luxury 2013](#)

A real Jeep with all the luxury you can imagine. Seats up to five adults with space for luggage in the rear. The Jeep is a classic and can handle most Icelandic trails.

[Suzuki XL-7 4x4](#)

The Suzuki Grand Vitara XL7 is very capable on the Icelandic highland trails. A real 4x4 with high and low range. Seats up to five adults with room for luggage.

[Grand Vitara 2006 - 4x4](#)

The Suzuki Grand Vitara are very capable on the Icelandic highland trails. A real 4x4 with high and low range. Seats up to five adults with space for luggage.

[Grand Vitara 2003-2006 4x4](#)

The Suzuki Grand Vitara are very capable on the Icelandic highland trails. A real 4x4 with high and low range. Seats up to five adults with space for luggage.

[Suzuki Jimny 4x4](#)

Small but highly capable 4x4 Suzuki Jimny. A real 4x4 with high and low range. Seats up to four persons. The Jimny can handle most Icelandic trails.

**Finally - Enjoy traveling around this unspoiled land and clean nature.
Fare well and have a fantastic journey!**

Thrandur



By Thrandur Arnthorsson

Thrandur is the chief-editor and owner of 4x4 Off Roads and an off-road enthusiast. Living in Iceland he loves to share the coolest 4x4 trucks and more offroad freedom.

Thrandur is the author of the book [4x4: Lifting Your Truck](#) available on Amazon Kindle.