

Iceland: Landscape and Climate

Think about the country of *Iceland*. What do you think it looks like?

Its name is a hint. Iceland has many **glaciers**, large sheets of ice. It has many rivers made from melting glaciers.

Iceland is also a land of fire. Hot water from deep in the earth shoots out of **vents** in the ground. There are many active and inactive **volcanoes**. About 85% of the homes in Iceland get energy from volcanoes and vents.



Iceland is located northwest of Europe



A geyser erupts, shooting water up into the air

When volcanoes erupt, the impact goes farther than Iceland. Ash can fall over northern Europe. Huge smoke **plumes** hide the sky, affecting air traffic. In 2010, eruptions in Iceland caused many flights to be canceled. More than 10 million travelers were affected.

Large areas of Iceland are covered with hardened lava from old eruptions. These areas are called **lava** fields. They are many miles in area. Some are covered with miles of moss or with ice sheets. Some grow deeper when new lava flows from volcanoes.



Ice in an extinct volcano crater

Iceland is a small island, only about the size of Kentucky. It is located at the **Arctic Circle**. Despite its location, the weather is not as cold as you might think. The warm **Gulf Stream** in the Atlantic Ocean keeps winters mild. Summers are cool.

In the winter, there are many days without sun. These are called the Polar Nights. In the summer, there are many days when the sun does not set. This is called the Midnight Sun.



Iceland's capital city, Reykjavik

Iceland has the fewest people of any country in Europe. The **population** is about 330,000, a little more than Corpus Christi, Texas. About two-thirds live in and around the capital, Reykjavik (RYE-keh-vick). The capital is in the south, the warmer part of the country. The northern part is **sparsely** populated.