



Ultimate Guide to Iceland's Glacier Lagoons

Description

"It's a pity we don't whistle at one another, like birds. Words are misleading. I am always trying to forget words. That is why I contemplate the lilies of the field, but in particular the glacier. If one looks at the glacier for long enough, words cease to have any meaning on God's earth."

Halldór Laxness

During a recent trip to Iceland, our first day around Ring Road included a stop at the natural crown jewels of Iceland: Fjallsarlon and Jokulsarlon Glacier Lagoons and Beidamerkursandur, also known as Diamond Beach. The spectacular images from these sites deserve a dedicated post. The Ultimate Guide to Iceland's Glacier Lagoons will provide the info you need to visit this bucket list destination. It was our favorite moment on an adventure that was full of moments of non-stop breathtaking scenery. This destination was mother nature in all its glory.

Iceland's Ring Road

We came upon these glaciers during our drive around Iceland's Ring Road. Ring Road, also referred to as Route 1, is a national road in Iceland that does the island's full circle. Completed in 1974, the road is 821 miles in total. It may not seem a great distance to some, but the road is mostly a narrow two-lane, head-on road, so speed limits are pretty low. However, you will discover what slows you down is the stunning landscape and raw beauty along this path. It is as varied as the weather can be.

All three destinations are immediately off Ring Road and are in the southern area of Iceland. If heading east from the capital city of Reykavik, it is about a five-hour drive.

Location of Jokulsarlon Glacier Lake

Google Maps

Fjallsarlon Glacier Lake



The first stop on the Ultimate Guide to Iceland's Glacier Lagoons will be Fjallsarlon Glacier Lake on your left. It is easy to miss as it is not fully visible from the road. The parking lot is quite large, and parking is free. It is a quick 5-minute, easy downhill walk down a wide graveled trail to the shores of

the lake. Once you take sight of the glacier lake, it will take your breath away. There is a sizeable unmarked building near the parking lot, but they were all closed during our time there. There were no bathroom facilities at this location.



Fjallsarlón is the lesser-known of the two glacier lakes in the area and is a more intimate visit. However, it is no less stunning and much more peaceful due to fewer crowds. The glaciers extend onto the lake's surface, where large icebergs break off from the ice cap. Hundreds of glittering icebergs float gently on the lake, and some settle on the shore at your feet. The icebergs' colors range from electric blue to crystal clear.

Little Brother



Fjallsarlon Glacier is part of the arm of the giant glacier Vatnajokull. The Breida River feeds the lake from the glacial lake Breidalon. This glacier is often called the little brother of the Jokulsarlon Glacier. Many visitors skip it to head to its bigger brother, but at this lake, you are much closer to the glacier itself, with a gorgeous background of the glaciers and mountains.

When we arrived, the sun was coming down over the mountain and reflected beautifully off the lake. It was serene and peaceful. There was only a handful of people there, primarily photographers, and as we would soon discover, this was not the case at its bigger brother farther down the road.



Jokulsarlon Glacier Lagoon



Our next stop on the Ultimate Guide to Iceland's Glacier Lagoons is ten kilometers down the road at the Jokulsarlon Glacier Lake. You will go across a bridge that spans an outlet out to sea. A vast parking lot will be on your left after the bridge, and parking is free. There are some services there, as well as bathroom facilities. Boat and hiking tours tend to leave from this area.



The setting is striking, with the massive glacier in the distance. It sits south of Europe's largest glacier Vatnajokull. This area encompasses Iceland's largest and Europe's second-largest national park, Vatnajokull. Jokulsarlon Lake is Iceland's deepest lake, about 750 feet deep, with a surface area of 11 miles. Due to global conditions, the glacier is rapidly receding as the lagoon is quickly growing, resulting in the glacier melting naturally forming the lagoon. Hundreds of icebergs of all sizes and colors are gently floating and slowly melting as they make their way out to sea. Some icebergs come to the shoreline and will be right at your feet. You can get up close to examine these pieces of the iceberg that are over 1000 years old.

Wildlife



Seals are often visible hunting for fish near the shoreline, and we saw many. The sky was teeming with birds during our visit as well. You will not, though, find Puffins. That day, our travels did have us come across by surprise some Puffins at Dyrholaey Point south of VIK.

The terrain at Jokulsarlon Lagoon offers wide-open areas to walk around to view the icebergs and lagoon. There are rolling hills to hike up that provide views from many different elevations.

We found many people watching in silent reverence as if what they were observing was challenging to grasp. We arrived at sunset, and we could not have chosen a more perfect time to experience this breathtakingly beautiful setting because it is a photographer's dream come true and a blast to capture what our eyes could barely believe.



Diamond Beach



Beidamerkursandur; is a long stretch of black sand beach known to many as Diamond Beach and was our last stop on our Ultimate Guide to Iceland's Glacier Lagoons. It is immediately across the road from the Jokulsarlon Lagoon. The parking lot is immediately off Ring Road. It is a few-minute flat hike to the beach. There is a circle of boards with information and images you will pass on the way to the beach. To the right is the bridge the glaciers float under on the way to the open ocean. It is gorgeous in its own right. This area can get quite windy, which is the norm for Iceland.



The sand is the most bottomless black sand you will ever see. It is fine sand that makes you think of silk. The black sand with the translucent icebergs densely scattered along the coastline is magnificent. It is much smaller than the icebergs in the lagoon. They have been sculpted by pounding surf and glisten in the sun.

Watch closely, and just feet from the coastline, you will see seals bobbing their heads, playing in the waves. Their little black faces appear to be laughing. Can you spot the seals in the photos on this post?



Hollywood has been here too

Scenes from the James Bond films *Die Another Day* and *A View to a Kill* were filmed at the Jokulsarlon Lagoon and Tomb Raider

Several commercials and music videos have also been shot at Jökulsárlón, such as Justin Bieber's 'I'll Show You.'

Even a video does not do this site justice

Are you planning a trip to Iceland? Check out our [Iceland Travel Guide](#) to help you plan the perfect trip.



Getting there

You can approach two ways from the east or the north. From the capital city of Reykjavik is a five-hour drive, and from Vik, the next closest city east, it is about two hours and fifteen minutes. Remember, this is an incredibly scenic drive, and you will want to make many stops. Our travels that day started from Reykjavik, and we arrived about 9 hours later at the lagoon. The glacier lakes were our last stop before our hotel in Hofn, an hour north of there.

If coming from the north, it is one hour from Hofn, five and a half hours from Lake Mytavn, and six hours and twenty minutes from Akureyri, Iceland's northern "capital" city. Ring Road is the only way to get to this location from either direction.

This area is accessible year-round, but in winter months, the weather can play havoc on driving conditions, so you must prepare accordingly.



Activities in the area

Boat tours of the lagoon are available in the summer. There will be up to many trips a day during peak season. You can choose from Zodiac boats and Amphibian boats. It would be best to book in advance to see the more enormous icebergs up close. Though it was summer when we were there, we saw no boats on the water to take away from the pristine setting at sunset—just pure natural wonder.

There are tour groups that provide guided hikes and tours of the area. Many local companies offer tours and packages.



Outside of the summer months, there is ice caving within the Vatnajokull glacier. These are usually available only from mid-October to March and are weather-dependent.

Finally, as this area has little unnatural light, it is a fantastic location to catch the Northern lights year-round. Though they are only visible in the dark, Iceland has little darkness in the summer and long dark periods in the winter.

Where to stay



There are a handful of hotels and guest houses nearby. There is the Fosshotel Glacier Lagoon, Ekra, Skyhusid Guesthouse, Reynivellir II and Gerdi Guesthouse, and Hali Country Hotel, to name some. These fill quickly, so book as early as you can.

The closest town is Hofn which is an hour north. There are many more choices for accommodations in that area. That was where we stayed the night.

It is important to price out properties on various sites. [Expedia](#) is a US-based company, whereas [Booking.com](#) is Europe-based. Not all properties appear on both, so check both. Our personal first choice is Booking.com. If the establishment has a website, check the price there as well.

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Final thoughts

Though this destination was planned to stop, nothing prepared us for the wonder we witnessed. Those into photography will have you in seventh heaven. Do not miss the chance to visit this marvel of Iceland, where fire meets ice.

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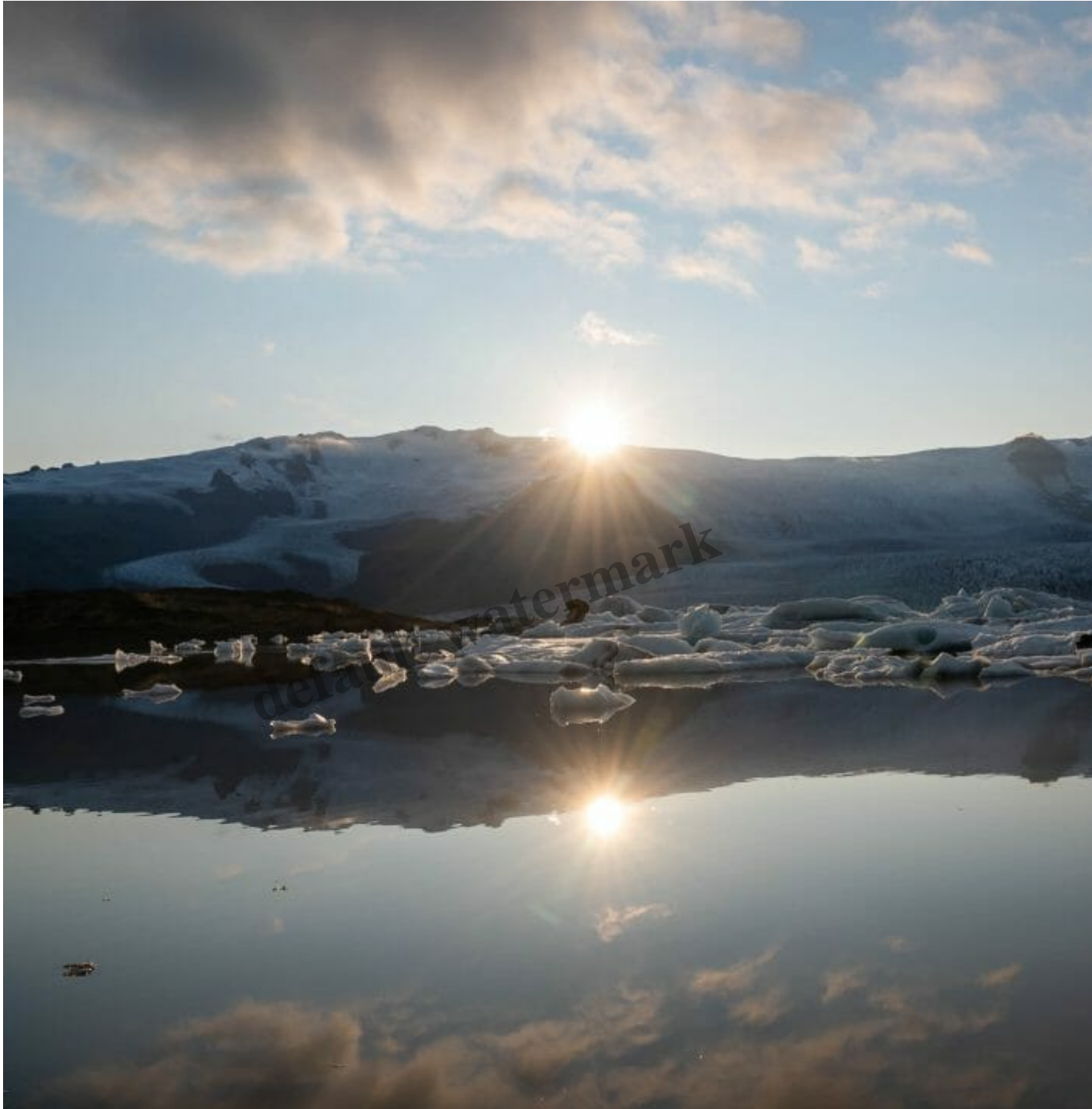
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We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller

ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

[Vacation Rental By Owner \(VRBO\)](#)

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[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

[Viator](#)

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