Iceland is an island. It is part of Europe. It is the 18th largest island in the world and the 2nd largest island in Europe. Iceland marks the boundary of the Eurasian Plate and the North American Plate

It has a population of 320,000. Bellevue has 126,000 people.

Capital and largest city is Reykjavik.

2/3 of the population lives in the southwestern region of the country.

Iceland is volcanically and geologically active. Interior is a plateau of sand fields, mountains and glaciers.

Iceland is 62% Tundra, 14% lakes and glaciers, and 23% vegetated.

Define: Tundra – a treeless plain where the subsoil is permanently frozen

The climate of Iceland’s coast is subpolar oceanic. Because of the jet stream it has a temperate climate despite being right outside the Arctic Circle.

Define: Jet Stream – high speed, high altitude air that blows west to east that effects the weather.

Define: Arctic Circle – a line of latitude near but to the south of the north pole; it marks the northernmost point at which the sun is visible on the northern winter solstice and the southern most point at which the mid-night sun can been seen on the northern summer solstice.

It was became a sovereign state under the Danish Crown in 1918. It was not until June 17, 1944 that Iceland became independent country.

It has been one of the wealthiest and most developed countries in the world. It is a developed and technologically advanced society.

Icelandic culture is founded upon the nation’s Norse heritage. Most Icelanders are descendents of the Norse (Norse are people from Norway). Historically, and due to cultural, economic and linguistic similiarities, Iceland is considered politically one of the Nordic countries.

Language: Icelandic which is a North Germanic Language descended from Old Norse. English is a widely spoken second language as well as Danish. Kids study both English and Danish in schools.

Naming: rather than using family names Icelanders use patronymics. This means a persons name is based on the name of one’s father. As a result the telephone directory is listed alphabetically by first name rather than surname.

Most Icelandic surnames are based on patronymy, or the adoption of the father's first given name. For example, Magnús and Anna, children of a man named Pétur, would hold the surname Pétursson and Pétursdóttir, respectively. Magnús' children, in turn, would inherit the surname Magnússon, while Anna's children would claim their father's first given name as their surname. Women normally maintain their original surnames after marriage. This system of surnames is required by law, except for the descendants of those who had acquired family names before 1913. Most Icelanders, while reserved by nature, rarely call each other by their surnames, and even phone directories are based on first names. Because of its small size and relative homogeneity, Iceland holds all the characteristics of a very close-knit society.

Iceland marks the boundary of the Eurasian Plate and the North American Plate. There are lots of volcanos in this area and Iceland has many active volcanos.

This year a volcano in [Eyjafjallajökull](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_eruptions_of_Eyjafjallaj%C3%B6kull) erupted on March 21, 2010 for the first time since 1821 (nearly 200 years) and 600 people had to evacuate their homes.

They also have many geysirs

Geysers – a natural spring that explodes out hot water and steam.

Fishing accounts for half of Iceland’s exports.

Polar Bears occasionally visit – travelling from Greenland on icebergs!

Natural Resources: Except for its abundant hydroelectric and geothermal power, Iceland lacks natural resources. Its economy depends heavily on fishing.

Transportation: There are lots of cars. There are no railroads.

Energy: Renewable energy resources: geothermal and hydro power provide effectively all of Iceland’s electricity. And nearly 80% of the nation’s total energy, with most of the remainder being imported oil for transportation and fishing fleet.

Define: Geothermal Energy -heat under the ground used to heat water and make steam to turn generator turbines and make electricity

Literature: The best-known classical works of literature are the Icelanders’ saga, prose epics set at the Age of Settlement.

Iceland is home to LazyTown.

There are 3 National Parks in Iceland:

Vatnajökull National Park is the largest in Europe. It covers about 11% of Iceland.

Thingvellir “Symbol of the Icelandic Consciousness” is a rift valley between the American and European geological plates. Lake Thingvellir contains species of fish found nowhere else.

Snaefellsjökull National Park is at the foot of a volcano and glacier.

Geography: Iceland is a volcanic island. 79% of the land area is of recent volcanic origin and consists of glaciers, lakes and a mountainous lava desert. Only 1% of the land is cultivated. 60% of the population lives on the coasts.

People: Most Icelanders are descendants of Norwegian settlers and Celts from the British Islands. 94% of the people live in urban areas and 63% live in the Reykjavik metropolitan area.

HISTORY: Settled in the late 9th and early 10th century. In 930AD the ruling chiefs established a republican constitution and an assembly called the Althingi, the oldest parliament in the world. It was independent until 1262 when it joined in a union wit the Norwegian monarchy. Then it was passed to Denmark when Norway and Denmark were united.

MAIN EXPORTS: aluminum and marine products

The **Coat of arms of Iceland** or ***Skjaldarmerki Íslands*** is a cross of silver on a sky-blue shield, with a fire-red cross inside the silver cross (similar to the [Icelandic flag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icelandic_flag)). The shieldbearers are the four protectors of [Iceland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland) ([landvættir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landv%C3%A6ttir)) standing on a [pahoehoe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lava#P.C4.81hoehoe) lava block. The [bull](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bull) (Griðungur) is the protector of southwestern Iceland, the [eagle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle_(heraldry)) or [griffin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Griffin) (Gammur) protects northwestern Iceland, the [dragon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragon) (Dreki) the northeastern part and the Rock-[giant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_(mythology)) (Bergrisi) is the protector of southeastern Iceland. Great respect was given to these creatures of Iceland, so much that there was a law during the time of the [Vikings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vikings) that no [ship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longship) should bear grimacing symbols (most often dragonheads on the bow of the ship) when approaching Iceland. This was so the protectors would not be provoked unnecessarily.

The [landvættir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landv%C3%A6ttir) also decorate the obverse (front) of the [Icelandic króna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icelandic_kr%C3%B3na) coins but animals of the ocean ([fish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fish), [crabs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crabs) and [dolphins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolphins))

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The Viking ship "Icelander" based on a style of boatbuilding over 1,100 years old. This working replica built between 1994 and 1996 using traditional methods and tools to the Viking era, is similar to the Gokstad ship found in Norway in 1880.

Viking ships were primarily of two types 1) the Longship was used for shorter voyages, coastal excursions and warfare.  2) the knörr used to carry cargo and longer trips such as voyages to Iceland.

Fully manned a ship like the "Icelander" would have had a crew of around 70. It is 23m (75 feet) long, 5.25m wide and gross weight of 80 metric tons. The mast is 18m tall with sail area of 130 m2.

In 2000 Captain Eggertsson and crew of 9 sailed the Icelander to America via Greenland, following the path of the Icelandic Viking explorer Leifer Eiríksson. The 4,200 nautical mile journey took 110 days.

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