

# IELTS

## General Reading Test 1

2019





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### IMPORTANT NOTICE

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This practice test is not endorsed by IELTS

These materials are for practice only and may not give an accurate representation of your IELTS level

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## Section 1 Questions 1 – 13

Read the texts below and answer questions 1 – 7

### A

Beautiful cond. 70K orig. mi. \$10,500. More in stock!

**Woorup Primary School**

Needs a cleaner who is flexible, with a good eye for detail and can work on their own initiative.

**Wages:** \$18  
**Hours:** 12 hours/week: split shift  
**To apply:** Contact school office  
 Tel: 023 5674 546  
 Email: Woorup@edu.net

CONVERT. 2dr, blk/blk lthr

\$18,98  
 LOADE  
 1-800  
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 \$16.97  
 888.80  
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 Full pv  
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### B

#### Help Wanted – Office worker

Must be able to multi-task and work well in a team. Experience with MS office is essential. Suitable for school leaver.  
 Hours: 9-5 Mon – Fri, 9-12 Sat  
 Send resume to: hrmagorr@gmail.com

### C

#### *Long term baby-sitter needed*

*Baby-sitter needed to look after 6 month-old baby every Tuesday and Thursday evening, 7pm - 9.30pm for the next 6 months.*

*References preferred but not essential.*

*Call 017 8899345 after 5.30pm if interested.*

### D

#### Deepend Motel – Night manager

As Night Manager you will man the office during the night hours and supervise the night team. You will ensure that excellent service is delivered at all times. You will act as first point of contact for guest queries during this time and ensure that Night Audits are completed.

Hours: 39 hours per week  
 Salary: \$40,000 – 50,000  
 Email: deependmotel@yahoo.com

### E

#### Part-time Cashier Wanted

We are looking for a responsible, friendly person who can handle a lot of customers and remain smiling. Experience is preferred but not necessary.

**Wages:** \$17  
**Hours:** 22 hours/week (Mon – Sat)  
**Location:** Windbourne  
**Contact:** (021) 7834 453/ rptlhr@gmail.com



### Questions 1 - 7

Look at the five job advertisements on the previous page. For which job are the following statements true?

Write the correct letter, **A – E**, in the spaces beside the questions **1 –7** below.

- 1 You need to like people and have a happy personality for this job. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Has the fewest hours per week \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 This job includes running a team and office \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 This job requires an independent worker \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Requires multi-tasking and team work \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 This job is suitable for someone who likes to work with others \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 This is a short-term job \_\_\_\_\_



Read the text below and answer Questions 8 - 13

## Heathcliff Sports Centre

The Heathcliff sports centre is a hub combining both a private membership and many sporting clubs in one convenient location.

Membership of the sports centre does not automatically qualify you with entry to every part of the centre, but all privately owned facilities offer generous discounts to centre members.

Membership is payable monthly or annually and there are student discounts available. To find out more about membership you can go to our website: [www.heathcliffsports.co.au](http://www.heathcliffsports.co.au)

### INDOOR FACILITIES

25 metre heated pool – open only from 9am – 7pm Monday to Thursday and 9am – 9pm Friday to Sunday.

Badminton and squash courts – open from 9am to 9pm seven days a week, however on weekends the courts are reserved for competitions from 9am to 2pm. Members are welcome to sign up and compete but must have registered by 2pm of the Thursday prior and if they are not members of the badminton club must pay a \$7.50 registration fee.

Apex Gym – open from 7am – 9pm Monday to Friday and 9am – 9pm Saturday and Sunday. The gym is privately owned and not part of the sports centre, however members of the sports centre get a 50% discount on gym membership or can pay as they go at a rate of \$6 per visit.

### OUTDOOR FACILITIES

Tennis courts – open from 8am to 9pm every day excepting Saturdays when the courts are reserved for competitions from 10am to 4pm. Use of the courts is free for centre members but you must book the courts at least 24 hours in advance. The Tennis club welcomes new members and offers lessons for aspiring tennis players of all ages. Competitions are open to everyone and the schedule is displayed on the centre noticeboard. Registration for non-tennis club members is \$8.00 per event and registration must be done one week in advance.

Outdoor swimming pool – this pool is not heated and is only open from November to April. At these times the pool is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Thursday and 7am to 11pm Friday to Saturday. Entry is free to sports centre members. During the swimming season the pool will be closed for a maximum of three Saturdays for competitions. The dates will be displayed on the centre notice board. The swimming club welcomes new members and runs a learn to swim program during December. Swimmers are welcome to join club training sessions which are held at 7am and 6pm Monday to Friday. To join the club or enter competitions contact the swimming club secretary on (53) 6849003.



### Questions 8 - 13

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the text on the previous page?  
In the space beside each statement write:

- TRUE            if the statement agrees with the information  
FALSE           if the statement contradicts the information  
NOT GIVEN    if there is no information on this

- 8** Access to all areas of the centre are included in a sports centre membership
- 9** You can belong to more than one private club
- 10** The indoor pool is open late on weekends
- 11** You cannot book the tennis courts from 10 to 4 on Saturdays
- 12** It costs all players \$7.50 to register for badminton competitions.
- 13** Yearly membership fees are cheaper than monthly fees



## Section 2 Questions 14 – 27

Read the text below and answer Questions 14 – 20.

### Flexible Working Arrangements: Information for employees

The Fair Work Act 2009 (FW Act) provides employees in the national workplace relations system with a legal right to request flexible working arrangements (flexi-time). To be eligible you must have worked for your employer for at least 12 months on a full-time or part-time basis. Long term casual employees who have a reasonable expectation of ongoing employment are also eligible. A long-term casual employee would usually have been employed on a regular and systematic basis for at least 12 months. Employees are eligible to request flexi-time in the following circumstances:

- the employee is a parent, or has responsibility for the care of a child who is of school age or younger
- the employee is a carer (within the meaning of the Carer Recognition Act 2010)
- the employee has a disability
- the employee is 55 or older
- the employee is experiencing violence from a member of the employee's family or
- the employee provides care or support to a member of their immediate family or household who requires care or support because they are experiencing violence from the member's family.

Employers must seriously consider a request for flexible working arrangements but may refuse on reasonable business grounds. See below for more information on reasonable business grounds.

#### Why make flexible working arrangements?

Flexi-time assists employees to achieve balance between work and their personal lives. For example, they can help parents manage the demands that come with being a parent of a young child, school age child or a child with a disability, such as picking-up and dropping-off at childcare, caring for sick children, and attending medical and other appointments.

Flexible working arrangements can also benefit businesses by increasing staff retention, decreasing absenteeism and achieving greater productivity through increased employee job satisfaction. More information about flexible working arrangements can be found in the Fair Work Ombudsman's Work and family best practice guide.

Common flexible working arrangements include:

- changed starting and finishing times
- part-time work or job sharing
- working more hours over fewer days
- working additional hours to make up for time taken off
- taking rostered days off in half days or more flexibly
- time off work instead of overtime payments, or
- changing the location of work or the need to travel to work (for example, working from home).

There are other kinds of flexible arrangements. The key is to find the arrangement that best suits you and your employer.

#### Examples: Eligibility for flexible working arrangements

1. Greg wants to start work at 10am instead of 9am so he can take his son to pre-school. He can request flexible working arrangements to help him care for his son.
2. Shirley is 60 years old and wants to finish early on Wednesdays so she can volunteer at her local hospital. She can request flexi-time because she is over 55 years old.

Adapted from <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/best-practice-guides/the-right-to-request-flexible-working-arrangements> © Fair Work Ombudsman [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)



### Questions 14 – 20

Complete the sentences below.

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the text for each answer.

14. To be eligible for \_\_\_\_\_ you need to have worked at the same place for at least 12 months.
15. To qualify as a \_\_\_\_\_ you must comply with the Carer Recognition Act 2010
16. One reason to request flexi-time is maintain a work-life \_\_\_\_\_ .
17. People with \_\_\_\_\_ find flexi-time helps with the demands of looking after them.
18. Flexi-time helps employers because it reduces staff \_\_\_\_\_ .
19. It is important to find a system that works for both the worker and \_\_\_\_\_ .
20. Shirley is able to request flexi-time because she is more than \_\_\_\_\_ .





Read the text below and answer Questions 21 - 27

## Your First Job

Looking for your first job or a new job? This can be an exciting time.

To help ensure you get a proper deal when you start your job, it is important to find out about your rights and entitlements and what responsibilities you may have in the workplace.

### Am I allowed to work?

Some state and territory governments have minimum age restrictions about when you can get a job and when you are allowed to work. To find out whether any restrictions apply to you, contact the relevant government department in your state or territory.

### What are my employment conditions?

When you accept a job, you will agree to work for your employer under certain terms and conditions. Generally, those terms and conditions will be set out verbally, in a letter of offer, or instrument such as an enterprise agreement or an award. While there are a number of documents that can set out the terms and conditions of your employment, most of them are likely to be set out in an award or instrument that applies to you. Visit the Awards page or contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 for information on what award or enterprise agreement applies to you.

Generally, you will be employed either on a casual, permanent part-time or full-time basis.

#### **Full-time permanent employees**

Full-time employees normally work 38 hours per week (plus reasonable additional hours) and have an ongoing contract of employment. As a full-time employee, you are entitled to benefits such as sick leave, holiday pay, long service leave and carer's or other types of leave.

#### **Part-time permanent employees**

Part-time employees are engaged for less than full-time hours but with similar entitlements to full-time employees. If you work part-time you will most likely receive an amount of annual leave and personal/carer's leave calculated according to the number of hours you work each week.

#### **Casual employees**

You may be a casual employee even if you are given a different title. If you are employed as a casual employee, you do not normally have guaranteed hours of work each week and may be called to work at short notice. Casuals are not entitled to sick leave and annual leave. However, as a casual employee, you will normally be paid a casual loading instead of getting the permanent employee entitlements.

### Probationary or qualifying periods

So that you and your employer can decide whether you can satisfactorily do a job, you may be subject to a probationary or qualifying period when you start employment. You are always entitled to be paid your full rate of pay for all the work you do during a probationary or qualifying period.

### Hours of work

Your hours of work will depend on the industry in which you work and the award or agreement you work under. There may be minimum hours that you will be required to work. If you work hours outside of your agreed hours, then you may be entitled to overtime pay.

Adapted from <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/best-practice-guides/a-guide-for-young-workers> © Fair Work Ombudsman [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)



## Questions 21 – 27

Complete the notes below

Use **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text for each answer.

### Your First Job

Some states specify how old you have to be in order to work.

Employment conditions are usually laid out in a document, enterprise agreement or **21** \_\_\_\_\_. You can visit the **22** \_\_\_\_\_ or contact Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 for more information

Permanent full-time employees work **23** \_\_\_\_\_ per week whereas permanent part-time employees work fewer hours but both are entitled to annual leave, sick leave, long service leave, carers leave and **24** \_\_\_\_\_. For part-time workers this is based on the number of hours worked **25** \_\_\_\_\_.

Casual employees do not get the same benefits but instead are given a **26** \_\_\_\_\_ instead.

Often there is a **27** \_\_\_\_\_ where although you are being paid your employment is not yet permanent.

Hours of work are based on your industry and award/agreement you work under. If you work more hours than specified, you may be eligible for overtime pay.

Section 3     *Questions 28 – 40*

**Questions 28 – 35**

Passage 3 on the next page has eight paragraphs, **A – H**.

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below.

Write the correct letter, **i – x** beside each question below.

**List of Headings**

- i. Don't be citybound
- ii. Hazards abound for the unwary driver
- iii. Learn about Iceland
- iv. Everyone speaks English
- v. Communication not an issue
- vi. Aquatic adventures
- vii. Hiking is fun and easy
- viii. The name is a misnomer
- ix. Trekking is fun if you've prepared well
- x. How to get around

- 28. Paragraph A \_\_\_\_\_
- 29. Paragraph B \_\_\_\_\_
- 30. Paragraph C \_\_\_\_\_
- 31. Paragraph D \_\_\_\_\_
- 32. Paragraph E \_\_\_\_\_
- 33. Paragraph F \_\_\_\_\_
- 34. Paragraph G \_\_\_\_\_
- 35. Paragraph H \_\_\_\_\_



## Travelling in Iceland

Adapted from: <https://wikitravel.org/en/Iceland>

### **A**

Iceland is a stunningly beautiful place if you enjoy strange and desolate landscapes. The amount of daylight varies dramatically by season with the midnight sun occurring in June when sun never truly sets and there are 20-22 hours of full daylight. Iceland was first inhabited by Nordic and Celtic people in the 9th century CE - tradition says that the first permanent settler was Ingólfur Arnarson, a Norwegian Viking who made his home where Reykjavik now stands, however it is thought that Irish monks had temporarily inhabited the island some years prior to this.

### **B**

Despite its name, Iceland has surprisingly mild winters for a country at that latitude owing to the warming effect of the Atlantic Gulf Stream. Iceland enjoys a maritime temperate climate and the average temperature in winter is around 0°C, although the wind chill makes it feel a lot colder. The rapidly changing weather has given rise to the local saying: 'If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes!' It's the kind of place where it's not unusual to get rained on and sunburned at the same time. The summers are cooler and more temperate than elsewhere at the same latitude and the temperature rarely exceeds 20°C.

### **C**

It's a shame most visitors don't stray far from the capital as some of the most memorable sights in Iceland are further afield. There are many excursions offered by tour companies, readily available from any of the main centres such as Reykjavík and Akureyri. They will fly you around and take you out to the glaciers and to the big volcanoes for a reasonable price. However, the cheapest option is to drive around with a rented car since none of these sites have entry fees.

### **D**

Some common activities to do in Iceland include hiking which in Iceland is no easy business, strong walking boots which support your ankles are recommended as the terrain is usually craggy lava rock or springy moss with hidden holes! Likewise, you'll need to be prepared for strong bursts of sideways rain and sleet, especially in winter and shoulder seasons, and particularly in the mountains. Glacier hiking especially, is one of Iceland's most popular tourist things to do with the area of Skaftafell in the South East being the centre of activity.

### **E**

Whitewater rafting is popular. In south you can raft on the big Hvita river. North Iceland has some of the best rivers for rafting, Vestari and Austari Jokulsa. The companies offering rafting are located in Varmahlid. One of them is Bakkaflot with really good facilities (hot pools, accommodation restaurant & drinks) to use after your adventure. Finally, whale watching is available all year from Reykjavik and during the summer from Husavik, but sightings are most common in summer in either place.

### **F**

A car offers the most flexibility for travel around Iceland. Renting a car in Iceland is fairly expensive. Numerous agencies rent vehicles, and ferries allow individuals to bring their own car with them. Rental prices include basic car insurance, but additional insurance may be purchased to protect against damage from gravel or other common mishaps. Read the fine-print however, because the things that usually break (windscreen, tyres, bottom of the car) are usually excluded. Travellers can see the majority of Iceland's sights with a two-wheel drive vehicle, but those interested in venturing into the interior or to places such as Landmannalaugar will need four-wheel drive - and long experience at the wheel - as roads are rough and rivers may need to be crossed.

### **G**

Drivers in Iceland should familiarize themselves with road signs and be prepared for Iceland's unique driving conditions. The roads in Iceland are of a medium to low quality, typically made from slightly rough black basalt. Crossing rivers can be very dangerous, particularly if it has been raining, and should be done with great caution. Driving on gravel can be a challenge, and loss of control on cliff-side roads can easily be fatal. There are two signs in particular that foreigners should pay attention to. First, "malbik endar" means that the road changes from a paved road to a gravel road. Slow down before these changes, for one can lose control easily. Also "einbreið brú" means that a one-lane bridge is approaching. Arrive at the bridge slowly and assess the situation. If another car has arrived at the bridge first allow them the right of way.

## H

The official language of Iceland is Icelandic (*islenska*), which remains very similar to, although not *quite* the same as 13th-century Norse. Icelandic is related to the other Scandinavian languages (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Faroese), and while written forms may be mutually intelligible, this is hardly the case with spoken forms. Most Icelanders speak English well and have a basic to moderate degree of Danish (with a local accent), as both languages are compulsory in schools. Even though the majority of Icelanders are competent in English, attempts at speaking Icelandic are always appreciated, and learning some basic greetings and phrases in Icelandic will make your trip much smoother.

## Questions 36 – 40

Complete the summary below

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the test for each answer.

Write your answers in the space provided.

### Why driving can be dangerous in Iceland

Although a car is the most flexible way to see Iceland, drivers need to be careful and should always take out **36**. ..... when they rent a car, being careful to check exactly is covered as some breakages, such as windscreens are not included. The roads are not very good and usually made from **37**. ..... or gravel. Care should be taken crossing **38**. .... , and on cliff-side roads as losing control can be fatal. There are two important road signs, 'malbik endar' means a **39**. ..... road ahead, and 'einbreið brú' indicates that a single lane bridge is coming up. Drive up to the bridge **40**. ..... and if another car has already reached the bridge you must give way.

# Answers with explanations

## Section 1

### Questions 1 – 7

1. E
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. B
6. B
7. C

- 4 This job requires **an independent worker** \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Requires **multi-tasking and team work** \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 This job is **suitable for someone who likes to work with others** \_\_\_\_\_

## A

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Questions 1 - 7

Look at the five job advertisements on the previous page. For which job are the following statements true?

Write the correct letter, **A – E**, in the spaces beside the questions **1 –7** below.

- 1 You need to **like people** and **have a happy personality for** this job. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Has the **fewest hours per week** \_\_\_\_\_ (tues + thurs = 5 hours)
- 3 This job includes **running a team and office** \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 This job requires **an independent worker** \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Requires **multi-tasking and team work** \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 This job is **suitable for someone who likes to work with others** \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 This is a **short-term job** \_\_\_\_\_ (6 months)



- 8. FALSE
- 9. NOT GIVEN
- 10. TRUE
- 11. TRUE
- 12. FALSE
- 13. NOT GIVEN

## Heathcliff Sports Centre

The Heathcliff sports centre is a hub combining both a private membership and many sporting clubs in one convenient location.

**Membership of the sports centre does not automatically qualify you with entry to every part of the centre<sup>8</sup>, but all privately owned facilities offer generous discounts to centre members.**

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## Questions 14 - 20

14. flexible working arrangements / flexi-time
15. carer
16. balance
17. children
18. absenteeism
19. employer
20. 55 years old

### Flexible Working Arrangements: Information for employees

The Fair Work Act 2009 (FW Act) provides employees in the national workplace relations system with a legal right to request flexible working arrangements (flexi-time). **To be eligible you must have worked for your employer for at least 12 months on a full-time or part-time basis<sup>14</sup>**. Long term casual employees who have a reasonable expectation of ongoing employment are also eligible. A long-term casual employee would usually have been employed on a regular and systematic basis for at least 12 months. Employees are eligible to request flexi-time in the following circumstances:

- the employee is a parent, or has responsibility for the care of a child who is of school age or younger
- **the employee is a carer (within the meaning of the Carer Recognition Act 2010)<sup>15</sup>**
- the employee has a disability
- the employee is 55 or older
- the employee is experiencing violence from a member of the employee's family or
- the employee provides care or support to a member of their immediate family or household who requires care or support because they are experiencing violence from the member's family.

Employers must seriously consider a request for flexible working arrangements but may refuse on reasonable business grounds. See below for more information on reasonable business grounds.

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Flexible working arrangements can also **benefit businesses by increasing staff retention, decreasing absenteeism<sup>18</sup>** and achieving greater productivity through increased employee job satisfaction. More information about flexible working arrangements can be found in the Fair Work Ombudsman's Work and family best practice guide.

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- time off work instead of overtime payments, or
- changing the location of work or the need to travel to work (for example, working from home).

There are other kinds of flexible arrangements. **The key is to find the arrangement that best suits you and your employer.**<sup>19</sup>

### Examples: Eligibility for flexible working arrangements

3. Greg wants to start work at 10am instead of 9am so he can take his son to pre-school. He can request flexible working arrangements to help him care for his son.
4. Shirley is 60 years old and wants to finish early on Wednesdays so she can volunteer at her local hospital. **She can request flexi-time because she is over 55 years old.**<sup>20</sup>

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### Questions 21 – 27

21. award
22. Awards page
23. 38 hours
24. holiday pay
25. each week
- 26 casual loading
27. probationary period / qualifying period

## Your First Job

Looking for your first job or a new job? This can be an exciting time.

To help ensure you get a proper deal when you start your job, it is important to find out about your rights and entitlements and what responsibilities you may have in the workplace.

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Generally, you will be employed either on a casual, permanent part-time or full-time basis.

### Full-time permanent employees



Full-time employees normally work <sup>23</sup> 38 hours per week (plus reasonable additional hours) and have an ongoing contract of employment. As a full-time employee, you are entitled to benefits such as sick leave, holiday pay<sup>24</sup>, long service leave and carer's or other types of leave.

### **Part-time permanent employees**

Part-time employees are engaged for less than full-time hours but with similar entitlements to full-time employees. If you work part-time you will most likely receive an amount of annual leave and personal/carer's leave calculated according to the number of hours you work each week.<sup>25</sup>

### **Casual employees**

You may be a casual employee even if you are given a different title. If you are employed as a casual employee, you do not normally have guaranteed hours of work each week and may be called to work at short notice. Casuals are not entitled to sick leave and annual leave. However, as a casual employee, you will normally be paid a casual loading<sup>26</sup> instead of getting the permanent employee entitlements.

#### **Probationary or qualifying periods**

So that you and your employer can decide whether you can satisfactorily do a job, you may be subject to a probationary or qualifying period<sup>27</sup> when you start employment. You are always entitled to be paid your full rate of pay for all the work you do during a probationary or qualifying period.

#### **Hours of work**

Your hours of work will depend on the industry in which you work and the award or agreement you work under. There may be minimum hours that you will be required to work. If you work hours outside of your agreed hours, then you may be entitled to overtime pay.

Adapted from <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/best-practice-guides/a-guide-for-young-workers> © Fair Work Ombudsman [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

## Questions 28 – 40

- 28. iii
- 29. viii
- 30. i
- 31. ix
- 32. vi
- 33. x
- 34. ii
- 35. v
- 36. flexible
- 37. rough black basalt
- 38. rivers
- 39. gravel
- 40. slowly

## Travelling in Iceland

Adapted from: <https://wikitravel.org/en/Iceland>

### **A**

Iceland is a stunningly beautiful place if you enjoy strange and desolate landscapes. The amount of daylight varies dramatically by season with the midnight sun occurring in June when sun never truly sets and there are 20-22 hours of full daylight . Iceland was first inhabited by Nordic and Celtic people in the 9th century CE - tradition says that the first permanent settler was Ingólfur Arnarson, a Norwegian Viking who made his home where Reykjavik now stands, however it is thought that Irish monks had temporarily inhabited the island some years prior to this.

### **B**

Despite its name, Iceland has surprisingly mild winters for a country at that latitude owing to the warming effect of the Atlantic Gulf Stream. Iceland enjoys a maritime temperate climate and the average temperature in winter is around 0°C, although the wind chill makes it feel a lot colder. The rapidly changing weather has given rise to the local saying: 'If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes!' It's the kind of place where it's not unusual to get rained on and sunburned at the same time. The summers are cooler and more temperate than elsewhere at the same latitude and the temperature rarely exceeds 20°C.

### **C**

It's a shame most visitors don't stray far from the capital as some of the most memorable sights in Iceland are further afield. There are many excursions offered by tour companies, readily available from any of the main centres such as Reykjavík and Akureyri. They will fly you around and take you out to the glaciers and to the big volcanoes for a reasonable price. However, the cheapest option is to drive around with a rented car since none of these sites have entry fees.

### **D**

Some common activities to do in Iceland include hiking which in Iceland is no easy business, strong walking boots which support your ankles are recommended as the terrain is usually craggy lava rock or springy moss with hidden holes! Likewise, you'll need to be prepared for strong bursts of sideways rain and sleet, especially in winter and shoulder seasons, and particularly in the mountains. Glacier hiking especially, is one of Iceland's most popular tourist things to do with the area of Skaftafell in the South East being the centre of activity.

### **E**

Whitewater rafting is popular. In south you can raft on the big Hvita river. North Iceland has some of the best rivers for rafting, Vestari and Austari Jokulsa. The companies offering rafting are located in Varmahlid. One of them is Bakkaflot with really good facilities (hot pools, accommodation restaurant & drinks) to use after your adventure. Finally, whale watching is available all year from Reykjavik and during the summer from Husavik, but sightings are most common in summer in either place.

## F

A car offers the most flexibility for travel around Iceland. Renting a car in Iceland is fairly expensive. Numerous agencies rent vehicles, and ferries allow individuals to bring their own car with them. Rental prices include basic car insurance, but additional insurance may be purchased<sup>36</sup> to protect against damage from gravel or other common mishaps. Read the fine-print however, because the things that usually break (windscreen, tyres, bottom of the car) are usually excluded. Travellers can see the majority of Iceland's sights with a two-wheel drive vehicle, but those interested in venturing into the interior or to places such as Landmannalaugar will need four-wheel drive - and long experience at the wheel - as roads are rough and rivers may need to be crossed.

## G

Drivers in Iceland should familiarize themselves with road signs and be prepared for Iceland's unique driving conditions. The roads in Iceland are of a medium to low quality, typically made from slightly rough black basalt<sup>37</sup>. Crossing <sup>38</sup>rivers can be very dangerous, particularly if it has been raining, and should be done with great caution. Driving on gravel can be a challenge, and loss of control on cliff-side roads can easily be fatal. There are two signs in particular that foreigners should pay attention to. First, "malbik endar" means that the road changes from a paved road to a gravel road<sup>39</sup>. Slow down before these changes, for one can lose control easily. Also "einbreið brú" means that a one-lane bridge is approaching. Arrive at the bridge slowly<sup>40</sup> and assess the situation. If another car has arrived at the bridge first allow them the right of way.

## H

The official language of Iceland is Icelandic (*islenska*), which remains very similar to, although not *quite* the same as 13th-century Norse. Icelandic is related to the other Scandinavian languages (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Faroese), and while written forms may be mutually intelligible, this is hardly the case with spoken forms. Most Icelanders speak English well and have a basic to moderate degree of Danish (with a local accent), as both languages are compulsory in schools. Even though the majority of Icelanders are competent in English, attempts at speaking Icelandic are always appreciated, and learning some basic greetings and phrases in Icelandic will make your trip much smoother.

