



HÁSKÓLINN Í REYKJAVÍK  
REYKJAVIK UNIVERSITY




# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDE 2018



# WELCOME FROM THE INTERNATIONAL TEAM AT RU

Congratulations on your acceptance to Reykjavik University, we look forward to welcoming you to our campus and working with you during your studies. An exciting road lies ahead of you, full of new experiences and opportunities. In this packet, you will find both necessary steps and helpful hints for preparing for your studies and surviving and thriving here in Iceland. The International Exchange Office provides specialist support to international students. Contact us if you have questions about the information provided in this guide, or if you have a query related to coming to live and study in Iceland.

**Open hours:** Student drop in hours: **Monday –Friday 13:00-15:30** / Location: 1<sup>st</sup> floor in the main building, come to the reception desk and ask for us.

		
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# SECTION 1: BEFORE YOU ARRIVE – IMPORTANT STEPS

## Check your passport!

Make sure your Passport is valid for the duration of your studies in Iceland, and for six months afterwards

### 1.1 STUDENT VISA

*If you are a non EU/EEA national*

A **student visa** is mandatory for all Non EU/EEA nationals who intend to stay in Iceland for longer than 3 months and must be applied for before entering Iceland. For information on applying for your student visa visit [www.utl.is](http://www.utl.is). For information and advice **talk to us!** We have a special agreement with the Immigration Office to facilitate the process.

*If you are an EU/EEA national*

**For stays of less than six months:** Citizens of EEA countries and Switzerland intending to stay for less than six months do not need a residence permit. You can choose to register with the national registry if you would like to receive a social security number (Kennitala). You may want to do this if, you would like to: open an Icelandic bank account, or you plan to work in Iceland. Further information regarding this will be given on the orientation day.

**For stays of 6+ months:** Students planning to stay longer than six months will need to apply for kennitala and for an extension of residence during their stay in the country. Information regarding this will be given on the orientation day.

### 1.2 HEALTH INSURANCE

Iceland maintains a universal healthcare system, under which all legal residents are covered by the Icelandic social insurance systems and pay less for access to health services. To be insured under the state health insurance a person must have been registered with domicile in the National Registry for six months.



**EEA/EU citizens:**

Students from EU/EEA countries should bring the **European Health Insurance card** with them. This must be presented on any visits to health care facilities and will allow you to receive access to health care at the same cost as Icelanders.

*Students from other countries (Non EU/EEA)*

Student originating from countries outside of the EEA/EU must pay for health services until they are registered in the Icelandic Health care insurance automatically after 6 months of residence. Health Insurance policies can be purchased from Icelandic insurance companies starting from around 12,000 ISK for the six-month period. Further information can be found in the [visa guidance handbook here](#) [www.vordur.is](http://www.vordur.is) , [www.tm.is](http://www.tm.is) , [www.vis.is](http://www.vis.is) , [www.sjova.is](http://www.sjova.is)

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### 1.3 ACCOMMODATION

Reykjavik University does not offer any student accommodation. To assist students in finding accommodation, we run a Facebook housing group. Accommodation can be very difficult to find during the high season, which lasts from May – September. Student often stay in hostels in shared dorms for this period. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you are having difficulties finding housing.

## **Word of warning!! IMPORTANT**

- **Never use Craigslist** to find accommodation in Iceland, this is only scams
- Never send money to a bank account outside of Iceland (if you are unsure if it is a bank account in Iceland email the international office for advice.
- Always make transfers if your landlord does ask for cash make sure you get a receipt!
- We can check a landlord out for you, send the full name of the landlord to the international office.
- It is also very important to sign a contract first before paying the deposit.

### *Other sources for finding accommodation:*

Facebook group:

- Leiga - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/271833860791/?fref=ts>
- Leiga 101 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/810385915715839/>
- Mbl.is - <http://www.mbl.is/leiga/>

*How much should I expect to pay for accommodation?* Please note these prices are for guidance only and prices may vary on the open market. (prices, November, 2018) prices during the summer months will be considerably higher. Prices are per month.

- Room with shared bathroom and kitchen– 65,000 – 95,000 ISK
- Room with private bathroom and kitchen facilities – 85,000 – 110,000 ISK
- Studio apartment – 120,000 - 150,000 ISK

Electricity and heating is often included in the rental price, and sometimes internet. Please be sure to check with your landlord what is included in the price.

*Where should I rent?* Reykjavik is divided into area codes, 101 is the downtown area. Popular areas for students are university; 101, 107, 105 (close to the university) and 104. Areas further out of the city centre tend to be cheaper.

*Deposits:* Most landlords ask for a deposit that will be refunded when moving out, if no damage has been done to the property. Always ask for a receipt for any payments made and never agree to transfer a deposit to a landlord's bank account outside of Iceland.

*Tenancy agreements:* It is important to make a rent agreements in writing with the landlord. Make sure you read the agreement well and acquaint yourself with the terms of the agreement, such as rules on insurance, notice and more.

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## **1.4 PLANNING YOUR FINANCES**

The cost of living of course varies between students, depending on your lifestyle. Students should aim to budget for about 1,400 EUR a month, (this is the minimum amount of support required by the immigration department for visa applications, November,2018)

## **1.5 PACKING**

**Once you have your paperwork in order, it is time to pack! The packing list is different for everyone, but some things to remember to bring include:**

- Your acceptance letter and other important documents.
- A rain jacket
- Warm clothing
- Hiking boots
- Swimsuit
- Hat and gloves
- Waterproof and wind proof clothing
- Electronic adaptors. Iceland uses a two circular prong, 220V outlet

## SECTION 2: YOUR FIRST DAYS IN ICELAND

Living and studying away from home can be a challenging experience, particularly in the beginning of the stay. There are several formalities you need to take care of during your first days.

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### 2.1 ARRIVAL

The First Day You've landed at Keflavik International Airport, you have all your bags, and you are ready to get settled in! But what next?

The first step is to get to Reykjavik. There are two buses that will get you into Reykjavik: Flybus and Iceland Excursions Grey Line. Either one works fine, the only difference is where in the city they go. Flybus stops at the main bus terminal, BSI. Iceland Excursions stops at Laekjartorg, in the centre of downtown. Tickets can be purchased from desks just outside of customs when you arrive. Flybus is around 2000ISK, Iceland Excursions is about 2,400ISK.



Once you arrive in Reykjavik, if you are staying in a hotel or hostel, the bus you travelled with can take you there (make sure you tell them ahead of time). If you are going to an apartment, it is recommended you take a taxi, there are always taxi's at the bus stations, or you can use the local bus service.



Taxi numbers: Hreyfill +354 588 5522 / BSR +354 561 0000 / Borgarbilastöðin +354 552 2440

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### 2.2 YOUR FIRST DAYS IN ICELAND – NON EU STUDENTS

*Important! Final steps for your residence permit: International Students (Non EU/EEA)*

In order to receive your student visa there are some important final steps you must undertake on arrival in Iceland.

- **Complete the housing certificate:**
  - **Undergo medical examination** (this is not a requirement for all non EU students, see you visa letter from the immigration department for further details). The International Office can assist you with booking this.
  - **Go to the Directorate of Immigration with documents and have your photo taken.**
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### 2.3 STARTING AT THE UNIVERSITY

*Orientation Day*

International students begin their studies at RU with an orientation programme which starts three days before the commencement of classes. During the orientation days' international students will have the opportunity to; meet other students and our staff, receive information regarding the country, the study system, the society and the nature. You will also receive your university access card, the access card gives students access to the school premises 24 hours a day. It is very important to attend the orientation days.

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### 2.4 MENTOR GROUPS

To ensure a smooth integration to the Icelandic way of student life, Reykjavik University runs a Mentor system. You will be placed in a mentor group (usually around 20 students with two mentors) before you arrive. You will be with your group during orientation as well as doing activities with the mentors.

## 2.5 CULTURE SHOCK

One of the most common challenges international students face is dealing with “culture shock.” Culture shock is a feeling of disorientation many people feel when experiencing an entirely new way of life. Many international students find it difficult to adjust. At the International Offices we are here to help come by and see us anytime, we can offer you support, a friendly ear or arrange for you to speak with one of our experienced counsellors. You should not suffer alone and you are welcome at our office.

Here are some tips that might help ease your transition:

- Simply understanding that this is a normal experience may in itself be helpful.
- Maintain your confidence in yourself; follow your ambitions and continue your plans for the future
- Most importantly, be prepared to open yourself to new experiences; be prepared to learn, not only in the classroom, but in your interactions with new people every day.
- Keeping in touch with home is an important part of living in a different country. The internet makes it very easy to maintain regular contact also by sharing news, information and photos of your life in Iceland.
- Eat a healthy and balanced diet.
- Take regular exercise. As well as being good for your health it can be a way of meeting people.
- Make friends with international students, whether from your own culture or from others, as they will understand what you’re feeling and, if possible, make friends with the local students so you can learn more about each other’s culture.
- Be prepared to take the first step and find activities which will give you a common interest with other students.
- Find someone to talk to who will listen uncritically and with understanding, rather than isolating yourself. And finally it is important to stress that culture shock is entirely normal, usually unavoidable and not a sign that you have made a mistake or that you won’t manage. In fact, there are very positive aspects of culture shock. The experience can be a significant learning experience, making you more aware of aspects of your own culture as well as the new culture you have entered.

## SECTION 3: PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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### 3.1 CELL PHONES

There are three main phone companies. The quality of the service is good for each carrier and they all have a store in the Kringlan mall. It is important to note that almost all services in Iceland require an ID number, or “Kennitala.” However prepaid services do not.



The newest phone company in Iceland. They offer a plan that is 700ISK a month and free calls and texts to other NOVA numbers, you only pay extra for the data plan you want.

Many young people in Reykjavik are using Nova. [www.nova.is](http://www.nova.is)



Has a variety of plans, including a combination of minutes and data for 1000ISK. [www.siminn.is](http://www.siminn.is)



Vodafone: Has a variety of plans, including simple pre-paid cards, and subscriptions at varying price points. [www.vodafone.is](http://www.vodafone.is)

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## 3.2 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The bus service is called Strætó ([www.bus.is](http://www.bus.is)) There is an app that you can download that will allow you to buy tickets on your phone and check bus schedules and viewing live maps. Additionally, you can either bring exact change (430ISK each way) or buy a bus card.



Strætó offers an annual student bus card, for around 45,000 ISK, (November, 2018). You will need a kennitala to purchase the student bus card online, for those without a kennitala it can be purchased at the main terminal in Mjodd or at the Strætó stand during orientation. Ask for further information on the orientation day. The bus number 5 serves the university.

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## 3.3 BANKS

There are three major banks here, and it is recommended that you get an Icelandic bank account and a debit card if you are staying longer than six months. With a debit card, you can withdraw money from kiosks or ATMs, or charge directly to your account from the store. To open an account at any of the banks you will need your ID number (kennitala), passport, and two passport photos. Visa, MasterCard, and to some extent American Express are widely used and accepted.

## 3.4 SHOPPING MALLS



Kringlan - is the closest shopping mall to the downtown area. There is a bus that goes right by, and it is only a 20 minute walk from the school. This mall has almost everything that you need, including: all the banks, phone companies, Hagkaup, Bonus and Vinbuðin (alcohol store).



Smáralind - is located just outside the Reykjavik area in Kópavogur.

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## 3.5 FOOD



The cheapest supermarket is Bonus.

Opening hours: Monday – Thursday 11:00-18:30, Friday 10:00 -19:30, weekends closes at 18:00



Kronan is the next cheapest and is open every day until 21:00.



Hagkaup: Is the most expensive. It has the widest selection, and some are open 24 hours.

But expect to pay up to twice what you would pay at Bonus but has 24 hours opening.

Other grocery stores: Kostur and 10/11. Bonus, Kronan and Hagkaup have locations around the city and Bonus and Hagkaup have stores in the Kringlan mall.

**Eating out :** There are endless restaurants in Reykjavik that serve up delicious meals, from all different types of cuisine.

**Street food:** Don't miss: Bæjarins Beztu Pylsur: Unanimously considered the best hot dogs in Iceland. By far the cheapest meal you will find, you'll pay 250ISK for one of the best hot dogs of your life. Located right across from Harpa.

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## 3.6 NATIONAL HOLIDAYS AND OPENING HOURS

Shopping hours in Reykjavik are typically: Monday-Friday: 9:00/10:00-18:00/19:00, Saturday: 10:00-18:00 Sunday: 12:00-18:00 or closed. Some grocery stores are open until 23:00 or 24 hours

## Public Holidays

- January 1st, New Year's Day
- Maundy/ Holy Thursday
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday
- Easter Monday
- First day of summer, usually the third Thursday in April
- May 1st, Labour Day
- Ascension Day
- White Sunday (Whitsuntide)
- White Monday
- June 17th, National/ Independence Day
- First Monday in August, Bank Holiday
- December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve (from noon)
- December 25th, Christmas Day
- December 26th, Boxing Day
- December 31st, New Year's Eve (from noon)

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## 3.7 LEISURE TIME

### *Gym Membership*

Exercising is a huge part of life here in Iceland, and a good way to fight off the winter blues. [World Class](#) is by far the largest gym here, and has multiple branches around the city. There is even one here at the university! Check out their website for information on special student deals. If World-class isn't your style, there are other gyms around town you can sign up with. [Mjölínir](#) and [CrossFit Katla](#) are two of the bigger ones.

### *Going to the Pools*

Going to the geothermal pools is a very social activity in Iceland. You will see families playing with their children, students after school and business people after a long day all at the pools. The cost to go swimming is 950 ISK, season cards or bulk buying tickets makes it more affordable (4,500 for 10 tickets). You can check out the [Visit Reykjavik website](#) to find your local pool. While it is a great experience and a daily activity for many students here, Icelanders have a strict etiquette that they expect to be followed when visiting the pools.



- Take off your shoes before you enter the locker-room.
- Take your towel with you to the showers. There is a towel rack to store your towel
- Everyone needs to take a shower without their swimsuit on before going to the pools. This rule is enforced. This makes some people uncomfortable, but remember this is their culture and you are a guest.

### *Night out on the Town!*

There are an endless number of bars and clubs in Reykjavik for you to explore and there is a lively nightlife scene. A Note on Safety: Reykjavik is known as one of the safest cities in the world, and that reputation holds true. However, it is a capital city, and no city is without crime. There are scuffles on the weekend and some people discover their wallets or purses missing. You should use your common sense and be aware when out.

### *Hiking and travelling in Iceland*

We hope that all our students take the opportunity to explore this amazing country. However, we must stress that it is extremely important to stay safe during your travels, be well prepared and make sure you inform people of your plans. ICE-SAR offers all travellers in Iceland to register information about your trip needed to start search or rescue, in case something happens while you're on your trip on their website. Good preparation is the key for a successful travel. Keep the below points in mind:

- During wintertime, most of the highland as well as many roads are closed. Get information about the area.
- Always leave your travel plan with someone who can react if needed
- Check the weather forecast. In Iceland the weather can change fast



- Remember to bring the right equipment for the kind of travel you are planning
- Map, compass and GPS should always be used when travel outside urban areas

Safe Travel (information and travel plan registration) <http://www.safetravel.is/>

Guide to hiking trails in Iceland: <https://guidetoiceland.is/travel-info/the-most-popular-hiking-trails-in-iceland>

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### 3.8 A WORD ON THE WEATHER IN ICELAND

The weather in Iceland is everyone's favourite topic of conversation. Iceland enjoys a cool temperate maritime climate thanks to the Gulf Stream, but the weather is known to change quickly and often. Icelanders have a saying: "there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing." No matter the season, you should always be prepared that the weather can change quickly and you should always have wind and water resistant outerwear as well as extra thermal layers on hand before heading out on excursions.

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## SECTION 4: HEALTH CARE

**In an emergency you should call 112**

### 4.1 HEALTH CARE CLINICS



The Primary Health Care of the Capital Area operate [fifteen health clinics](#) and four additional specialized centres in Reykjavik and vicinity. The Health Centres are open from Monday to Friday, 08:00 - 16:00. The health clinics are directed towards neighbourhood services and are expected to serve inhabitants of particular parts of the capital city area. Here is a [link to a map](#) showing locations and service areas. You will need to call to book a Doctor's appointment.

Beyond these hours most health care clinics offer an afterhours service that costs considerably more. However, this means you can usually see a doctor that day. Call your local health care clinic for more information.

### 4.2 WHAT DO I NEED TO TAKE WITH ME? HOW MUCH WILL I PAY?

#### **Citizens of EU/EEA countries**

Bring your European insurance card, personal identification (i.e. passport) EEA nationals presenting the European insurance card will be charged the same fee as persons insured in Iceland. If these documents are not presented they will be charged the full costs of the treatment according to tariffs.

#### **Citizens of Non EU /EEA**

Bring your insurance papers and a valid passport and will need to pay in full and then you be reimbursed.

### 4.3 AFTER HOURS CARE:

[Læknavaktin](#) (out of hours clinic) Smáratorg, Kópavogur, tel. 1770 This service is intended for those seeking urgent, general medical service during "off-hours". The shift is open on weekdays from 17:00 - 23:30, and on weekends from 08:00 – 23:30. You do not need to book an appointment, and it is also possible to seek medical advice by phone, tel. 1770.

**Landspítali Háskólasjúkrahús / University Hospital Fossvogur.** Tel. +354 543 1000 / Emergency Room, tel. +354 543 2000 The emergency service in Fossvogur is open 24 hours a day and is intended for general, urgent medical care in regard to accidents or severe health problems. You do not make an appointment.

In case of emergency help for psychiatric matters: Landspítali – University Hospital in Hringbraut, tel. +354 543 4050

## 4.4 PHARMACIES AND PRESCRIPTIONS



Pharmacies are called Apótek and they are generally open during weekdays 10 AM - 6 PM, Saturdays 10 AM - 4 PM and closed on Sundays or public holidays. In Reykjavik, Lyfja on Lágmúli 5 (tel. 533-2300) near the Reykjavik Hilton Nordica is open until midnight.

Pain relievers, cold / flu / allergy medicines, eye drops, etc. are all sold over the counter. If you require a prescription medication, you will need to obtain a prescription from an Icelandic physician. Since pharmacies have limited locations and opening

hours in the rural areas of Iceland, we recommend bringing any important medications with you from home.

## 4.5 DENTISTS

Check for dentist in the telephone directory online [www.ja.is](http://www.ja.is) the word in Icelandic is TANNLÆKNASTOFUR. The National Health Insurance Plan does not cover dentists' charges, so you will have to pay whatever amount the dentist charges. If you need a dentist outside regular hours contact: Dentist Emergency (Neyðarvakt tannlækna) Tel: 575 050

## GYNAECOLOGISTS AND SEXUAL HEALTH

If you would like to book a time with a Gynaecologist the following clinics usually have minimum waiting times: Lækning: 590 9200, Domus Medica: 563 1000

The hospital runs a sexual disease clinic (Göngudeild húð- og kynsjúkdóma) Open from 08:00-16:00 Weekdays. Call +354 543 6050 to book a time.

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## Section 5: Useful links

[www.ja.is](http://www.ja.is) – Search home & business addresses & numbers. Useful maps and route finder.

[www.bus.is](http://www.bus.is) – bus routes and timetables

[www.utl.is](http://www.utl.is) immigration department

<http://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/news/> - Icelandic news in English

<https://www.island.is/en> - public services in Iceland

<http://laeknavaktin.is/> out of hours medical assistance

<http://icelandreview.com/> news and current events in Ice