

DESTINATIONS

RESTARTING TRAVEL | ICELAND



Lake Myvatn

fast fact

Eco-retreat Torfhus opened last year with a strong sustainable vibe. Built using local stone and wood, it uses geothermic energy for heat and light, and serves ingredients sourced from within 10 miles.

PICTURES: Shutterstock/Creative Travel Projects

All eyes are on Iceland as the land of fire and ice enjoys its moment in the sun, writes **Katie McGonagle**

GETTING THERE

✿ National carrier **Icelandair** flies from five UK and Ireland gateways – Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester, Glasgow and Dublin – to Keflavik (Reykjavik). There are easy onward domestic connections, including to Isafjörður and Akureyri.

✿ **Jet2.com** has brought forward plans for twice-weekly scheduled services to Reykjavik, which will now start on September 2 from Manchester and September 30 from Birmingham.

✿ New low-cost Icelandic airline **Play** is due to start operating a four-times-a-week Stansted service to Keflavik on June 24.

✿ Other carriers include **Wizz Air** (from Luton), **easyJet** (from Gatwick, Luton, Manchester and Edinburgh in June, and from Bristol in October) and **BA**.

Iceland is unlikely to have featured in your top-selling summer spots before. Travellers flock to its volcanic landscapes in search of soft adventure, the northern lights and perhaps a dip in the Blue Lagoon, but bucket-and-spade holidays? No chance.

Now, thrust into the spotlight thanks to its inclusion as one of just three available destinations on the UK's travel green list, it might be this Nordic country's moment to shine with holidaymakers who would not have considered it before.

They'll have to wait until October for the northern lights to make an appearance. But in the meantime, visitors will find the summer's midnight sun – peaking in late June, when the sun sets so briefly that it never gets truly dark – offers longer daylight hours to explore.

Compact capital Reykjavik is pleasant enough to explore, but most visitors give it little more than a passing glance on their way out of the city and on to

the ever-popular Golden Circle. This driving route takes in top draws including Gullfoss Waterfall, Thingvellir National Park and the Geysir Geothermal Area.

But if clients' main objective is getting away from the crowds, swap the well-travelled Golden Circle for a more remote route. The Diamond Circle,

officially opened last year, is a 160-mile circuit linking some of northern Iceland's key sights including Lake Myvatn, Dettifoss Waterfall, the horseshoe-shaped Asbyrgi Canyon and the historic fishing town of Húsavik, now a centre for whale watching.

Alternatively, there's the Arctic Coast Way, which also explores the north, or the Westfjords Way, a circular driving route linked up for year-round travel thanks to the opening of the Dýrafjörður Tunnel. The latter takes in the rugged mountains, glacier-carved fjords and sweeping lowlands of the west, with sea kayaking, deserted beaches, wildlife spotting and tiny coastal villages to explore along the way. **TW**

THE FACTS

British travellers who have been fully vaccinated or can show they have recovered from Covid-19 have the easiest entry process to Iceland. They must fill out a pre-registration form at covid.is/english, take a PCR test on arrival at the airport and quarantine in their hotel until the result is received, usually within six to 24 hours. After that, they're free to enjoy their holiday. The same applies to children born in 2005 or later.

Other travellers have a longer procedure. They'll need to take a PCR test up to 72 hours before flying and bring the results with them, have a further test on arrival, and then quarantine in their hotel for five days until they can take a final test.

