

Words

- **Arctic Circle** = a line around the northern part of the world that has a certain distance from the North Pole
- **area** = region, section
- **bay** = when the coast makes a curve and surrounds a part of the ocean
- **coastline** = the land on the coast
- **emerge** = come up to the surface
- **eruption** = outbreak
- **fjord** = long narrow valley that is filled with water from the sea ; it has steep mountain sides and can be many kilometers long
- **flow** = here: move
- **geyser** = when hot water from and steam suddenly shoot out from the earth
- **glacier** = a large mass of ice which moves slowly down a mountain valley
- **Gulf Stream** = warm ocean water that flows across the Atlantic Ocean from the Gulf of Mexico
- **ice sheet** = an area of thick ice
- **mainland** = the main area of land of a country, without the islands
- **mountain range** = groups of mountains in one line
- **pool** = area of water
- **ridge** = the area at the top of a mountain
- **square kilometer** = a square, the sides of which are all 1 kilometer long
- **therefore** = that is why

Iceland is an island that lies in the middle of the northern Atlantic Ocean. It has a size of about 102,000 **square kilometers** and lies just south of the **Arctic Circle**.

Iceland is about 1000 km away from the European **mainland** and about 300 km from the coast of Greenland. Iceland has a long **coastline** with many **fjords** and **bays**.

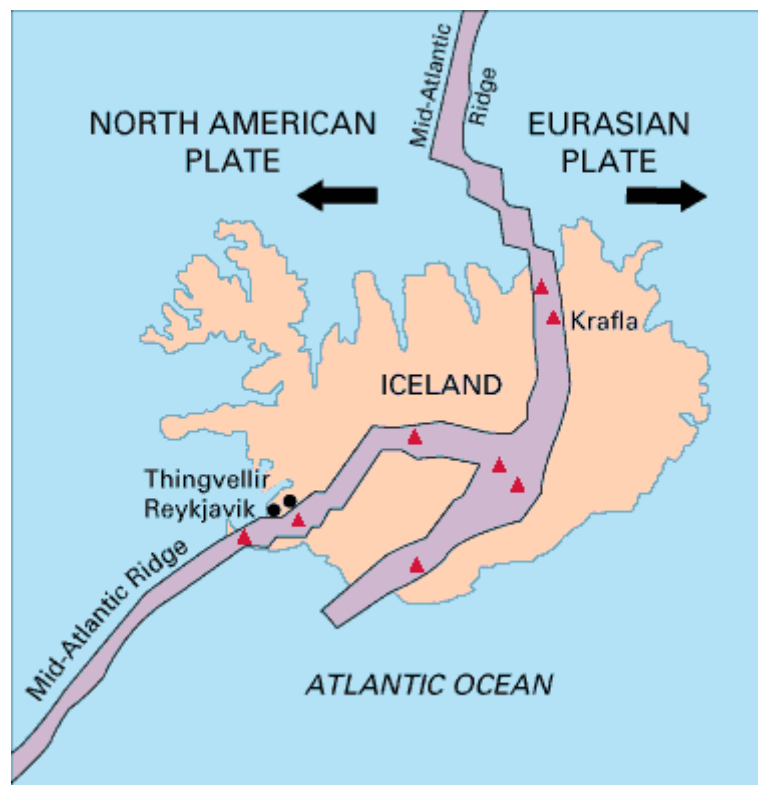


PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Iceland is a volcanic island. It **emerged** from an underwater **mountain range**, the Middle Atlantic Ridge, about 20 million years ago. Volcanoes are still active on Iceland today. The island is full of lava fields, **geysers** and hot **pools**. A small island, Surtsey, was formed by volcanic **eruptions** 40 years ago.

Iceland is also a land of **glaciers**. Vatnajökull, covering an **area** of 8,000 square kilometres, is the largest glacier on Iceland and the biggest **ice sheet** in Europe.

The climate of Iceland is warmer and milder than anywhere else near the Arctic Circle. The **Gulf Stream** that comes from North America **flows** around the southern coast of Iceland. Winters are **therefore** mild and summers can be cool and rainy.



Iceland lies on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge

Words

- **ally** = a country that helps other countries
- **birch** = tree with a smooth surface and thin branches; usually found in colder areas
- **bog** = wet muddy area of land with bushes or grass
- **cattle** = cows on a farm
- **century** = a hundred years
- **collapse** = break down
- **common** = widespread, usual
- **crop** = plant, like wheat or rice that farmers grow as food
- **descend** = to be related to a person who lived a long time ago
- **engage** = do something
- **establish** = set up
- **experience** = go through
- **hiking** = to take long walks in the countryside
- **income** = money
- **independent** = free
- **inhabitant** = a person who lives in a place
- **investor** = a person who gives a bank or a company money in order to get more back
- **major** = very big
- **profit** = to get money from
- **raise** = to look after animals and feed them so that they can be sold as food
- **replace** = to take the place of
- **rule** = govern
- **serve** = operate as, act as
- **settler** = someone who goes to live in a country where not many people have lived before
- **widespread** = found all over the place

PLANTS AND VEGETATION

Only about 25% of Iceland is covered with plants. Grassy fields and **bogs** are **widespread**. Originally **birch** trees were **common** on the island, but they have been cut down and towns and villages have **replaced** them.

PEOPLE

Most of Iceland's 300 000 **inhabitants descend** from Viking **settlers** who came to the island from Norway in the 9th **century**. Almost all of them live in towns and villages near the coast in the south and south-western part of the country. Reykjavik is the capital and largest city of Iceland.

ECONOMY

Because of the cool summers farmers cannot grow **crops** on Iceland. They make a living by **raising** sheep and **cattle**. Fishing is the most important economic sector in Iceland. 70% of the country's **income** comes from fishing.

Between 2008 and 2010 Iceland was **experienced** a **major** economic crisis. The country's large banks **collapsed**. Many **investors** from Great Britain and the Netherlands lost money because they invested in these banks.

Iceland's economy **profits** from thousands of tourists who come to the island every year to see its natural beauties. They can **engage** in many outdoor activities, including horse riding, cycling and **hiking**.

HISTORY

Iceland became one of the world's first democracies. After **settlers** from Norway came to the island at about 900 A.D. the first government was **established**.

In the 13th and 14th centuries Iceland was first **ruled** by Norway, then by Denmark. The island became **independent** again in 1944.

Today Iceland is a member of NATO and **serves** as an important military **ally** between Europe and North America.