

Hints for travellers to Iceland, 1863

by Sabine Baring-Gould

1. Take plenty of money in small change, and English gold. Your expenses will amount to about a guinea-and-a-half per diem. The money used in Iceland is Danish.

	s.	d.
16 skillings = 1 mark	= 0	4½
6 marks = 1 rigs dollar	= 2	3
2 rigs dollars = 1 specie dollar	= 4	6

English money can be changed at Reykjavík by any of the Danish merchants.

2. The steamer *Arcturus* sails once a month during the summer, starting from Grangemouth, near Falkirk. The vessel is manned and commanded by Danes. Information respecting the times of departure can be obtained from Messrs. Robertson, at Grangemouth.
3. The names of the guides at Reykjavík are, Olavur Steingrímson, Oddr Gislason, Bjarni, Arni Sigurthsson, Gúthmundr Jónsson, and Magnús. Next time that I go to Iceland, I shall take an English servant with me, and hire an Icelander just to look after the horses. You must be provided with a compass and Gunnlangson's map, then you can find your way as well without as with a guide.

The map can be obtained at Reykjavík for 16s.; from Messrs. Williams and Norgate, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, for 30s.; or from Mr. Stanford, Charing Cross, for £2. 12s. You had better provide yourself with a pocket Danish-English and English-Danish dictionary, price 4s., which can be procured from Messrs. Williams and Norgate. It will be found very handy.

4. Take the least possible amount of luggage with you; say, two flannel shirts, a comb and brush, two towels and soap, an oil-skin pilot coat, which can be procured at Grangemouth for 6s. 6d., a sou'-wester, and fishermen's boots. I found my india-rubber contrivances very useless, as the buttons were continually coming off and the material tearing. Fishing stockings are, however, serviceable, but they must be taken great care of, a pair of Icelandic stockings must be drawn over them, and wading shoes over these again. Be provided with rope, hammer, and nails. Horse-shoes must be purchased at Reykjavík. Take also biscuits, portable soup, salt, and a spirit-lamp for boiling coffee or tea. I should advise every tourist to be provided with a veil, as the flies are intolerable near lakes and standing water. Let all the goods be packed in a couple of strong wooden boxes, 15 inches high, 10 wide, and 22 long; the wood of which they are made must be 1 inch thick, and the sides must be morticed into each other. The lid should be arched to let off the rain. These boxes can be procured from Messrs. Day and Son, 353 and 378, Strand. Let the traveller ask for them made after Mr. Shepherd's improved plan. When they are packed take them to the top of the house and roll them down stairs; if they stand the test they will do for Iceland.

I recommend that pack-saddles should be brought from England; we found considerable difficulty in getting good ones at Reykjavík.

Take also with you a light saddle without a tree, commonly called a pilch.

If you are not prepared to undergo the discomforts of lodging in an Icelandic farm, you must take with you a tent, and rugs for a bed.

You will then require eight horses; if you do without a tent, six will suffice.

5. Pay a good price for horses; no animals which cost less than £2. 10s. are fit for anything. For riding ponies you will have to pay about £5. Do not bring an Icelandic horse home with you, the climate of England does not suit it, and it becomes fat and desperately lazy.
6. If you go in quest of birds, take a water-dog with you, or an india-rubber boat; the latter would necessitate the purchase of two more horses.
7. Extraordinary precautions must be taken to preserve thermometers from being shivered to atoms. Of ten which a friend of mine took to the Geysir wrapped in wool, seventeen broken in two days.