

TRAVEL

In Iceland, deals heat up



Revelers enjoy the geothermal baths at an Airwaves Blue Lagoon party during the Iceland Airwaves Music Festival in Reykjavik.

(GETTY)

BY CRISTINA VELOCCI
Special to amNewYork

When Iceland's three main banks failed in October, it sent the country's currency, the krona, into a free fall in which it lost nearly half its value.

Once considered prohibitively expensive, the four-star hotels, flashy nightclubs and world-class restaurants in the capital city of Reykjavik are now half-off.

Bonus: The flight is just five hours from New York.



Reykjavik has colorful architecture and nightlife.

WHAT TO DO

Golden Circle

This 190-mile circular route encompasses a triad of natural wonders, including Þingvellir National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site where the Vikings first established parliament in 930. Walk through the Almannagjá fissure, the deep rift where two tectonic plates are tangibly splitting apart, before continuing on to the geothermal Geysir, the progenitor to all other geysers. Finish at Gullfoss waterfall where white water cascades over two tiers before taking a dramatic drop into the Hvita River.

Eldhestar

810 Hveragerði,
011-354-480-4800,
Eldhestar.is

Head to Eldhestar, an eco-friendly horse farm 30 minutes from the city, and ride through meadows and over lava fields. Iceland's small horses are the same pure breed the Vikings rode a thousand years ago. They're also the only breed in the world to have five gaits instead of four — the fifth being the tölt, a mix between a trot and a gallop that shows off the horse's muscular strength.

Blue Lagoon

240 Grindavík,
011-354-420-8800,
BlueLagoon.com

This well-known geothermal spa on the Reykjanes Peninsula was accidentally created from the salt-water effluence of a nearby power plant. The milky blue water is not only steaming hot but also mineral-rich — it's said to have therapeutic properties that combat psoriasis, jet lag and hangovers.

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Borg

Posthusstraeti 11,
011-354-551-1440,
en.HotelBorg.is

Built in 1930, the 56-room Hotel Borg was Iceland's first luxury hotel. A recent renovation carefully restored its Art Deco interiors while upgrading with such modern touches as Bang & Olufsen phones and flat-screen TVs. Recent rates ranged from \$140-\$225.

WHERE TO DINE & DRINK

Seafood Cellar

Adalstraeti 2,
011-354-511-1212,
Sjavarkjallarinn.is

Widely regarded as the finest in town, this restaurant, set amid the stone walls of the oldest cellar



(COURTESY OF BLUE LAGOON)

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

■ **Currency:** At press time, \$1 U.S. dollar = 114 Icelandic krona.

■ **Room service:** Regardless of where you crash, make sure to request a room facing inward to avoid being kept up all night by the raucous revelers filling the streets until 5 a.m.

■ **Tickets:** Icelandair is offering a Budget Getaway package for travel through April that includes round-trip airfare, two nights' hotel, round-trip airport and hotel transfers, and Scandinavian breakfast each morning for \$799 per person.

in Reykjavik, features innovative French and Thai-influenced cuisine.

Bæjarins Beztu Pylsur

Posthusstraeti 101

This small waterfront shack has been serving hot dogs since 1935. Saying the magic words "eina mid öllu" — meaning "give me one with everything" — gets you a hot dog on a bed of crispy fried onions layered with ketchup, sweet mustard and remoulade sauce.

Or try the much-simpler "Clinton," which comes just the way President Bill ate it on a visit — with just mustard.

Kaffibarinn
Bergstadastraeti 1,
011-354-551-1588,
Kaffibarinn.is

This bohemian dive, part-owned by Blur front man Damon Albarn, packs in a crowd of artists, musicians (locals Björk and Sigur Róss are known to stop by) and hipsters.

Baseball fans rejoice:

The "Get Your Sox On" package offered by Hotel Commonwealth, located near Boston's Fenway Park, includes one night at the hotel and two tickets to a Red Sox game for \$359 (before taxes). Offer valid through baseball season (May through September). The Mets vs. Red Sox weekend is May 22-23. **Hotelcommonwealth.com** or 1-866-784-4000

Travel Deals

Myrtle Beach discounts:

A number of hotels, resorts and house rentals at this popular South Carolina beach area are being majorly discounted. The Breakers Resort, for one, is offering a free night with any three-night stay, two free nights with a five-night stay and three free nights with a seven-night stay. To view a complete list go to **VisitMyrtleBeach.com/deals**

Spring savings at The Greenporter:

Located just 2 1/2 hours from the city, this North Fork hotel's spring weekend package includes a three-course dinner for two adults, a complimentary kids meal, and continental breakfasts for the entire family. The Queen Room package begins at \$278/weekend. Available through May 7. **TheGreenporter.com** or 631-477-0066



The Greenporter can serve as a base for exploring Long Island's organic farms and vineyards.

NEW TRAVEL TITLES

The Rough Guide to Central America on a Budget



Want to explore Mayan ruins in Honduras, volcano hop in Costa Rica or horseback ride in Gua-

temala without going broke? The 1,280 pages dedicated to this nine-country region are filled with maps, country-by-country itineraries and budgets, the best and most cost-efficient nightlife spots and sports activities, not-to-miss festivals and markets, and even a "Treat Yourself" section to know what's worth a splurge. It's written by various Rough Guide authors with country-specific expertise.

(Rough Guides, \$24.99)

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

As Western travelers' journeys expand farther into Eastern Europe, the Baltic States' popularity has



increased. So has demand for a guide to the three newest hotspots: Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. This book, from Eyewitness Travel, features more than 400 pages of the best places to shop, relax to folk music and view old-world architecture and cathedrals.

(Eyewitness Travel Guides, \$28.00)

Coming in May:

Have Dog Will Travel — Oregon and Washington, Second Edition

Sometimes having a dog can feel pretty restricting. If you've ever wanted to go on vaca-



tion and stopped short at your pup's sad eyes, this book is for you. It features

400 pages of dog-friendly motels, B and Bs, and restaurants in the area, as well as canine traveling tips.

(Ginger & Spike Publications, \$19.95)

(EMILY MATHIS)