

Environment and Food Agency



SNÆFELLSJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK



By Háahraun

Notes for Visitors

Please keep to marked trails. Vehicles and bicycles are restricted to roads and tracks. Horse trekking is allowed only on marked bridle paths. Riders are requested to contact a Park Ranger. There are no campsites in the National Park but backpackers may camp for one night. Although we welcome you to explore this area, please help us conserve its ecology, its remarkable geological features and its tranquillity. Do not drive off roads, disturb geological formations or wildlife, or light fires. And please take your litter with you.

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Snæfellsjökull National Park

Snæfellsjökull (Snæfell glacier) National Park was established on June 28, 2001. The Park's purpose is to protect and conserve the area's unique landscape, indigenous plant and animal life as well as important historical relics. At the same time, the Park is meant to allow visitors easier access as well as improved opportunities to get to know the area. National parks are amongst Iceland's finest assets and everyone is free to explore them. Park Rangers operate in the area during the summer months, providing information as well as monitoring and tending the area. Visitors are encouraged to contact Park Rangers for assistance or information about the area.



Pond in Beruvík

Geography and Geology

Snæfellsjökull National Park – Iceland's only National Park to extend to the seashore – covers an area of 170 km² (65 sq. miles). The Park's southern boundary reaches to Háahraun in the region of Dagverðará while the northern part reaches to Gufuskálur. The coast is varied and alive with birdlife during the breeding season. The coastal plain is mostly covered by lava that flowed from the glacier or nearby craters. The lava is covered with moss but sheltered hollows can be found in many places, filled with a sizable variety of thriving, verdant plants. The omnipresent Snæfellsjökull glacier towers majestically over the Park, with trails of lava and signs of volcanic activity clearly visible on its flanks. On its north side the Eysteinsdalur valley cuts a path up from the plain encircled by alluring steep mountains. The geology of Snæfellsnes Peninsula is diverse with formations from almost every era of Iceland's



Rocks in Dritvík



Saxhóll

Lava is prominent on the landscape of this National Park with two types present – rough, jagged lava and smooth, ropy lava. Most of the lava emanated from the glacier, from the summit crater or from subsidiary craters on the flanks of the mountain. These lava formations are varied and fascinating, and there is a wealth of caves in the area. Visitors are advised not to enter caves unless accompanied by an experienced guide. Smaller volcanoes – Purkhólar, Hólahólar, Saxhólar and Öndverðarneshólar – are in the Park's lowlands, surrounded by lava.

The Snæfellsjökull Glacier

The Snæfellsjökull glacier is 1446m (4745 ft) above sea level. It was first climbed in 1754. The mountain is an active volcano, having been built up through numerous eruptions during the last 800,000 years. The summit crater is 200m (650 ft) deep, and full of ice. The glacier has shrunk somewhat in recent years. The flanks of the glacier are particularly attractive with intertwining lava streams forming long "plaits" down the slopes. The latest eruption was very large and took place around 1800 years ago. Light-coloured ash covered the northern half of Snæfellsnes Peninsula and was carried over much of the West Fjords. Lava flowed down the southern slopes of the mountain and the Háahraun lava field was formed during this eruption. The glacier has been a never-ending source of inspiration for poets and artists from around the world. Indeed, more than a few people say they feel a powerful influence from the glacier and consider it to be one of the world's seven most potent energy sources.



From Djúpalónsandur

Plant Life

The ground of Snæfellsnes Peninsula is mostly porous, not retaining water. Nevertheless, there is a broad variety of plant habitats within the National Park – from its coast to its mountain peaks. Coastal plants are numerous and crystal-clear pools abound with colourful kelp and other seaweed. The lava is covered with a thick layer of moss. Flowering plants thrive in sheltered hollows. Tree growth is limited and there are no tall trees to be found. Amongst rare plants are wood millet and herb-Paris, the latter of which is a protected species. Heather is widespread, and in late summer there are good crops of raspberries, bilberries and blueberries.



Mountain Avens

Animal Life

As may be expected, the Park's birdlife is dominated by seabirds. Guillemot, razorbill, fulmar, kittiwake and shag are amongst the Park's most common types of seabirds. Black guillemots can be seen around Malarírf and Lónrangar. Gulls nest in most areas, with the predominant species in the region being the great and lesser black-backed gulls, herring gull and glaucous gull. Songs abound from common heathland birds such as the golden plover, whimbrel, meadow pipit, snow bunting and wheatear. Other common birds are the white wagtail, oystercatcher, ringed plover, purple sandpiper, raven, and ptarmigan. Redwings can be seen in hollows in the lava. During the spring and autumn a large number of migratory birds, including the Brent goose, turnstone and knot visit the region. Foxes, minks and field mice live in the area as well. During a walk along the coast you can expect to see seals – both

the common seal and the grey seal – although not in large numbers. There is an abundance of life in pools left by receding tides. Marine snails, fairy shrimp, crabs, small fish including rock eels, and other sea creatures will catch the eye of an observant visitor. Cetaceans such as killer whales, minke whales and porpoises are common around Snæfellsnes Peninsula, but larger species of whales keep to deeper waters farther from the coast.



Razorbill

Legend

- Tourist Information
- Camping
- Airfield
- Parking
- Shipwreck
- Scheduled Sites
- Hiking Trails
- Bridle Path
- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Mountain Track, Track
- National Park / Nature Reserve



0 1 2 3 4 5 km



History

The adventurous *Bárður Saga Snæfellsás* is the best known of the Icelandic Sagas that take place in this area. There are archaeological remains from the period of Iceland's settlement around 1100 years ago – examples of which are the Forni-Saxhóll farm, Berutóftir and Írskubúðir. Near Gufuskálur there are a large number of dome-like structures of unknown origin, thought to be between 500 and 700 years old. They are probably the oldest known relics of the fishing industry in Scandinavia. A few people believe that these structures served instead as places of prayer or

meditation for Irish monks who may have once lived in the area. Fishing flourished in the 13th century and the human population grew in the areas around the glacier. A church had been built on Ingjaldshóll hill before 1200 AD. The size of the church bears witness to the sizeable population of nearby towns and villages, at least during fishing season. Rich fishing grounds were nearby and fishing stations were constructed where there was good access to the open sea. Dritvík is one of the best-known examples. It was one of the largest fishing stations in Iceland for a



Lighthouse at Óndverðarnes



Óndverðarnes Peninsula



The Peak of Snæfellsjökull

time, with 40-60 boats and 200-600 people employed there. Fishing declined on Snæfellsnes Peninsula during the 19th century because of changes in fishing techniques. Villages close to the National Park include Hellissandur, Rif and Ólafsvík. They were all fishing and commercial centres. Today, they are still flourishing fishing ports with lively communities.

Footpaths

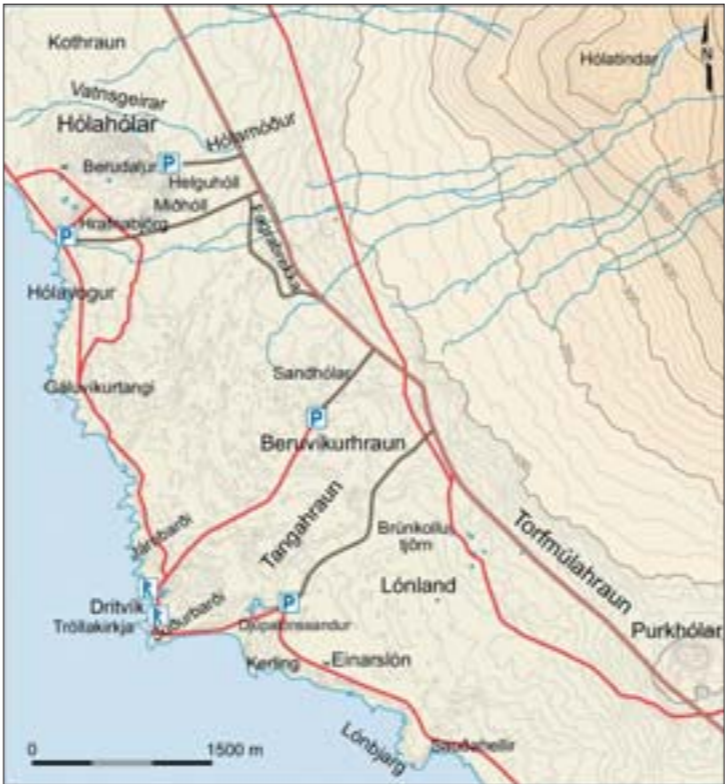
There are plenty of trails in the National Park to suit all tastes and abilities. Some are marked with posts or signs. Most trails are easy to follow and visitors can move from one to another to make for varied and interesting walks. Please note that there is very little drinking water in the area, so visitors are advised to take along something to drink when they set off for a walk.

Snæfellsjökull Glacier

The peak of the Snæfellsjökull glacier can be reached by foot from Jökulháls in less than four hours. Anyone considering going onto the glacier should seek information about conditions and routes before setting off, and proceed at all times with the greatest of caution. Existing large crevasses widen as summer progresses and the glacier becomes non-traversable. Organized skidoo and snow-tractor trips onto the glacier are seasonably available.

Historical Tracks

In times past there were a large number of paths in the area around the glacier, some of which still exist and are still passable. One trail follows the coastline and remains in reasonable condition, although some boulders have intruded onto parts of the track. This track is long and best followed in several stages. A second track, known as Efstivegur, lies at the foot of the glacier.



Gufuskálur

Around Gufuskálur, in the lava field, there are a number of presumed fish-drying stone structures. They are just a 10-minute walk from the road. On the opposite side of the present-day road is a track leading to Írskrabrunnur (*Irish well*). A short, clearly marked path leads from Írskrabrunnur to Gufuskálavör landing, where trails remain from the keels of boats dragged up onto land after fishing.



Fish-Drying Structure at Gufuskálur

Móðuvör – Skarðsvík – Óndverðarnes (4 km/2.5 miles)

This is a pleasant footpath that passes through Skarðsvík, an attractive sheltered little bay with light-coloured sand. On Óndverðarnes are relics of fishing and domestic occupation. An ancient well named Fálki was a water source for the residents of Óndverðarnes.

Óndverðarneshólar

From the road to Óndverðarnes there are several paths leading to hillocks. The walk to Vatnsborgarhóll and nearby crater Vatnsborg is 2 km/1.5 miles and the walk to Grashóll is another 1 km/0.6 miles. There are delightful paths from the hillocks leading down to Skálasnagi and Óndverðarnes, or into Berúvík.



Skarðsvík



View over Dritvík

Klofningsrétt in Berúvík – Litlalón – Hóláhólar (4 km/2.5 miles)

This is an attractive coastal path. Coastline features are varied and the path is easy on the feet, passing mostly over grassland. Berúvík was once a lively community while Hóláhólar was a large homestead.

Djúpalónssandur – Dritvík (1 km/0.6 miles)

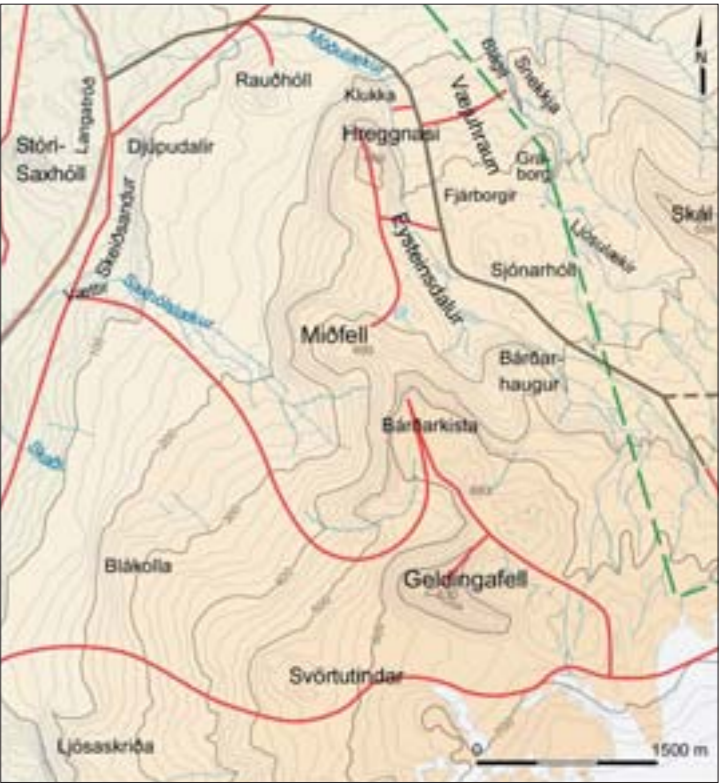
The path from Djúpalónssandur to Dritvík is easy and popular. On Djúpalónssandur there are some large boulders fishermen lifted to show off their strength. On Suðurbarði there is an old labyrinth, made by fishermen for amusement. In the 18th century Dritvík was a bustling community of up to 600 people during fishing season. It is possible to continue from Dritvík along the old fishermen's track past Berúvíkurhraun to Sandhólar. The entire route from Djúpalónssandur to Dritvík and on to Sandhólar is 4 km (2.5 miles).

Svalþúfa – Malarrið (2 km/1.5 miles)

A short path winds along the coast, passing by the lava pillars of Lóndrangar.

Eysteinsdalur

The road up the Eysteinsdalur valley runs alongside Móðulækur, towards the Snæfellsjökull glacier. Beautiful short walks from the road include Rauðhóll and Sjónarhóll. The dolerite-capped hill Klukka and the waterfall Klukkufoss are just a short distance from the road. Blágil is a deep ravine that is easily reached. An abundance of peaks await visitors. Hreggnasi (469m/1539 ft) is quite an easy climb, while Bárðarkista (668m/2192 ft) and West Geldingafell (830m/2723 ft) are the highest of the glacier's foothills and have summits that are more challenging.



Approaches and Services

National Road 574, Útnesvegur, follows a course through the National Park and can be used as a northern or southern approach. There are no campsites in the National Park but there are many in the vicinity as well as a selection of accommodations and restaurants to suit all tastes. Ólafsvík, Lýsuhóll, Grundarfjörður and Stykkishólmur all have heated public swimming pools. The nearest grocery stores are in Hellissandur, Rif, Ólafsvík and Vegamót. There are petrol stations at most of these locations, as well as in Arnarstapi.



From Eysteinsdalur

The following short list of Icelandic words may be helpful in understanding place names in the area:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| fell hill, small mountain | rétt sheep corral |
| hellir cave | sandur sand |
| hóll hill, hillock, knoll | skáli lodge, cabin |
| hólar plural of hóll | snær snow |
| hraun lava | steinn stone, boulder |
| jökull glacier | vík small bay, cove, inlet |
| klettur cliff | vör landing place |
| lækur stream, brook | þúfa clump of grass, tussock |
| nes cape, promontory, headland | |