

DRAFT Cruise Ready Reykjanes



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Cover photo: Visit Reykjanes

Photo: page 3, 11, 16 & 18: Visit Reykjanes



Cruise Ready

Why Cruise Ready?

Cruise Ready helps towns and cities get ready for expedition cruise visits. It gives essential information to make sure everyone knows what to expect, making the experience better, for locals, passengers, and operators.

Cruise Ready handbook

Visit Reykjanes and the main ports in Reykjanes; Keflavik and Grindavik, welcome small cruise vessels and want to make this type of tourism grow in a sustainable way. The Cruise Ready handbook is part of this. It gives a background to cruise tourism, with a focus on expedition cruises in the Arctic. By reading the handbook and attending the Cruise Ready workshop, you are helping to develop it. During the workshop, we will discuss your thoughts on the handbook and how we can improve it.

You will find a list of words with their meanings and translations into Icelandic at the back of the handbook.

Visit Reykjanes

Markaðsstofa Reykjanes (e. Visit Reykjanes (VR)) is the official destination marketing and management organization for the Reykjanes peninsula and Reykjanes UNESCO Global Geopark. VR is supported by the Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Business

Affairs, the municipalities on the Reykjanes peninsula, and member companies/organizations.

Visit Reykjanes serves as a competitive platform for its stakeholders, aiming to develop and enhance the image of the Reykjanes Peninsula in Iceland as a tourist destination. The organization assembles, coordinates, and markets innovations and events within the region, conducts research on target groups, and helps in marketing efforts. One of its key objectives is to foster innovation in tourism within the region. Visit Reykjanes also offers training and workshops for managers and staff across various areas of marketing and product development. Additionally, the organization is actively involved in the marketing and promotion of the Reykjanes Peninsula and takes part in ongoing development projects for tourism in the region.

The primary goal is to encourage visitors to explore the entire peninsula at a more leisurely pace, extending their stays for increased financial benefits to the tourism sector. For industries involved, the aim is to expand opportunities for companies, organizations, and municipalities in the region, enhancing service quality and adding value. On a broader scale, the region seeks to evolve into a sustainable destination, considering the well-being of the environment, the local industry, and the community as a whole.

Cruise Ready is one of those key development projects for the region that will give the stakeholders the opportunity to actively take part in developing sustainable cruise tourism in the Reykjanes region.

AECO

The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, AECO, is a member organization founded in 2003, dedicated to managing responsible, environmentally friendly, and safe tourism. AECO develops best practices, educates passengers, collaborates with communities, and supports members in community engagement efforts. The organization also works with authorities, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders with the goal of protecting the region's unique heritage.

Flexible itineraries

Expedition cruise ships are small, and operations are flexible, allowing them to respond to changing Arctic conditions and take advantage of unexpected opportunities. Vessels can navigate in narrow waterways or make unscheduled stops. This flexibility is crucial in remote and unpredictable environments where weather and wildlife sightings can change quickly.

Safety and environmental sustainability are top priorities and operators adjust plans to ensure the safety of guests and crew, and to minimize environmental impact.

Anchoring

When the vessel cannot go alongside, it can stay on anchor. Passengers are transported to the port in a tender boat. A tender boat is a smaller vessel that shuttles between a larger ship and the shore. They are used for bringing supplies and equipment, transporting passengers, or providing a casual ride on the water. Some tenders can be used as lifeboats. They navigate in shallow waters where large boats can't go.



A tender boat.

Nature landing

A nature landing is when passengers visit a remote area without port infrastructure. They reach this area by using a zodiac from the cruise ship.



Chartered vs. owned vessel

In the expedition cruise industry, operators often charter vessels instead of owning them. This arrangement requires operators to contract with third-party companies for ships and crews. This can make the planning process more complex. Note that the same vessel can be used by different operators throughout the year.

The Arctic cruise season

The Arctic cruise season usually runs from early May to early October, when the sea ice melts, and weather conditions are more favorable for navigation. This period allows expedition cruise vessels to access remote destinations in Svalbard, Greenland, Canada, and Iceland.

The expedition cruise guest

Expedition cruise guests have diverse background and interests but share the curiosity for remote and unique destinations. The age spans from 30 to 80, with a concentration between 50 and 70. What is common among them is the desire for immersive travel experiences, often with a passion for wildlife, nature, and cultural exploration.

Here is a typical day on an expedition cruise vessel:

6.30: Breakfast in the ship's restaurant.

8.00: Mandatory briefing on safety and emergency protocols.

9.00: First excursion: exploring local communities or coastlines.

12.00: Lunch served on board or during land activities.

14.00: Second excursion: kayaking, hiking, or wildlife viewing.

16.00: Free time on board for relaxation.

18.00: Recap session, led by expedition staff.

19.00: Dinner in the ship's restaurant.

20.30: Activities like presentations about tomorrow's destination, photography, glaciers, or local history.

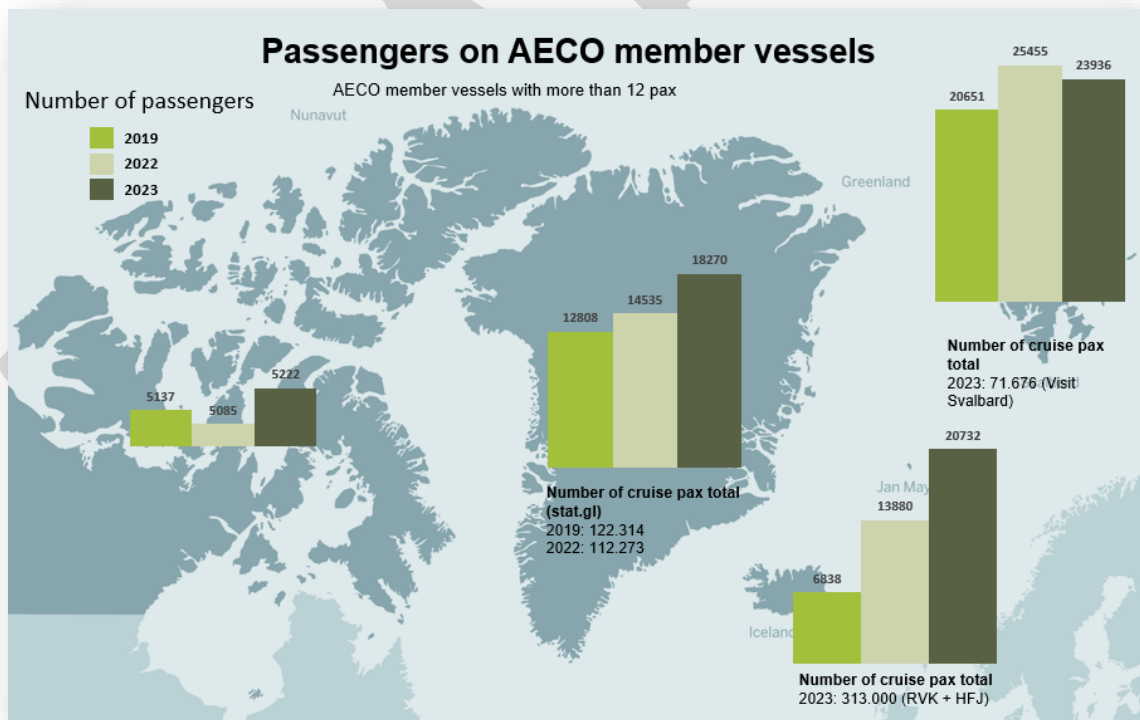
21.00: Guests retire to their cabins.

AECO

What does it mean to be an AECO member?

AECO members commit to follow AECO's mandatory guidelines, which often exceed legal requirements. Membership offers access to resources for implementing best practices in environmental stewardship, safety, and cultural sensitivity in Arctic tourism. AECO also facilitates networking and collaboration among members, who work together to set higher standards for their industry. AECO is owned by the members and funded by membership fees.

AECO currently has 74 members in total, where 40 are operating members and the rest are members associated to the industry. AECO members operate around 65 vessels in the Arctic.



Passengers on AECO member vessels 2019-2023.

A full list of members and vessels can be found here: <https://www.aeco.no/members/>

Local value creation

AECO works to ensure that the expedition cruise industry adds value to the Arctic. Value can be defined in different ways, such as economic value, local coordination, local competence development and stakeholder relations. Below are examples of how AECO creates value through the following initiatives:

Community Specific Guidelines, created through a community workshop where locals list their dos and don'ts for cruise passengers.

Clean up Iceland, where cruise passengers' clean litter on Icelandic beaches, reducing plastic pollution.

Made in the Arctic, where AECO gathers information about local producers of food, souvenirs and art and passes it on to AECO members.

Joint Arctic SAR, an annual event focusing on search and rescue and cooperation in the Arctic. The event is possible through a long-term collaboration with the Icelandic Coast Guard.

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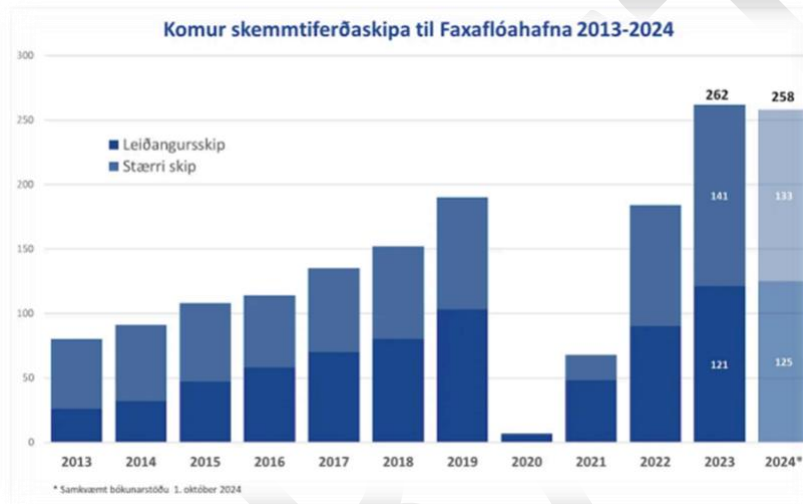


Iceland

Cruise industry in Iceland

The cruise season in Iceland usually runs from April to mid-October, with the peak from June to August.

In the past 10 years, there has been a steady rise in cruise traffic, along with an increase of turnaround calls.



Cruise ships in Reykjavik from 2013-2023.



Cruise vessels are visiting more ports and spreading their traffic to more ports across Iceland. The ports are owned by the municipalities, and in 2023, 31 ports welcomed cruise vessels. An additional eight landowners received vessels on nature landings.



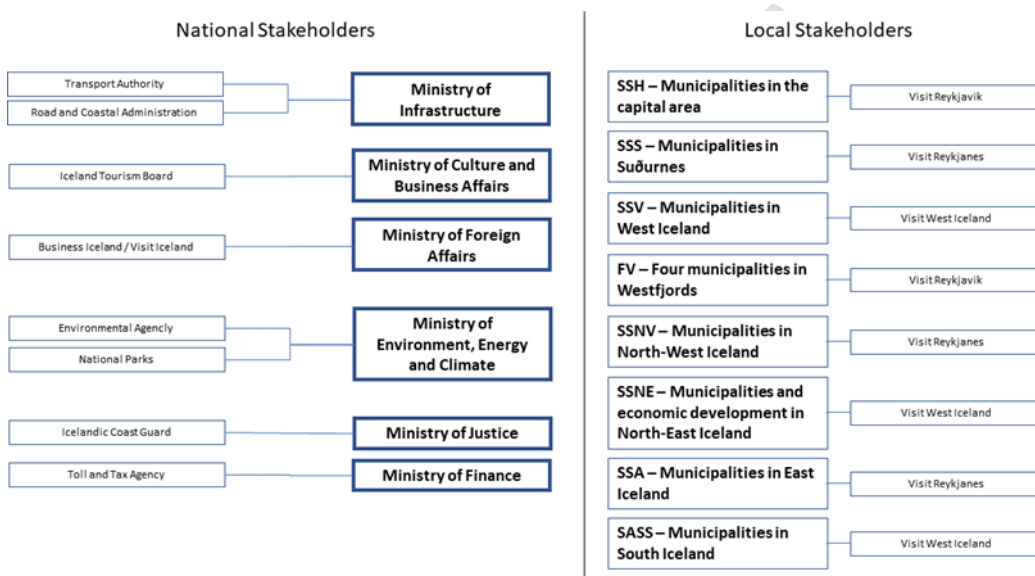
Ports receiving cruise vessels in 2014 and 2022.

It has also become more common to do a **circumnavigation** in Iceland, compared to just making 3-4 port calls. This partly explains the increase in turnarounds. Turnaround calls are particularly valuable. Because they involve many different services they have a significant economic impact.



Circumnavigation and a single stop cruise.

Iceland's tourism governance



The **Ministry of Business and Culture**, led by Lilja Alfreðsdóttir, sets the strategy for all tourism in Iceland.

The **Icelandic Transport Authority (Samgöngustofa)** oversees safety in aviation, maritime, and road traffic. It also manages SafeSeaNet, a system that oversees cruise traffic.

The **Iceland Tourism Board (Ferðamálastofa)** monitors and promotes the development of tourism as a crucial and sustainable element of the Icelandic economy. They consider the carrying capacity of Icelandic nature and society, and facilitate coordination, analysis, and research within the tourism sector in line with government policies. They also collect and publish cruise traffic data on Mælaborð Ferðathjónustunnar, the tourism dashboard, where data from Icelandic tourism is displayed.

The **Environmental Agency of Iceland (Umhverfisstofnun)** protects natural resources, promotes sustainability, and develops preservation plans that affects cruise tourism areas.

Promote Iceland (Íslandsstofa / Business Iceland) promotes Iceland, supports export industries, and boosts the demand for Iceland as a tourism destination through Visit Iceland.

The **Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG)** ensures maritime safety and security.

Cruise Iceland represents Icelandic ports and cruise service providers, organizes familiarization trips for cruise executives and trade show participation to boost cruise traffic.

Regional development offices

There are eight regional development offices in Iceland. They coordinate between the municipalities in each region on a variety of matters, such as employment and development.

SSH – Municipalities in the capital area
SSS – Municipalities in Suðurnes
SSV – Municipalities in West Iceland
FV – Four municipalities in Westfjords
SSNV – Municipalities in North-West Iceland
SSA – Municipalities in East Iceland
SASS – Municipalities in South Iceland

Destination management and marketing (DMO)

There are seven Destination Management and Marketing (DMO) offices in Iceland. They develop tourism and are public-private, funded by the state, municipalities and

member companies. These are [Visit Reykjavík](#), [Visit Reykjanes](#), [Visit West Iceland](#), [Visit Westfjords](#), [Visit North Iceland](#), [Visit East Iceland](#), [Visit South Iceland](#).

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Service providers

Port agent

Port agents are representatives or intermediaries who act on behalf of the owner, operator, or charterer when a ship calls at a port. Examples of services port agents provide are:

- port bookings
- customs clearance
- arranging for pilot assistance
- immigration and crew change services
- coordinating with service providers such as ship chandlers or suppliers
- arranging for repairs and maintenance,
- providing information and support to the ship's master and crew

The port agent usually sends one bill to the operator for all services provided during a call in a specific place. Some port agencies in Iceland are Gára Port Agency, Samskip and Blue Water.

Tour operator

A tour operator is a company that arranges and promotes tours, excursions, and other travel experiences for individuals and groups. They take care of all aspects of the trip, including ground transportation, accommodation, activities, and meals. Their packages are then offered to customers who are looking for tourist excursions.

Tour operators normally work closely with local partners (hotels, transport companies, and attractions) to provide their customers with the best possible experience. Some tour operators specialize in tours that focus on specific interests or themes, such as adventure, culture, history, or wildlife. Icelandic tour operators include Atlantik, Iceland Travel, Nonni Travel and West Tours.



Preparations and roles

Long-term preparations

Planning and preparing a cruise call involves a lot of work and expedition cruise itineraries are planned 2-3 years in advance. The operator's head office manages daily operations, coordinates staff, ensures safety, and handles finances. At the head office, the **itinerary planner** is responsible for developing expedition plans, coordinating activities, and ensuring compliance.

Once the itinerary is completed and booked with the local authorities, through the port agent, it is passed on to the sales and marketing department that promotes it and makes it available for sale.

Mid-term preparations

Before a cruise vessel arrives, the operator's head office handles tasks such as coordinating with national or local authorities. This can involve obtaining necessary permits and permissions for the cruise. They also book a berth (allocation within the port area) with the port authority, through the port agent. Additionally, they can contact the local DMO, local tour operators and/or guides to set up shore excursions and activities for the passengers.

Who does what on board

Mariners include the captain, bridge officers, and maritime crew. They are responsible for keeping the vessel operational. The **captain** oversees the overall operation and safety of the vessel and must pass an annual test with AECO. Their duties include confirming with harbor master on arrival details, pilot assistance and assigned berth. The **medical staff** provide medical aid in case of emergencies.



The **hotel department** handles ordering provisions of food and non-food and arranging transfers to the airport for guests and crew during turnaround calls. The **purser** is part of the hotel department and manages onboard finances, administrative tasks, and crew payroll. The **shop manager** oversees retail operations onboard, including inventory and sales. The **hotel manager** is responsible for hotel services, including dining, housekeeping, and guest services.

The **expedition staff** include the **expedition leader (EL)** who arranges and confirms with local tour/activity providers or other local attractions such as museum and shop(s). He also develops and implements educational programs, leads briefings, and ensures compliance. The **assistant expedition leader (AEL)** helps with shore excursions and itinerary planning. The expedition staff guides guests, leads lectures, and assists with coordination tasks. All expedition staff must pass an annual test that includes questions about Iceland.

An AECO study from 2021, with 513 participants showed that expedition staff are highly qualified:

- 74% have four or more years of higher education
 - Majority nature studies, archeology, and history
- 98% have finished first-aid training
- 47% have advanced first-aid training
- 77% have learned crisis management
- 40% have more than 10 years' experience
- 88% have more than 2 years' experience
- 44% have experience in research work

Reykjanes

Ports

There are two harbors that welcome cruise vessels into the Reykjanes peninsula: Keflavik Harbor in the north, and Grindavik Harbor in the south. The harbors function as fishing harbors during the winter season but accommodate smaller vessels (up to 160m) during the spring and summer. These ports have decided to welcome expedition cruise vessels and will allow only one vessel at a time. Planned cruise calls can be viewed in the port website and Cruise Iceland.

Roles in Reykjanes

The port authority oversees cruise call operations, including dock allocation, security, pilot assistance and services. They receive port bookings from the cruise lines / operators, through a port agent. Once they confirm the booking, it is displayed in the Icelandic port booking system, DOKK. The booking overview can be seen on <https://www.cruiseiceland.com/>. The port authority manages the cruise calendar and are in contact with the bridge team and captain before and during a port call

The **destination management organization** (DMO), works with tourism for the whole area, promotes local attractions, events, and facilities to cruise visitors.

Some communities have **transportation providers** that offer services for cruise visitors, such as taxis and buses.

The **local community** can engage with cruise readiness efforts to promote local involvement and enthusiasm. They can also participate in meet and greet initiatives and contribute to local exchanges.

Local businesses can provide products, services, and experiences to cruise visitors, including shops, hotels, restaurants, and attractions.

The municipality is responsible for the infrastructure and the coordination with emergency services like police, fire brigade, and medical services. Some communities can appoint a **cruise coordinator**, that coordinates cruise call activities from the community side. This person provides information to locals about upcoming calls and facilitates local efforts. They serve as a resource for local development and engagement in connection with cruise calls.