

Institutes Learn About Iceland

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roads whereby this isolated part can be explored. Rivers and lakes are numerous in Iceland because of a relatively abundant rainfall. None of the rivers are navigable because of rapids and swift currents. Some rivers originate under the glaciers in the centre of the Island while others originate in mountain springs where the water is as clear as crystal.

There are many volcanoes in Iceland. The best known is Hecla which has erupted many times covering the countryside with ashes and lava, devastating the large grassy farm-lands and burying people and livestock under the molten rock. Famine has resulted, as in the years following the ashes from the eruption poisoned the herbage and livestock died from grazing upon the ash-covered pastures. In November last year, a volcanic island popped right up out of the ocean 20 miles south of Iceland, hurling up millions of tons of rock, smoke, and molten lava, high above the ocean's surface. This volcano is still erupting, and it is likely that this island will be permanent.

There are no railways in Iceland and the country roads are very narrow; they have no super-highways as we have. Now, people are travelling by plane a great deal to save hours of driving by car. Cars in Iceland are not streamlined as they are here. Small cars and jeeps are very much in demand. We saw hundreds of ponies, and the only use for them now is to round up the sheep in the fall, and for horseback riding, as all farmers have tractors. These ponies are really horses, and are of a true strain of the wild horses that used to roam in Europe thousands of years ago.

Education is compulsory from the age of 7 to 15 years. Illiteracy is non-existent. Four Grammar schools have the right to grant matriculation and about 800 students attend the University in Reykjavik annually. There are beautiful boarding schools in the country. As schools close on May 15th, and don't open until October 1st, they are used for hotels for summer visitors to lodge. Every available student is needed to assist in the fishing industry, in the green-houses and parks. There is positively no unemployment. There are beautiful displays of craft in some of the country high schools where weaving, sewing, tailoring, smocking, knitting and embroidery are taught. Blankets were woven from wool of the Icelandic sheep and some of the yarn was dyed to make patterns in the blankets. Coarse linen thread for tablecloths, tea towels, tea cloths and dish cloths were woven. The graduating students at this particular high school were really a bevy of beauties, as they all had the clear

pink complexion that is noticed by everyone visiting Iceland.

Icelanders are avid readers and are well informed on world affairs. Every home we visited had a library of excellent books, and it is said that more new books are published in Iceland than in any country in the world. Iceland has produced many famous poets, sculptors, artists, and authors.

There were some things I missed while in Iceland. The country for the most part is treeless, but here and there small birch trees, Sitka Spruce, locusts, Norway Pine and Mountain Ash thrive extremely well. On many mountain slopes small bushes are seen and at the present time great interest is being given to reforestation. I missed my toast at breakfast. Small square pieces of buttered bread are served on which may be slices of ripe tomato, cucumber, cheese, hardboiled eggs and sardines. Cakes are served at every meal, even at breakfast. I never saw a cabbage, lettuce, spinach, swiss-chard or celery. These and all greens are grown in Iceland, but at the time of year when I visited there, the prices were so exorbitant that people could not afford to buy them. They do import some vegetables, but prices are still high. We saw only potatoes and carrots grown outdoors. Coffee is served to guests and many delicious sweets and pastries. Sea foods are prepared and served in many different ways and are considered great delicacies. The excellence and ingenuity of the Icelandic cooks is unsurpassed and the hospitality of the Icelander is unbounded. The housewives keep their homes spotlessly clean and the people dress immaculately. Fish and lamb appear on the table and rarely any other kind of meat. An Icelandic dessert is skyr made from the whey of milk. There is a little tartness to the taste, and it is a most tempting dish, looking very much like whipped cream.

In the last two decades the country has changed from isolation and poverty to conditions of modern civilization with its attendant advantages. The population now is 185,000 and of these about 85,000 live in Reykjavik. Towns and villages have increased in population. In place of the old stone and turf cottages are modern dwellings with all modern conveniences. The waterfalls have been harnessed to provide electrical power for cities, towns, and country districts. Industry has expanded and manufacturing has reached considerable proportions. Iceland has now become a comparatively wealthy country, considering its limited resources and population.