

DRIVING IN ICELAND IN THE FALL, SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

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Helpful information while you decide what kind of car to rent for your fall trip to Iceland

Preparing for a trip to Iceland in the fall months of September and October can be tricky. Most people that plan to drive in Iceland during those months wonder what kind of car they should rent, if they should go for a 4x4 or if they will be ok in a small car. In this blog we give you the tools to make that decision based on where you plan to drive.



Photo by www.eyepandpen.com.

We at SADcars consider August the end of summer and early November as beginning of winter. However, Icelandic weather is unpredictable which means that you can have snow in August and really nice weather in November. All things normal, you should be able to drive any type of car anywhere in Iceland in September and well in to October. There are a lot of things to consider though and as you might have realized by now, you cannot count on the normal in Iceland! Let's go over some points regarding road conditions and weather in different parts of the country to help you which car to drive in Iceland in the fall.

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Where are you planning to drive and during what time?

At the beginning of September the weather is typically fair all over the country. Temperatures should be between 10-20 degrees Celsius and normally there is no snow on the ground. You should however definitely be prepared for colder weather, even down to 0 degrees at this time of the year, especially in the North and the highlands, where the weather in Iceland in the fall is colder and can be harsher.

The fall months of September and October can be beautiful months with calm winds and low sun. However, typical fall weather in Iceland includes heavy wind and horizontal rain. Not the ideal weather for sightseeing, we know. You need to watch out for those winds because they can cause serious damage to the cars as well as cause sandstorms, more on that in our [how to avoid sandstorms blog](#). However, wind and rain should not affect your ability to drive a small car. What really affects your decision is ice and snow on the roads.

When driving on the ring road or between parts of Iceland you have to cross heaths or mountain passages. You see, you are crossing a mountain and although our mountains are not very high, the weather up there can be very different from down below and sometimes much worse. There can be ice and snow on the roads up in the mountains, even if there is none in sight where you are. Always check the road conditions when passing heaths in Iceland in fall or winter. If you are not sure if you can cross, we suggest you stop at the gas station before the heath. The locals usually know if the roads are open or not and can offer you advice on the matter.



Holtavörðuheidi (connects the south and north) and Hellisheiði (connects Reykjavík and the south), thanks to Google maps.

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Fall and winter come sooner to the North, Western fjords and Eastern fjords. If you plan to drive to these parts of the country in the fall month of October, we definitely recommend an AWD or 4x4 vehicle. If you are traveling to the North you will have to cross Holtavörðuheiði heath. If you go on to the Western fjords you will most likely drive either Þróskuldar or Steingrímsfjarðarheiði heaths (or both).

Winter often comes a little later to the South and the West which only means that the roads are clear of ice and snow a little longer. In order to go to the South you will have to cross either Hellisheiði heath which is a part of the ring road or other heaths if you are on the Golden circle. Hellisheiði is usually fine to drive in the fall but can be dangerous in the wintertime.

You will always need a 4x4 car if you plan to go to the highlands regardless of the weather and road conditions. It's also worth noting that the highland roads close for the spring months, so if you plan to drive them in the fall months, you'll need to check the dates for road closures for that year to make sure you can still access them.

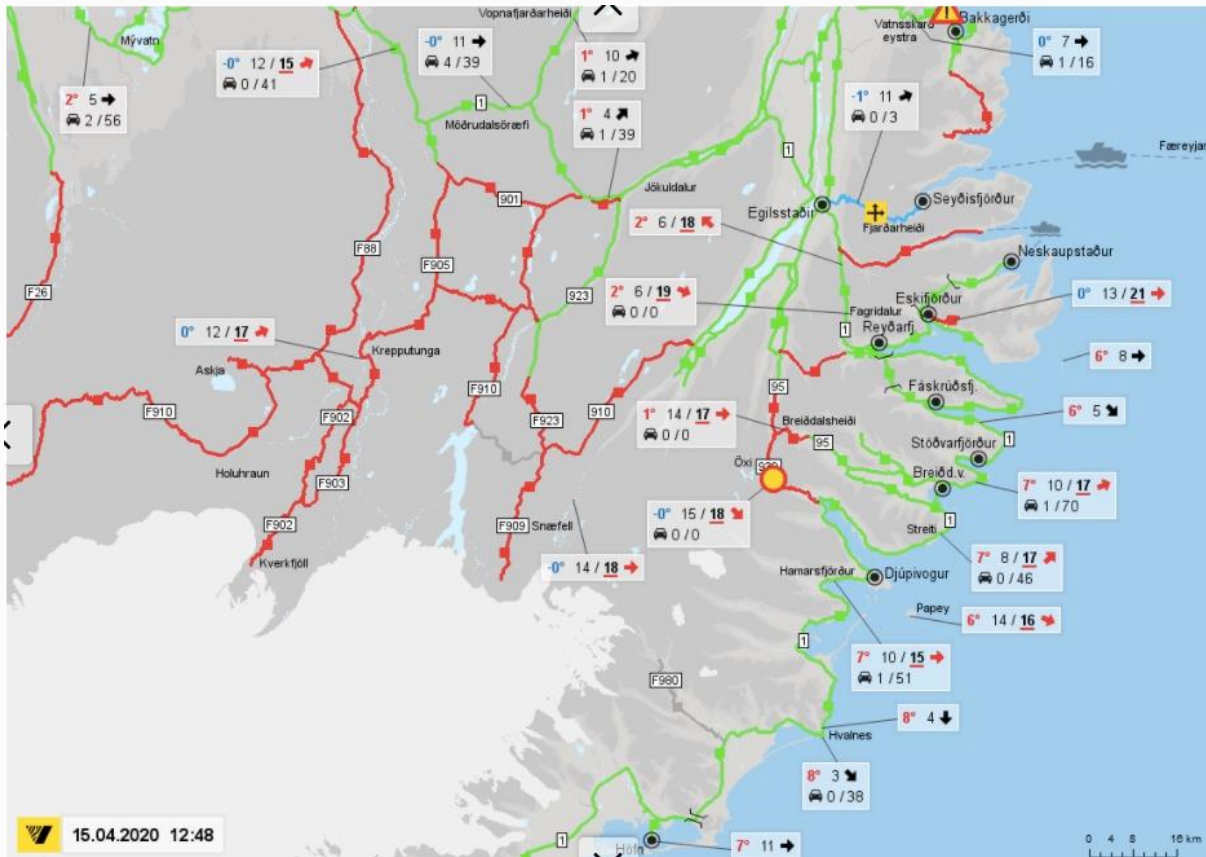
All cars in Iceland are required to be equipped with winter tires or all year tires during winter. Those that choose to have nailed tires can start using them on November 1st. Just to clarify, we do believe that you can drive small cars out in the country in winter as well. It all depends on when you are going and how the road conditions and weather forecast is during that time.

Information you must have while driving in the fall in Iceland

It is important to always check the weather forecast and road conditions before starting your journey in Iceland, even in the fall months. Your first stop should be the site of the [Icelandic Met Office](#) (go to Station forecasts) for the weather forecast. Next stop is the [Icelandic Road Administration](#) for road conditions and webcams all over the country. We have written a blog about [driving in Iceland in winter](#) which includes information on how to use these sites. You can find other blogs about driving in Iceland on our [Information page](#), they contain useful info and links to good sites.

You can also call 1777 (if problems use +354 522 1100). Open 8-16 in summer and 6:30-22 in winter. An English answering machine with similar road information is in phone number 1778.

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Road.is provides current road conditions so that you can judge whether driving is safe at the time you plan to travel. The above map shows road conditions in April 2020.

Here you can see how well The Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration (IRCA) website presents its up to date information on road conditions. The roads in green are easily passable with no problems. The roads highlighted yellow mean there are some spots of ice on the road, and roads in blue or white are very slippery, heavy with snow, wet, or generally dangerous to drive. The highlands are impassable (red roads). Pretty easy to read right?

So, a small car or 4x4?

Choose the car that is best for you and that you will feel most comfortable driving. It is always better to drive a 4x4 when the weather conditions are unstable, but not necessary. If you will be going the ring road in September you should be fine with a small car but in October it would be better to have a 4x4. If you plan to be in Reykjavik and only take day trips to sightsee, you should be fine with a small car in both September and October.

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At SADcars, you can always upgrade to a 4x4 car at the time of pick up if the weather and road conditions are going to be bad (depending on availability of course).

My advice is to be prepared for all kinds of weather. Be prepared that you might have to change your plans (or spend more on an upgrade to a safer car). Have warm clothes with you. Think of the unpredictability as an adventure. Always check the road conditions and weather forecast or talk to locals. Stay safe.

I do hope that this information helps a little in your decision making and that you find a car that is comfortable for you and your budget. If you have any questions about this, do not hesitate to e-mail us at info@sadcars.com or get in touch on our various social media sites.

Other interesting SADcars blogs related to driving in the fall in Iceland

[How to drive in winter in Iceland](#)

[How to avoid getting into sandstorms in Iceland](#)

[Hunting the Northern Lights in Iceland](#)

[Things to do in Iceland in August and September](#)

[Where to find information about Iceland](#)

All the best!