

GRO • FTP

Fisheries Training Programme

2024-2025 Introduction to Iceland



More about living in Iceland:

YouTube video series on Living in Iceland. Search for: 8 Best things about living in Iceland. You can watch many videos in this series. One worth watching is: How much it costs to live in Reykjavik (check out Food and Drink).

A quick guide to thumbnail facts and a historical timeline can be found on **BBC news** country profile:

bbc.com/news/world-europe-17383525

The DISE Handbook. (Depart. of International Studies in Education) See section on Living in Iceland. Search for: The DISE Handbook.

Worldpress.com

Iceland

Iceland, a small island nation in the North Atlantic, is famous for its breathtaking landscapes, from glaciers and volcanoes to stunning waterfalls. In the latter part of 2024, the country's population is fast approaching 400,000, with around 20% being immigrants. Most of Iceland's residents are concentrated in the capital, Reykjavik, and its nearby areas.

Living in Iceland comes with both its rewards and challenges. On one hand, the cost of living is relatively high, particularly for housing, food, and transportation. But on the other hand, Iceland offers a fantastic quality of life. The country has good healthcare and education systems, a low crime rate, and a strong social safety net. It regularly ranks among the best countries in the world for quality of life, safety, and happiness. Iceland also leads the world in gender equality, has a pristine environment, and enjoys a robust economy, driven by tourism, fishing, and renewable energy-powered aluminium smelting.

Beyond its economic strength, Iceland is culturally vibrant with a diverse music scene and brims with outdoor adventures, from hiking and skiing, to Northern Lights spotting and soaking in natural hot springs.

With Iceland's small, close-knit population, the Fisheries Training Programme finds it easy to foster connections between industry, academia, and society, providing fellows with unique access to the country's fishing industry and research opportunities. While many fellows note that the cost of living can be high and the winter weather unpredictable, most leave with fond memories. Iceland's distinct culture, friendly locals, and stunning natural landscapes often make the experience an unforgettable chapter in their lives.

Weather in Iceland



What to expect

Iceland's temperatures are cool and vary throughout the year. In winter months, minimum temperatures plummet to below freezing. In Reykjavik, summer temperatures average around 13°C (55°F), while winter maximums are approximately 0°C (32°F). Rainfall is consistent throughout the year; between 25–50 mm per month, with most days experiencing some rainfall. You might expect Iceland to be colder than it actually is – it does have the word 'ice' in its name, after all – but parts of the country have a more temperate climate due to a section of the Gulf Stream flowing along the southern and western coast. The south coast of Iceland is warmer, but usually windier and wetter, than the north.

However, you should expect ALL kinds of weather. This is a hard one to describe because the weather in Iceland is so unpredictable. Take a look at the following site which gives you more information and you can watch some fun videos: <https://guidetoiceland.is/travel-info/climate-weather-and-northern-lights-in-iceland>

Weather in Akureyri

Our Fisheries Policy and Management fellows spend a good four months in the north of the country living in Akureyri. The northern fishing and university city of Akureyri is generally cooler than along the south coast and in Reykjavik because it misses out on most of the Gulf Stream. Although it's cold, Akureyri does not reach extreme levels like other places on the same latitude. Snow cover starts to build in October and melts in April, but depending on yearly trends, snow can sit on the peaks year-round. There's less rainfall than in the south due to wind patterns.

Warm Clothes

“There ´s no such thing as bad weather in Iceland, just bad clothing!”

To get through the November to May period, you should have warm outdoor clothing. Most of our fellows come from a much warmer climate and therefore do not have Icelandic gear in their everyday wardrobe. Clothes in Iceland should be planned in two-layers. When inside, all houses and buildings are well heated thanks to our geo-thermal heating, so something light is required. But outside, you will need a good warm coat which covers you well. Hat and gloves, and most importantly, sturdy footwear that has good grips for when the weather turns icy, and when the roads and pathways become slippery. Because this type of winter gear is expensive to buy new here, we recommend fellows use their settling-in allowance and visit the second-hand clothes shops of which there are many.

Your accommodation in Iceland

GRÓ FTP ´s host institute is the **Marine and Freshwater Research Institute** in the harbour town of Hafnarfjörður where the whole group will be based for the first 5 weeks of the 6-month programme. Fellows will not be based in the same housing throughout their six-months in Iceland and must be ready to move. The different housing periods are explained below.



The Marine and Freshwater Research Institute in Hafnarfjörður.

Reykjavik #1

The GRÓ house, Grensásvegur 14, 108 Reykjavík, Iceland

The GRÓ House is the Reykjavík home of the GRÓ six-month fellows from our sister programmes (GRÓ FTP, GRÓ GTP & GRÓ LRT) and houses occasionally host GRÓ M.A./M.Sc. and PhD scholarship recipients and visiting guest lecturers invited by the four GRÓ Programmes. The house is located on Grensásvegur 14, close to a major shopping

and recreational area with convenient access to bus routes. The GRÓ House is a three-storey building with units for 27 fellows located on the two upper floors. There are 19 ensuite units and 8 units with shared bathrooms, in addition to three communal rooms where fellows can gather, cook, eat, etc.



Dining table in one of the communal rooms.



Each room unit is equipped with basic cooking facilities.

This accommodation is for everyone at the beginning of the programme. You will be housed together with the other FTP fellows until the specialization lines starts in January when the Fisheries Policy and Management fellows will go to Akureyri (see below for accommodation). Those remaining in the house will stay until the last week of February 2025 when our fellows move into alternative accommodation to make way for the GRÓ LRT fellows (see below for accommodation).

To get to Hafrannsóknastofnun (Marine and Freshwater Research Institute), you will have to take 2 buses: Bus 2 from Grensás stop until Hamraborg or Sunnuhlíð and Bus 1 until Fjörður or Suðurbæjarlaug and then it's a short walk to the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute.

Reykjavik #2

Information about the March to May housing will be given to you after arrival.

This accommodation is for those who are not moving to Akureyri for the specialization lines (Quality Management, Aquatic Resource and Monitoring, and Sustainable Aquaculture). Fellows will be housed in this accommodation until the end of the programme in May.

Akureyri

Address: Kjalarsíða 1A/1B, 603 Akureyri

Kjalarsíða 1A and B are two apartment buildings with twenty apartments each. On each floor there are five apartments, the buildings have twelve one-bedroom apartments and twenty-eight two-bedroom apartments. Each apartment is self-contained and includes a separate storage room. Kitchen appliances include a fridge, a baking oven and a stove, and the bedrooms all have a built-in wardrobe. Each floor also includes a laundry room equipped with a washing machine and dryer.

From Kjalarsíða there is a short walk to the University campus. There is also a bus stop close by, a bakery in Sunnuhlíð, a 24-hour convenience store, and an eighteen-hole disc golf course on campus.

This accommodation is for those in the Fisheries Policy and Management specialization line who will be going to Akureyri at the beginning of January until right before graduation. The staff in the Fisheries Policy and Management line will provide further information on house rules.

Reykjavik #3

More information will be given to you in the following weeks when the information is ready.

This accommodation is for the fellows coming back from Akureyri at the end of the programme in May 2025. The accommodation is reserved for a week, from just before graduation to two days after graduation. It is a shared short-term rental flat in Reykjavík. Two fellows will share a bedroom with shared kitchen and bathrooms. In the case that a fellow's flight is later than the check-out date and time, FTP will arrange a temporary accommodation with the available options we have at the time.

Important notes on the accommodation

The rooms in the GRÓ House are different: a few larger en-suite rooms on the 2nd floor, some smaller en-suite rooms on 3rd floor, and several rooms with shared bathrooms (bathroom access from the hallway) on 3rd floor. When you move to the next accommodation (not including those in Fisheries Policy and Management specialization line), those who were given smaller rooms in the GRÓ House will receive larger rooms, while those in larger rooms will be in smaller rooms (according to the available accommodation). This is done in the interest of offering all fellows equal housing.

In the accommodation in Akureyri, we have reserved flat units which accommodate two fellows, two bedrooms and shared bathroom, living area and kitchen.

<p><i>If you think you are lost, please rely on Google Maps. It will be the most reliable guide on how to get to different locations in Iceland. It will show you estimate walking distances and most convenient transport routes.</i></p>
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Practical information on settling into life in Iceland

Travelling to Iceland

FTP books (or has booked) your flights to Iceland. The flight route request template outlines the conditions of the flight purchase. For every fellow, FTP guarantees one item of check-in luggage included in the travel itinerary, any additional luggage is to be paid by the fellow themselves. Hence, it is important to check the luggage limits of all the tickets organized by FTP. Finally, if a fellow's itinerary includes an overnight stay (specific requests for over-day stay), FTP will organize an airport/transit hotel en route.

First weeks in Iceland

Arrival into Reykjavik and GRÓ-House

Depending on your airport arrival time, you will be travelling to the city (45-minute drive) together with any other fellows who land at the same time or similar time. This is normally by shared taxi and FTP will inform you of the arrangements. An FTP representative will welcome you on arrival at the GRÓ House and introduce the house to you. You will be given the necessary access key/s. Waiting in your room, you will find a bus card, SIM card (for your Icelandic telephone number), and pre-paid gift/visa card (which contains financial support until a bank account can be opened). Instructions will also be available.

Medical check-up and UTL procedure

In the first days after arrival, FTP has booked medical check-up and photo sessions as required by the Directorate of Immigration's residence permit instructions. The medical checkup includes blood test, chest X-ray, and a short interview with a doctor regarding your health. The group will be divided according to the availability of appointments at the health centre (Monday 18th November and Tuesday 19th November). Everyone will go together for the immigration photo session on Tuesday. For these procedures, do not forget to bring your passport. When these requirements are fulfilled, the residence permit will be issued, and a resident card will be ordered, which FTP will collect for you and distribute. Once the residence permit has been approved, your Kennitala (Icelandic word for Social Security Number comprised of date of birth and 4 random digits) will be activated, which you can use to open a bank account in Iceland.

Bank accounts

As soon as the Kennitala (Social Security Number [210889-XXXX]) has been approved, normally within the first 2 weeks, FTP staff will take you to the closest Landsbankinn branch to open a bank account. **You will need to bring your passport to the bank for identification.** After the bank account is created, your financial support will be deposited into that account at the beginning of the month.

GRÓ-FTP allowance

GRÓ-FTP provides and pays for fellows housing which includes bathroom and kitchen facilities (some rooms will have shared bathroom) and provides fellows with a living allowance of 5,200 ISK/day until the end of 2024 with an inflation-related increase in 2025. In November and into December, your monthly allowance will be provided in the

form of a pre-paid gift/visa card because it can take some weeks to open bank accounts and arrange access to banking facilities. In November, in addition to the monthly allowance, fellows receive a settling-in allowance to the value of 50,000 ISK. The settling-in allowance is intended to cover any initial expenses that might be necessary, e.g., a warm coat and good winter shoes. The card has been issued by Arion Banki. Please familiarise yourself with the rules regarding the gift card by visiting the bank website at <https://www.arionbanki.is/english/individuals/payment-cards/gift-cards/> As soon as fellows can open a bank account, GRÓ-FTP will transfer the monthly allowance into your accounts in the beginning of each month.

Please note that once you get a bank account and a debit card, you will be able to withdraw money from any cash point machine/ATM or withdraw directly from the cashier in the bank. You will also be able to open an online account and transfer money online. However, your initial pre-paid gift/visa card can only be used at service outlets that accept Visa payment cards without a PIN number (most outlets). Unfortunately, you cannot use your card at a cash machine, but you can withdraw the balance from any branch of Arion Banki. (See the information under the heading pre-paid currency card below.)

Other Scholarship benefits

Your GRÓ-FTP scholarship includes:

- One return air ticket to and from Iceland (economy class). 1 check-in item on the journey to Iceland and 1 check-in item on the journey home.
- Living allowance of 5,200 ISK/day (rate for 2024) paid to each GRÓ-FTP fellow.
- Housing arrangements are paid for GRÓ-FTP fellows.
- Emergency medical and accident insurance during the 6 month-stay in Iceland. Please note this does not cover incidental doctor's visit to cover general health.
- Immigration fees.
- Free bus pass for travel in the capital area.
- Free SIM card and Icelandic telephone number. Wifi is free at MFRI and in the GRÓ House, but for roaming WiFi packages are available.
- Each fellow is provided with a laptop computer upon arrival in Iceland and which is theirs to keep on the successful completion of the programme.
- Each fellow is provided with a settling-in allowance.

Getting refunded for application and visa costs

All the costs that you had to pay in connection with your application and visa (eg. transport to VFS, transit visas, visa application fees and international postal costs) will be reimbursed in January 2025. Within the arrival week, you will receive a reimbursement form, where you will list all your payments which are claimable, accompanied by the receipts and short description of what each of them is. Make sure to bring all the receipts so that they can be refunded correctly. To get a refund, there must be a receipt, and usually, it is clear what is refundable and what is not. If there is a question on refunding or not, FTP staff will consider and inform you.

Facts and information about Iceland



Reykjavik

1. Here you can find **general information on Icelandic society**, the environment, economy, and public services.
www.inspiredbyiceland.com
2. **How´s life in Iceland?** The OECD Better Life Initiative is a summary of well-being indicators focusing on issues that shape the quality of people´s lives.
www.oecd.org/en/countries/iceland.html
3. **YouTube promotional video on Iceland**

18 Awe-inspiring things to do in Iceland
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xE6B-doCZV4
Iceland no-frills guide
www.youtube.com/watch?v=96VYXiAfsio
4. **Things to put you off living in Iceland - we must be objective 😊**
www.icelandwithaview.com/worst-things-living-iceland/

Discovering Iceland

Iceland is Europe's westernmost country, uniquely positioned between Europe and North America. Covering 103,000 square kilometers, it's known for its vast, stunning landscapes. Glaciers are one of Iceland's most iconic features, covering more than 11% of the island.

The fishing industry is the backbone of Iceland's economy, built on principles of sustainability and a strong commitment to environmental care. Icelandic seafood is world-renowned, with the North Atlantic often referred to as "The Icelandic Silver Mines" for its abundant cod, haddock, herring, shrimp, and shellfish. On land, Iceland's pristine rivers and streams are home to salmon and trout that are considered among the best in the world. Since 2018, both the fishing and tourism industries have driven Iceland's economic growth.

Water is another of Iceland's precious natural resources, serving a variety of purposes—from drinking and swimming to powering clean, renewable hydroelectricity. Iceland produces electricity using hydropower and geothermal steam, with geothermal energy also heating most homes across the country.

With a population of almost 400,000, Iceland has a strong community feel. The Greater Reykjavik area, which includes Reykjavik, the capital, and nearby towns of Kopavogur, Garðabær and Hafnarfjörður, is the most concentrated urban area in the country, offering a mix of cosmopolitan culture and local charm.

The name "Reykjavik" translates to "Smoky Bay," a nod to the steam rising from the geothermal hot springs first observed by settlers in the 9th century. Today, those same geothermal resources provide pollution-free energy, keeping homes and outdoor pools warm while ensuring the air is fresh and clean. A salmon-fishing river even runs through the city, and Reykjavik's outskirts are filled with beautiful spots for outdoor exploration.

Reykjavik offers something for everyone, from historical landmarks and natural beauty to museums, galleries, and unique architecture. The city's cultural scene is particularly lively, with theatres, symphony and opera, music concerts, ballet, and art exhibitions. Popular outdoor activities include swimming, fishing, cycling, horse riding, hiking, and even golfing. There are 18 swimming pools in Reykjavík, open all year long, with heated pool, hot pots and sauna facilities.

As for the language, Icelandic is a Nordic language that has changed very little since the time of the Norse settlers. English is widely spoken and understood, making it easy for visitors to get by. Icelandic features two unique letters: þ (pronounced like the "th" in "thing") and ð (pronounced like the "th" in "then").

The GRÓ FTP team is looking forward to welcoming our 2024-2025 cohort of fellows to the six-month programme, to Reykjavík, and to Iceland. Don't forget, before you leave you still have time to reach out to FTP alumni in your country for their impressions and recommendations on your time here and what to expect.