

Countries Around the World™

Iceland

Program Summary

Meet Bryndis. She and her family live in Reykjavík, the capital city of Iceland. Join Bryndis as she explores the countryside and introduces students to the wildlife, climate and geology of Iceland when she encounters natural hot-springs, lichen growing on volcanic rocks and snow-covered mountains. Students will learn how Iceland meets its energy needs when Bryndis follows huge geothermal energy transportation pipes back to her house. Furthermore, students will discover the versatility of geothermal energy when Bryndis relaxes in a naturally-heated outdoor pool before shopping for produce in a greenhouse. Then, experience the Viking heritage of Iceland while Bryndis explores an old Viking dwelling before visiting a museum populated with artifacts and the original text of an Icelandic saga. After a visit to the Althing, Iceland's parliament, Bryndis crosses a bridge spanning a tectonic fault line. Bryndis completes her journey with trips to the Reykjavík Zoo, a fish packing plant and large geothermal pool dubbed "the Blue Lagoon."

Country Information

- **location:** Northern European island between the Greenland Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, northwest of the United Kingdom
- **capital:** Reykjavík
- **official language:** No official language, but Icelandic is the national language; English, Nordic languages and German are widely spoken.
- **type of government:** constitutional republic
- **total area:** approximately 103,000 sq km
- **climate:** temperate, moderated by North Atlantic Current with mild, windy winters and damp, cool summers
- **terrain:** mostly plateau interspersed with mountain peaks and ice fields; coast deeply indented by bays and fjords
- **natural resources:** includes fish, hydropower, and geothermal power
- **industries:** includes fish processing, aluminum smelting, geothermal power, and tourism
- **agricultural products:** includes potatoes, green vegetables, mutton, dairy products, and fish

Vocabulary

flora — The plants found in a particular region and period.

lichen — A living relationship between fungi and algae, in which algae make food through photosynthesis, and fungi grow on top, protecting and anchoring the algae.

geothermal energy — Energy that is generated using the heat from inside the Earth. Geothermal energy is a renewable resource.

Icelandic krona — The currency of Iceland.

Viking — Any one of a seafaring people who left Norway, Sweden or Denmark and sailed to other parts of Europe in order to raid, trade and explore.

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Scandinavia — A region of northern Europe that consists of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and sometimes Finland, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands.

drakkar — A Viking longship.

saga — A long, narrative, written account of Vikings.

Althing — The parliament of Iceland. The oldest assembly in Europe, it first convened in 930 C.E.

tectonic plate — A sub-layer of the Earth's crust that floats on top of magma.

magma — The melted rock found beneath the Earth's surface in the mantle.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Iceland gets its power almost exclusively from geothermal energy. Lead a discussion on energy use by asking questions such as: What are the main sources of energy in the United States? What are some other ways we can produce energy without fossil fuels? Would geothermal be a good source of energy where you live? What would be the best source of alternative energy for your area?
- Inform students that they are going to experience what life is like in Iceland. Discuss why learning about a different country and a different culture is important. What does learning about another culture help you learn about yourself? What are some things that you think might be common to most cultures? How do cultural traits define people?
- The people of Iceland are proud of their Viking heritage. Discuss the importance of heritage to groups of people and individuals. Ask students to share information about their background and ancestry and what it means to them.

Follow-up Activities

- Because of the climate, greenhouses are essential to growing a wide variety of food and flowers in Iceland. Have students sketch their own designs for a greenhouse and include the plants they would want to grow inside of them. As an extension, have students plant seeds in cups and grow them. They can monitor the growth of their plants in a logbook. Students can also make a chart to compare the growth rates of different plants.
- Provide outline maps of Iceland to the students and have them label the capital and other major cities. Ask students questions like: Which bodies of water surround Iceland? Where is the capital located? Why do you think all of the cities are located on the coast?
- Many people argue that Greenland is icy and Iceland is green. Ask students if they agree with that assertion. Encourage them to use information about each country's location, climate and geography in their response. If they were given the opportunity to rename Iceland, what would they call it?
- Bryndis visits a museum that displays Icelandic sagas: ancient, epic stories about Vikings. Have students write their own versions of a saga wherein they recount a heroic deed that either they did or heard about someone else doing. Encourage students to include illustrations and even have a "reader's theater" where one student reads the saga while other students act it out.
- In order to explore the biodiversity of Iceland, students can create a fact poster about a type of plant or animal found in Iceland. Each poster should include a title, picture or illustration and a minimum of five facts.
- Vikings may have been the first people to settle Iceland, but that's not the only place where the Vikings lived! Have students investigate Viking settlements in other countries, such as Russia, Ireland and Canada. Instruct students to create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts a Viking settlement in another country with the settlements in Iceland. Consider watching the programs about Norway and Ireland in this series.

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- Pools heated by geothermal energy are very common and popular in Iceland. Students can pretend that they are the owners of a spa featuring geothermal pools and create a brochure advertising their business. Students should create a name for their spa, devise a slogan, illustrate the brochure and write a price menu for the services offered. Students can even write a Icelandic krona-to-U.S. dollar conversion table for their spa services. Current exchange rates can be found at: www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html. Select "Iceland" from the drop-down menu and the exchange rate can be found under the "Economy" banner.
- From geothermal pools and mountain ranges to fjords and earthquakes, Iceland's landscape is an example of the tectonic plates in action! Students will have fun making "fact sheets" about the tectonic plates and how they affect the Earth in general, and Iceland in particular. Instruct students to find three geologic facts related to Iceland and write each on a separate index card. Mount the cards on construction paper and include an illustration or picture. Display students' work on a wall dedicated to geology. Use these facts for a classroom trivia game. Students can even respond to yes and no questions in Icelandic. "Já" means yes and "nei" means no.

Suggested Print Resources

- Landau, Elaine. *Exploring the World of the Vikings with Elaine Landau (Exploring Ancient Civilizations with Elaine Landau)*. Enslow, Berkeley Heights, NJ; 2005.
- Scieszka, Jon. *Viking It and Liking It (Time Warp Trio)*. Viking Juvenile, New York, NY; 2002. This is a fiction text that incorporates elements of Viking culture into its narrative.
- Somervill, Barbara A. *Iceland (Enchantment of the World Series)*. Scholastic, New York, NY; 2003.

Teacher's Guide written by Brian Wales, Curriculum Specialist, Schlessinger Media

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Iceland and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the "World Factbook" link.
- www.iceland.org/us/the-embassy/Iceland-for-kids/
Discover Iceland and what it is like to live there! Learn more about Iceland's history, geography, culture, people, language, resources and government at this children's site created by the Embassy of Iceland in Washington, DC.
- www.bbc.co.uk/schools/vikings/
Learn more about the Vikings! This site, by the BBC, features a wealth of student activities and teacher resources that reveal more about the history and life of the Vikings.

Teacher's Guides for titles in this series are available at www.LibraryVideo.com

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