
II. ICELAND

The Country

Iceland is a volcanic island located in the North Atlantic mid-way between Canada and Europe. Its total area is 102,828 km², about the same size as the island of Newfoundland. About four-fifths of the country is barren and largely uninhabitable; the lowlands and cultivated areas are situated mainly near the coasts.

General Information

Climate — The Gulf Stream keeps the temperature warmer than might be expected in a country so far north. The average temperature in Reykjavik in July is 11 degrees C, and in January 1 degree C. There is often considerable rainfall, especially in the south, but it can be warm in the summer and the air is clear of pollutants.

Local Time — Local time is the same as Greenwich Mean Time throughout the year.

Population — The population is approximately 232,000 (December 1981), 53 per cent of which live in Reykjavik and district. Before 1939, a large proportion of the inhabitants were either farmers or small scale fishermen. Since then, the urban population has increased and more than 85 per cent now live in towns or village communities. Other population centres are Akureyri (14,000) and Keflavik (6,500).

Language — The language is Icelandic but most businessmen speak English well.

Political System — Iceland, one of the smallest self-governing countries in the world, is an independent republic.

Telephone — The telephone service operates 24 hours a day and is mostly automatic. It is used a great deal for daily business.