

COOL DOWN THIS SUMMER... TAKE LESSONS IN ICELAND

BY SHERYL MAIZE

I began going to Iceland in 2005 to teach my Amaizing Golf Schools and have gone each summer for approximately 10 days each summer.



It all began with a student from Iceland who got bit by the "golf bug". He pursued having me come to Iceland to visit for 6 years before I finally "gave in", took the plunge. He would call, email and even send me books about his beautiful country. I just couldn't rationalize being away from teaching golf here in Minnesota during the summer for any length of time. As a golf professional, summers are not when we take our vacations but when my student mentioned he was putting together a group of businessmen who wanted to do a golf school, my interest was peaked. What started as 6 men, quickly turned into over 30 and then I wished I had never waited so long. The country is rugged yet incredibly beautiful, and the people are crazy for golf! It is much like Minnesota with the length of their golf season and the passion of their people for the game we all love. My student, Petur Gudmundsson is no longer just a student as he and his wife have become dear friends of mine.

From my first trip over, I was so fortunate to be sponsored by one of the top golf clothing companies in Iceland: ZO-ON. Not only is it perfect for golf, it's really cool looking stuff!

My first year over, I was asked by the Icelandic Golf Association to do two seminars. One for the country's top junior golfers on college golf in the US and the second was for Icelandic golf professionals on conducting golf schools, instructional programs and swing theory. What a treat to make the presentations on their Olympic Campus. Then in 2007, my student Petur and I finally decided it was time to make a golf instruction manual for my golf schools; something Icelanders could have in their own language. Icelandair jumped on board as our sponsor and we developed the first instruction manual written in Icelandic.

Iceland has 60 golf courses etched into it's beautiful terrain that spans various elevations and conditions. Of the courses only 15 are 18 hole courses. Iceland is home to the world's most northern golf course which annually hosts the famous Artic Open at Akureyri Golf Club. Golfers play all night long under the midnight sun. If golfing through the night is not your thing, there are several other golf courses that will take your breath away during the day. Several courses are built on the beautiful sea while others host huge bluffs and glaciers as their backdrop. Golfers can hop a short flight to the Westman Islands to play a beautiful gem of a course built around an old volcano that last erupted in 1973.

Iceland has something to offer everyone from the outdoor adventure seeker to those who enjoy fine dining and museums. The history of the country draws you in and the people are incredibly funny and intelligent. English is widely spoken everywhere and no worries about getting good internet connection. Since Iceland is basically an isolated island nation, they were forced to be on the cutting edge of technology to survive. And they have done much more than survive. Iceland uses it's natural resources in a way that shames other countries. They use geothermal to heat their water and have figured out how to transport and use the energy with less than 10% energy lost in transit.

Several movies have been filmed in Iceland.....the James Bond movie is probably most memorable. And several movie stars "hide out" in Iceland, since the Icelanders treat them just like anyone else.



No trip to Iceland would be complete without an Icelandic Hot Dog (President Clinton had a fondness for them too!), a trip to the

Blue Lagoon; the world's finest natural geothermal spa, or a stroll through downtown Reykjavik and visit the largest building in the country, Hallgrímskirkja Church, which took 40 years to build and has a monument to Leif Ericsson out front. Other attractions include Gullfoss (Iceland's grand waterfalls) and Þingvellir National Park, home to the world's oldest democratic parliament founded in 930AD. Locals and foreigners alike enjoy the big Geyser, an amazing site, riding on an Icelandic horse (my favorite!) and grabbing a delicious dinner in downtown Reykjavik (fish is a must and Lamb a close second--and I never thought I liked lamb!)

For the thrill seeker a trip up on a glacier in one of their tricked up vans or Land Rovers or a trip to the Glacier Lagoon to take a boat ride out among the icebergs are also



not to be missed.

In less than one century Iceland has gone from an impoverished society living in grass covered mud houses to a thriving technological center that has one of the highest standards of living in the world. They relish their relationship with nature since they are so dependant on it. It is one of the healthiest and purest places I have ever been. I think most Minnesotans would really appreciate Iceland.....the land, the people and the Golf!