Weather and daylight times

How cold will it be?
Iceland has a prevailing maritime climate with mild winters, cool summers and high humidity. Though the name of the country invokes a rather chilly image, winters are relatively mild with an average temperature more than 15°C warmer than other countries at the same latitude (63-67°N).

An important characteristic of Icelandic weather is its changeability. It can be extremely windy and storms are common in the winter time, however, such weather is also possible during any month. Precipitation is regular but usually not very heavy. Changes in the weather can occur suddenly and without warning, and it is often said that in Iceland a “four seasons in one day” climate prevails. Visitors need to be certain that their clothing and equipment can cope with the full range of Icelandic weather. Temperatures in July can span from 0°C to as much as 25°– 30°C in the north east of the country. In Reykjavik however, the temperatures are much more stable, and are rarely higher than 20°C.

Information from The Icelandic Meteorological Office.
You can see the national weather forecast for the week on the mbl.is website.
View current weather in Iceland on the Weather Underground website.

This picture was taken at the volunteer camp at Vesturdalur in Jökulsárgljúfur, Vatnajökull National Park (July 1990). Although this is very unusual summer weather in Iceland, it shows that anything is possible!

Daylight in summer

When people think of Iceland they imagine it being cold and dark. It is true that in the winter it can get rather dark but it is more than made up for by the summer. From the end of May to the beginning of August, there are nearly 24 hours of perpetual daylight in Reykjavik, while in the northern part of the country the sun barely sets at all. Some people find that this upsets their sleeping patterns. The summer tourist season is from late May to early September. During the first half of this period the sun stays above the horizon for almost 24 hours and the interplay of light and shadows on mountains, lava fields and glaciers yield an ever-changing landscape.

Daylight times (Reykjavik, 2011)

	Sunrise	Sunset
May 1st	05:01	21:51
May 15th	04:14	22:36
June 1st	03:24	23:29
June 21st (longest day)	02:55	00:04
July 1st	03:05	23:57
July 15th	03:40	23:25
August 1st	04:33	22:33
August 15th	05:18	21:45
September 1st	06:09	20:45
September 15th	06:50	19:55
October 1st	07:36	18:58
October 15th	08:17	18:09
November 1st	09:10	17:12
December 22nd (shortest day)	11:23	15:30

Times from: www.timeanddate.com
Further information available at www.gaima.com

The Northern lights

The aurora borealis (or northern lights) are caused by electrically charged particles emitted by the sun and interacting with the earth's magnetic field. The particles (chiefly electrons) are accelerated towards the earth and guided towards two zones, one near the North Pole, the other near the South Pole. Colliding with the upper atmosphere at very great speeds, the particles cause the air to glow in the beautiful colours of the aurora.

Iceland is in the middle of the aurora zone where the phenomenon is most frequently seen, however the intensity and the frequency of the lights are extremely variable. In Iceland the aurora are most often seen before midnight, from about 21:00 to 01:00 (GMT). The brightest aurora are usually seen in the spring and autumn rather than mid-winter. The aurora may be visible from late August but their appearance can never be guaranteed.

From "Visitor's Guide, 2003" (Netid info, Reykjavik) - The Visitor's Guide website has a huge range of information about Iceland as well as their current online guide.

View photographs of the northern lights at "Iceland on the Web".