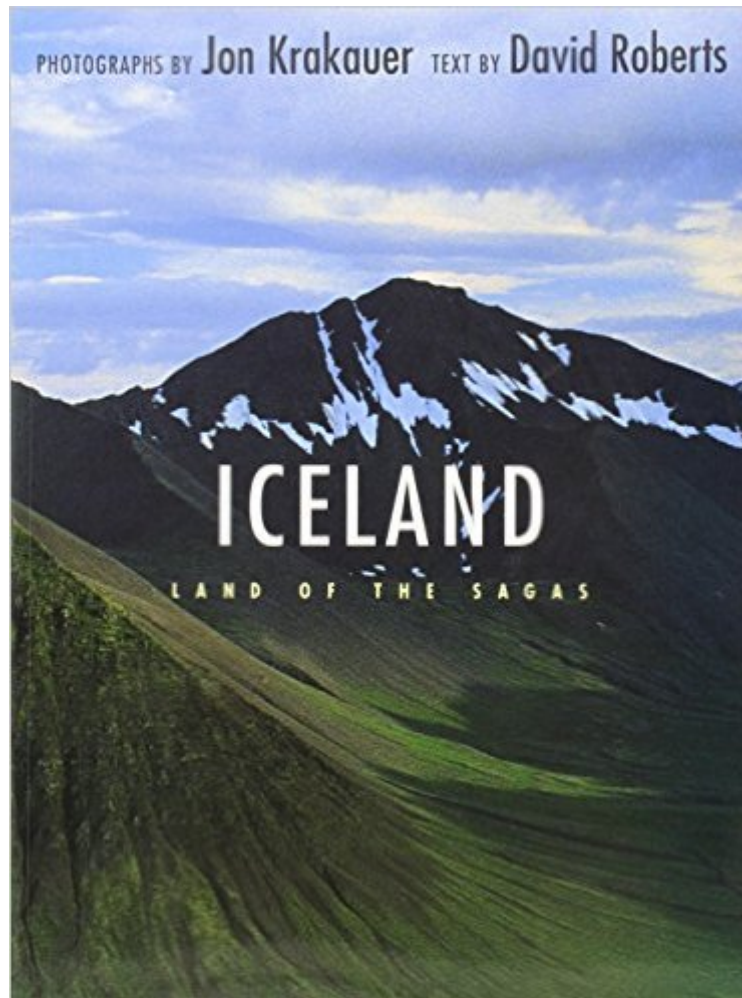


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Iceland: Land Of The Sagas



Synopsis

"We raised our fists and cheered. . . . With the sagas in our heads, with Iceland at its wildest beneath our boots, it would not have been impossible to see Þórdr clumping along the summit ridge, prodding the glacier with his staff, ready to show us the way down." Iceland is a pictorial classic on one of the last "undiscovered" countries in Europe--reissued for the first time in paperback. Iceland is often thought to be covered by ice, but in fact it is gloriously green. Lush meadows, wildflower fields, and miles of rich tundra cover a landscape of remarkable variety: deep lakes, bubbling hot springs, tumbling waterfalls, snow-capped mountains. It's also a landscape amazingly alive with massive lava flows and enormous glaciers. The human story of Iceland goes back more than eleven thousand years, and its heritage is told here in a treasury of riveting sagas of real-life heroes and all manner of supernatural beings. Both the land and the people of one of Europe's most gorgeous countries come to life in this colorful account of the authors' adventures as they walk, climb, and photograph their way through Iceland and connect to the bone-chilling sagas and the unfamiliar terrain. With breathtaking photographs from critically acclaimed writer and journalist Jon Krakauer, author of the international bestsellers *Into Thin Air* and *Into the Wild*, and a penetrating narrative from *Outside* contributing editor and travel writer David Roberts, Iceland splendidly captures the spirit of this enigmatic country. Circumnavigating Iceland in summer and winter, Krakauer and Roberts encounter tales of monks and Vikings, outlaws and adventurers, trolls and witches. While touring and photographing, they discover the myths and legends of Iceland's stirring history. Numerous other feats--including a hazardous winter climb to the summit of one of Iceland's tallest mountains--round out a fascinating introduction to this unique and beautiful land.

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Customer Reviews

Another coffee table paperweight? Not by a long shot! I am planning a trip to Iceland and have been reading fairly intensively in the subject. When I began reading this book, I did not expect to learn much. What a pleasant surprise! I spent a whole Sunday poring through it and was surprised at how excellent the text is -- and how well Jon Krakauer's superb photographs supplements it. David Roberts digs deep into the sagas, quoting from such relatively abstruse sources as GIMLI'S SAGA, GRETTIR'S SAGA, and BARD'S SAGA. The helpful bibliography lists a number of works I never knew existed, including a book by Sir Richard Francis Burton, the African explorer, about a summer he spent in Iceland as well as a number of rare travel books written by Europeans going back as far as the 18th century. One thing unique about this book is that Roberts and Krakauer visit many out-of-the-way places mentioned in the sagas, such as the almost inaccessible Isle of Drangey, where Grettir the Strong met his death. If you hope to visit Iceland, get this book first. It will give you not only an excellent background in the sagas but an awe for this isolated land that is so close and yet so far.

Truly a beautiful book! I would have expected to pay quite a bit more for the heavy paper and breathtaking pictures. I found it to be an excellent introduction to Iceland. The first 40% of the book is devoted to a general introduction to the land, early history, and flora and fauna. After that, the authors intertwine travelogue and stories from the Icelandic sagas to give a picture of early Iceland, and how the history, geography and people have all combined to produce today's Iceland. About half text, half stunning pictures, this book is a must-have!

As a native Icelander I have been feeling very nostalgic for my homeplace and for my history of more than 1100 years since I read Krakauer's and Roberts's book: Iceland, Land of the Sagas. My memories were rekindled by seeing the excellent photographs by Krakauer and the well researched and presented narrative by Roberts. I like in particular the way Roberts weaves the sagas to the local of the Saga in present day Iceland and his telling the story of Iceland through the eyes of earlier foreign travellers who wrote about the country. I was especially enthralled by Roberts excellent retelling of the Sagas and was brought back repeatedly to my Icelandic study days. The sensitivity and fairness that the authors handle their presentation is exemplary. Krakauer's

photographs give a vivid and true picture of the varied and harsh beauty of Iceland as I know it. I highly recommend this book to everyone who is interested in history or those who might contemplate traveling to Iceland. It's also a good book for those who are interested in the Viking Age and its history.

I am glad I got this book just for the text, which is excellent. But I'm surprised at rave reviews for the photos, which to me are absurd. They hardly explore Iceland's unique topography and instead turn it into a generic rugged Anywhere. Notice that in almost every photo there's some sign of habitation: a building, an animal, a person in a boat, etc. The thing that distinguishes Iceland is that there's NO ONE there. You can drive for hours, as I have along the coast on a road that's simply a leveling of the gravel, without seeing another car, building or even a road sign. It's creepy and exhilarating. It's the ideal place to be alone. The landscape is so unusual it reminds you of nothing familiar, nothing from your past. And except for rocky outcroppings, it's flat in a way that makes you feel you could be on the moon. I love Iceland, am obsessed with it, and go there as often as possible. For me it is a source of existential peace. For a true picture of the landscape, listen to the music of Sigur Ros, and investigate the photographs of artist Olafur Eliasson. Or go and take your own pictures. They'll be better than these.

I ordered this book before coming to Iceland-- When I received the book I first was amazed by the Photography, it was outstanding. I couldn't wait until I was in Iceland so that I visit some of the places I saw in the book. (It looks even better in person-- no trick photography here) I also read about the sagas-- Sagas in Iceland are a very big part of the culture--No ifs ands or buts. They love telling stories about the sagas and thanks to this book I have been able to carry on some interesting conversations with the local Icelandic folks. Most sagas are rich with excitement. If you are looking for a book with great photos mixed with Icelandic culture-- Here's your book!

I'm fascinated with Iceland. I'm a freak, I guess. For some reason, I want nothing more than to learn the entire history of the country and then move there. Being the "Icelandite" that I am, I read any literature on the country that I can get my hands on. This book was excellent. A perfect combination of color photos and text. The text is filled with and almost exclusively pertains to the Icelandic sagas. Reading excerpts from them and then looking at pictures of the sites where they took place gives you a great idea of what it must've been like to live in Iceland about 1000 years ago. It also gives you a good picture of what daily life is like. It shows you the contrasts between city life in Reykjavik, and

country life in... well, just about everywhere else. Being the isolated country that it is, Iceland has had the chance to develop and nurture its own very individual culture.

This book gave me a new appreciation for the remarkable history of the world's most literate people. The photography was (for lack of a more original word) breathtaking. This tome is perfect for anyone who wants to dispell friends' misconceptions (my copy has been lent out numerous times), learn more, or just look at splendid photos of Europe's best-kept vacation secret.

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