

CYCLING IN ICELAND

If you are planning an adventurous cycling trip, Iceland is unique in many ways. It is safe to travel here if you are properly prepared, and you will find Icelanders both helpful and friendly. You can plan your own trip, but there are also a few companies that specialize in guided bike tours.

Iceland's cool, oceanic climate is quite mild for its latitude, thanks to the Gulf Stream. The summers are short, and the best time to visit is late May to early September. The average daytime temperature around the coast during this period is 10-12°C (50-55°F). The average daily sunshine in July and lugust is 5-6 hours, and the nights are bright during the summer months. You might even experience the midnight sun if you are near the Arctic Circle.

lowever, the weather is extremely changeable and unpredictable, so you should always be prepare or the unexpected. You might encounter sudden strong winds and even snow in the middle of summer. Even if you stick to the main roads, you should always consult the weather forecast, and in all cases carry warm clothing with you. You can get the weather forecast by telephone (902-0600), on www.vedur.is or just by asking the locals. Icelanders follow the weather forecast almost religiously Wind speed and gusts (vindhviður) from windy places on the main roads are shown on electronic signs 10–30 km before those areas, and also on www.road.is. At wind speeds above 15-20 m/s, cycling becomes dangerous. Close to some mountains, gusts easily exceed 30 m/s, even pushing your bike can be dangerous

Try to keep your plans flexible so you can go with the wind or wait at a safe place. If you have to cycle against the wind, consider cycling in the late evening and at night (in June and July) as the wind often calms down in the evening. This has the added benefits of encountering far less traffic and experiencing wondrous sunsets and sunrises, but access to shops and services is of course limited. In the interior highlands, temperatures are lower, and the storms may be more extreme than in the lowlands.

Most main roads are asphalted (albeit often with a somewhat rough surface), but there are still many gravel roads which are often the roads with the least traffic. The main highway in Iceland, Route 1, circles the country in around 1400 kilometers. Once you leave the south-west part of the country, traffic volume decreases, but vehicles still move fast. The roads also become narrower. especially once you exit Route 1. There is far less traffic on the gravel roads, but you may encounter

long stretches with potholes, "washboards" or loose sand.

The mountain roads in the interior highlands are usually closed until late May or even as late as July, depending on the seasonal snow melt. The Road Administration, www.road.is, informs about road conditions and summer opening dates.

The highland roads are all rough gravel/dirt roads of various quality, ranging from packed mud to washboards, loose gravel and even sand, on which it may be impossible to cycle when it has been dry for some period. Many rivers must be crossed at fords and can become dangerous during or after rain, and, in the case of glacial rivers, during warm periods. You may therefore have to wait until late night or early morning to cross certain glacial rivers during the summer. Mountain bikes with fat knobby tires for good traction and comfort and low gear ratios to help

climb steep hills are recommended. Please remember that in the highlands the nearest lodging can be far away. The highlands are generally devoid of any shops and services. There may be terrible storms, sandstorms or snow. Large areas have no mobile telephone coverage, and some tracks are very lonely. Depending on the road surface, progress can be very slow, and you may cover as little as 25 km per day. If you travel on lonely tracks or hike away from any roads, make sure that someone: friends, hut wardens or www. safetravel.is, knows about your travel plans, so that help can be arranged in the case of an emergency. The map overleaf only shows traffic volume, major fords, and the areas in which loose sand can be expected. Please study the map legend carefully. Those who plan to travel in the interior highlands must aquire further information that is not supplied by this map.

Traffic regulations

Cycling is allowed on all roads except the Hvalfjörður tunnel. However, the motorway-like main roads in the Capital Area are not suitable for cycling. It is better to use the bike paths there. When cycling on roads, cyclists should cycle on the right side of the lane farthest to the right, and allow motor vehicles to pass

Cycling on sidewalks and walking paths is legal in Iceland, but cyclists have to show regard for It is prohibited to damage the vegetation and soil by off-road or off-track cycling. The tire tracks

may cause erosion, and plants grow very slowly in Iceland. Bicycles are required to have head- and taillights when cycling in darkness, through tunnels or

when visibility is poor, but not in daylight. Children, 14 years and younger, are required to use bicycle helmets when cycling.

Cycling into and out of Reykjavík and Akureyri

Within the Capital Area, there is a rather good network of bike paths. The best routes for cycling into and out of Reykjavík are shown on the map above. In addition, it is usually ok to cycle on all minor roads; many of these have bike paths as well.

Note that cycling on sidewalks and walking paths is legal in Iceland, but cyclists have to show regard for pedestrians. Some particularly narrow or uneven sections are marked as "slow" paths on the map; cycling on nearby "orange" roads may be faster.

Cycling on the large motorway-like main roads is not recommended Outside of the built-up areas, there are no bike paths. Within a 50 km radius of Reykjavík, car traffic is heavy and fast on the main roads. Road No. 1 is especially narrow and dangerous for cycling, but the road to Keflavík is wider. It is much more pleasant to cycle on the smaller roads to Krýsuvík. Nesiavellir, Þingvellir or Hvalfjörður via Mosfellsheiði/Kjósarskarð.

Another good way to avoid the car traffic is to use public transport to e.g. Hveragerði, Akranes or Borgarnes. The buses to Akranes or Borgarnes take you through the only tunnel in Iceland that is not passable by bike: the Hvalfjörður tunnel. If you want to cycle around Hvalfjörður, which boasts fantastic nature and sparse car traffic, you may get off the bus in Kjalarnes at Esjuskáli. East of Akureyri, a rather narrow, hilly and busy section of road No. 1 can be avoided by cycling on

racing bikes. It is open despite of ongoing tunnel construction works at both ends of the road. The climbs are gentle and steady, and there are very few cars.

Always carry warm, wind- and rainproof clothing; gloves and a warm hat may be necessary even in the summer. Tents must be able to withstand strong winds. A robust trekking bike or mountain bike, for the highlands, with low gears is optimal. Wearing parts such as tires, brake pads, chain and bearings should be in good condition, as the next bike shop may be far away. It is advisable to carry tools and spare parts for field repairs. The most common problems are flat tires, broken spokes, a broken chain, loose or lost screws and nuts, split derailleur and brake cables and broken aluminum luggage racks.

The Cycling map shows all of the places where camping or indoor accommodation is available, as well as huts and shelters in uninhabited areas.

Camping: It is encouraged to use the designated campsites. For cyclists, we have prepared specific information about all campsites like car-free areas for tents, wind shelter, hot showers, indoor facilities etc., see www.cyclingiceland.is/camping_huts. You may ask for a printed version at Reykjavík campsite and tourist informations, but we recommend to download it to your smartphone. When the next campsite is too far away, walking travellers and cyclists are generally permitted to put up their tent anywhere except on cultivated land, too close to residential buildings and in especially

Huts in the highlands are guite likely to be full and should be booked well in advance.

It is common courtesy to ask farmers for permission before camping on their land. In the lowlands, main roads through cultivated areas and forests are fenced in most places. In areas with sparse vegetation (lava fields, sand plains, and at more than 200 m above sea level), most roads are unfenced. Take care not to damage the fragile vegetation and soil and take all garbage with you. Always secure your tent to withstand sudden strong winds that may start at any time.

Food can only be purchased in towns and some other highway locations. You will therefore have to take enough food for several days if you are crossing the highlands. As Iceland is sparsely populated, there may be 100-200 km between shops even on the Ring Road, e.g. between Mývatn and

Water can usually be accessed quite easily in the countryside from streams and rivers. Never take water from areas downstream of farms or fields. Instead, you should visit the farms and ask for tap water. Water from glacial rivers should only be drunk in an emergency and should preferably be filtered. Two liters of water carrying capacity is usually enough, however, in sand and lava areas without any surface water, it may be necessary to carry more water.

Health care

In the case of an emergency, call 112.

For less urgent cases, you will find medical centers in most villages/towns with >100 inhabitants. Specialist doctors, dentists and hospitals may be found in larger towns. Pharmacies are in most larger villages/towns, while in small places a limited range of medicine may be available upon request in the local shop. Ask the locals to find the nearest help, or call 112 in emergency.

In Reykjavík, you can go to any medical center on working days for general medical advice. On evenings and weekends, contact *Læknavaktin* in Kópavogur, tel. 1700. For emergencies, call 112 and there is a 24h emergency ward at Landspítali hospital in Fossvogur.

Travelling by plane and arrival at Keflavík airport

jing their bikes on flights to Iceland must pack them in suitable boxes. Keflavík airport: Conditions for cyclists were greatly improved in 2016. While it is not permitted to pack/unpack bicycles in the terminal building, a special container with an assembly stand for bicycles, tools and information material has been set up 100 m east of the arrivals exit (see the Keflavík mini map). Bike boxes can be stored at Bílahótel (grey building marked "Geysir", 800 m to the northwest, Arnarvöllur 4, tel. 455-0000)

cling from/to Keflavík airport: A new bike path to the town of Keflavík begins at the bike container. To all other destinations you need to cycle on the roads. The main road to Reykjavík is quite wide

for the most part, but there is heavy traffic. Shuttle bus from Keflavík airport to Revkiavík: *Flybus* connects with every flight; they also provide

onward transport from the BSÍ bus terminal to Reykjavík campsite/City hostel and other guesthouses *Strætó* route 55 operates to Hafnarfjörður or BSÍ, but this particular bus does NOT take bicycles. Reykjavík campsite/City hostel offer tools to assemble/disassemble bikes, and bike boxes can be

Most domestic flights depart from Revkjavík city airport; please note that there are two terminals the old gravel road over Vaŏlaheiði (see the Akurevri mini map). It is suitable for all bikes except (see the Revkjavík map). In most domestic airports, you will find some space to work on your bike. Just be considerate and don't take up too much space.

Travelling by bus and bike

In Iceland, public transport buses are operated by several companies. The Public Transport map shows which company operates which routes. For schedules, prices etc., refer to the operator's websites. On most routes, reservations are not possible, but a few routes require pre-booking for bikes. It is always advisable to contact the operator you are intending to travel with before setting off in order to confirm your travel plans and check for weather-related changes. Always ask about the conditions for taking your bike on the bus.

Some *Strætó* routes, shown with dashed lines, run on demand only. Call the operator several hours before departure. Long-distance buses depart from different locations in Reykjavík, marked on the Reykjavík map.

Strætó: Mjódd terminal, a few services also from BSÍ terminal. *10YO* and the *Flybus*: BSÍ terminal. Sterna: Harpa and campsite. Trex: City center and campsite. Buses have scheduled stops in every village, but, if necessary, you can get on or off the bus anywhere where the main road meets smaller roads on the bus route in rural areas. Just be sure to make it

clear that you want the bus to stop. In the Capital Area and other areas with local buses, buses only stop at marked stops. In rural areas, bikes are put in the luggage compartments of the buses. Some buses have additional space in trailers or on bike racks. On most services, there is capacity for $4 \pm x$ bikes. The exact number of bikes on any given bus can not be guaranteed but bikes are usually accepted as long

as there is room for them. For all rural buses, you can buy tickets on the bus with cash or credit card. For Strætó, packs of 20 tickets are also sold at a few filling stations in rural areas and at some bus terminals and swimming pools in the Capital Area. Apart from *Strætó*, most operators charge ca. 3500 kr for the transport

The yellow *Strætó* city buses in the Capital Area can accommodate up to 2 bicycles, if the space is not needed for other passengers, children's prams or wheelchairs. On the bus, tickets must be payed for in cash (ca. 420 kr) or bought in advance; bikes go free of charge. Nevertheless, cycling is usually the better alternative within Reykjavík.

Travelling by ferry and bike

The Smyril Line ferry sails every week all year between Hirtshals in Denmark, Tórshavn in the Faroe Islands and Seyðisfjörður. Most domestic ferries charge for the transport of bikes. Pre-booking for bikes is not necessary, but

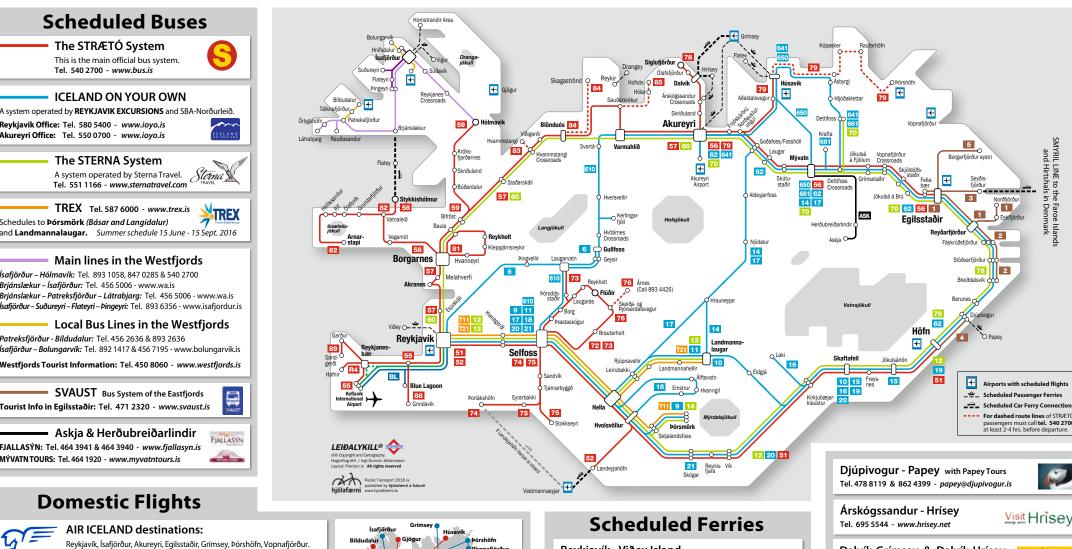
you should contact the operators to confirm sailings. The ferry to Vestmannaeyjar sometimes has difficulties with the harbour in Landeyjahöfn. As an alternative, they operate from Porlákshöfn. On such days, Strætó route 52 terminates in Hvolsvöllur, and a special bus connects with the ferry in Porlákshöfn.

The ferry across Breiðafjörður makes an intermediate stop on the small island Flatey. Cyclists who want to stay in Flatey have their bikes lifted on/off the ship by crane, while for through passages, bikes are stored on the car deck.

EuroVelo 1 – The Atlantic coast route There are plans for Iceland to become part of the EuroVelo network of designated cycling routes,

Although the intended route Seyðisfjörður – South Iceland – Reykjavík has not been formally opened yet, it is already shown on this map.

www.publictransport.is



Reykjavík, Vestmannaeyjar, Höfn, Húsavík, Bíldudalur, Gjögu Tel. 562 4200 & 562 2640 - www.eagleair.is

KEFLAVIK AIRPORT TRANSFERS Tel. 580 5400 - www.flybus.is Tel. 586 1310 - www.f

Reykjavik

Call / text: + (354) 694 8956

www.reykjaviksewaytours.is

Travelling in Iceland

www.publictransport.is

www.planiceland.com

www.visiticeland.com

www.visitrevkiavik.is

www.travelnet.is

www.nat.is

www.utivist.is

en.ja.is/kort

CYCLIST'S WEBSITES AND BLOGS

USEFUL PRINTED INFORMATION

EMERGENCY NUMBER 112

CYCLING ICELAND Summer 2016

List of campsites and huts

Leaflet available at tourist informations and camp sites and www.cyclingiceland.is/camping_huts

Other free online maps

www.cyclingiceland.is/reykjavik

reykjavik.is/gonguoghjolastigar

www.bikingiceland.com

members.ziggo.nl/erens/iceland.htm

widely sold in book shops, filling stations

particularly for travelling in the highlands.

and tourist information centres.

Fjorðungskort 1:300,000

Good maps are recommended

Ferðakort 1:250,000

bv lðnú

Bike plan of the Capital Area

www.cyclingiceland.is

www.fi.is

www.safetravel.is

Tel. 570 3030 - www.airiceland.is

EAGLE AIR destinations:

Rent-A-Bike / Segway Tours / Bike Tours / Private Tours

USEFUL WEBLINKS FOR CYCLISTS

Reykjavik Excursions

Ægisgarður 7 - Old Harbour

Weather in Iceland

Road conditions

www.hagkaup.is

www.byko.is

www.hostel.is

www.farmholidays.is

www.belgingur.is/locales/en

Filling stations also offering food, WC

Shop chains with seasonal bike

Accommodation & camp sites

www.cyclingiceland.is/camping_huts

The Icelandic Mountain Bike Club

www.fiallahiolaklubburinn.is/english

widely available in tourist informations etc.

Around Iceland/ Rund um Island

& camp sites, places of interest etc.

Books available in book shops

and South Iceland. Google it!

Comprehensive information with town

The Biking Book of Iceland by Ómar

Smári Kristinsson (4 books available). Cycle

trails in the Westfjords, West, South West

maps, phone numbers of all accommodation

www.cvclinadutchairl.com

Free booklets

and air pumping, found in every town

Mountain huts:

Básar in Goðaland, tel +354 893 2910 Fimmvörðuskáli hut, tel +354 893 4910

Reykir - Drangey with Drangey Tours Tel. 821 0090 & 821 0091 - www.drangey.net

Tel. 433 2254 - www.seatours.is

Reykjavík - Viðey Island

Tel. 481 2800 - www.herjolfur.is

Tel. 519 5000 & 533 5055 - www.eldina.is

Vestmannaeyjar from Landeyjahöfi

Stykkishólmur - Flatey - Brjánslækur

Drangey Tours

E EIMSKIP

2

Seatours

FERÐAFÉLAG ÍSLANDS

Dalvík-Grímsey & Dalvík-Hrísey

Akureyri - Grímsey Arctic Circle Express

To Hornstrandir Area & Vigur

BOREA: Tel. 456 3322 - www.borea.is

Húsavík-Flatey & Húsavík-Grímsey

Gentle Giants - Tel. 464 1500 - www.gentlegiants.is

VESTURFERÐIR (also to Vigur): Tel. 456 5111 - www.vesturferdir.is

West Tours 🌊

Tel. 458 8970 - www.saefari.is

Tel. 462 6800 - www.ambassador.is

www.fi.is



VATNAJÖKULSÞJÓÐGARÐUR NATIONAL PARK

Travel Association, Laugavegi 178, Reykjavík, tel. +354 562 1000

Other huts: Strútsskáli, Dalakofi, Sveinstindur, Skælingar,

www.utivist.is - utivist@utivist.is

Álftavötn. For more infomation call our office, tel. 562 1000

Vatnajökull National Park spans the largest glacier of Iceland, vast highland areas, volcanoes, rivers and lakes. In its southwestern part, Lakagígar is a series of craters formed during the Skaftáreldar eruption in 1783 which left behind lava flows extending over 60 km. In this magnificent area we recommend three routes leading to the Laki craters. Please note that services in this highland area are limited. You need to bring all provisions, and remember to take enough water from the fords and rest places. There are a few huts and you can put up your tent at the campsite in Blagil which provides water and a shower

The Laki circle (39 km)

The heart of the Laki area is encircled by the roads F207 and F206. Within this ring, there are many beautiful volcanic craters. Fragile green moss contrasts with the landscape of black ash and lava. There are interesting hiking trails at the Laki mountain and at the Tjarnargígur crater lake. The river Varmá which has been displaced by the lava flows is crossed in the western part of road F207. The original path of Varmá was 2 km south of Laki where you can see only a few small streams today. Water is also available at the rest places at Laki and Tjarnargígur and in Blágil.

The middle route F206 (35 km)

The main access road to Laki is F206. It is quite easy to cycle, the climbs are not too steep, but you need to cross several fords. The route begins 6 km west of Kirkjubæjarklaustur. After passing the bridge over Skaftá, a 1 km detour to Fjaðrárgljúfur gorge is recommended before continuing north. After the last farm Heiðarsel a track along a power line leading to Leiðólfsfell intersects the F206. Continuing on the main road, you pass a deserted farm, and 1 km farther north you will reach the first of several fords. Geirlandsá is the largest, but usually safe to cross. North of Geirlandsá, a short detour to the east leads to Fagrifoss, a stunning waterfall. After several smaller fords and Hellisá ford, you reach the Laki circle at the crossroads of roads F206 and F207.

Cycling Iceland Summer 2016 Editor: Sesselja Traustadóttir, Director of Hjólafærni á Íslandi.

Produced by **Hjólafærni á Íslandi** in cooperation with Andreas Macrander, Ómar Smári Kristinsson, Nína Ivanova and Hugarflug. © **Hjólafærni á Íslandi 2016** – 4th English Edition. All information subject to change. Copyright exists on all layouts, designs and logos. ISBN 978-9935-9321-0-5

The Cycling Iceland 2016 map is based on maps from the National Land Survey of Iceland. Special thanks to: Haukur Eggertsson, Páll Guðjónsson, Darri Mikaelsson, Orri Páll Jóhannsson, Þórður H. Ólafsson, Kristinn Jón Eysteinsson, Tómas Guðberg Gíslason, Erla Bil Bjarnardóttir, Helga Stefánsdóttir, Bjarki Valberg, Jón G. Snæland, Ásbjörn Ólafsson and other employees of The Road inistration, Karl Benediktsson, Kjartan Guðnason, Robert Berman, Jessica Ann Tadhunter, Christina M Mary Frances Davidson, Maria Ericsdottir, Morten Lange, Árni Davíðsson, staff members in GuðjónÓ,

National Land Survey of Iceland, The Environment Agency of Iceland, Icelandic Tourist Board and tourist information staff around Iceland. Cycling Iceland is supported fby most of the companies that are listed with address and phone numbers Other companies are listed under "Google it!" Based on info available to us as on 20 May 2016. Title photo from Fjarðarheiði near Seyðisfjörður taken by Andreas Macran

While we take great care to get the details correct, we cannot accept responsibility for any errors. Check details for yourself, take care, and enjoy your time cycling in Iceland. This map is dedicated to our generation, our children and our future.

You are welcome to contact us for any comments, ideas and corrections and if you want to order the Cycling Iceland 2016 map. hjolafaerni@hjolafaerni.is - www.hjolafaerni.is - tel. +354 864 2776



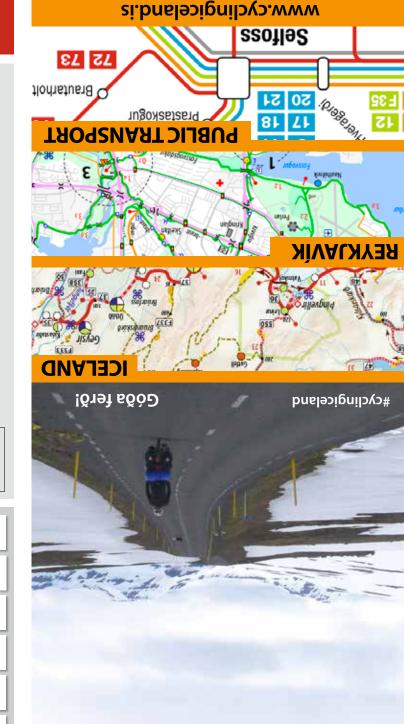
The western route (48 km)

The western route is best to cycle on the return trip from Laki. In this direction, the steep sections are downhill, and there is less danger of getting lost. In a lava field in the southwest of the Laki circle, turn on a track to the hut Hrossatungur. After the hut, the route continues to the south, always remain on the main track. After some streams, the track passes the western side of Leiðólfsfell, where there is accommodation in a turf hut. 1 km farther south, turn left at the power line and follow it to the southeast. 2 km later, you will reach the ford across Hellisá. It is quite shallow and calm and usually easy to cross. The main track continues along the power line until reaching the F206. Cyclists may turn right 1.5 km after the ford onto a horse riding path which is closed for motorized traffic. You will pass a gate and follow the path to the south. After 5 km, the track leaves the highland and descends to the farm Skaftárdalur. From the farm, use the bridge over Skaftá. After 4 km, you reach road F208 / 208 that connects with road No. 1.

The eastern route (40 km)

This jeep track is not always well-defined, and it has some steep climbs in both directions. The route begins roughly 0.5 km south of the rest place at mount Laki. The first section (formerly a part of F206) goes eastward along the southern foot of mount Laki. Then the track turns left uphill to the northeast. In the slopes of mount Blængur, the route turns to the south and descends. After a turnoff to the nearby hut Blængur (closed) the main track continues south, crosses a few streams and aims at Miklafell. At the mountain, a path to the northeast leads to Laufbalavatn. At the lake you can find one of the most remarkable systems of lava caves in Iceland, protected as a natural monument. If you are properly equipped, you may explore these magnificent caves, but take care to not get lost.

The main track turns west around Miklafell, and is rather rough in this section. South of the mountain, a short detour leads to the hut Miklafell (accommodation). Continuing to south through a lava field, the track improves while descending to the farm Þverá. After 2 km you finally reach road No. 1 at Orrustuhóll which is a conspicuous tuff "island" in a lava flow ca. 15 km east of Kirkjubæjarklaustur.



Hoos souf mox

SUMMER 2016 CYCLING ICELAND



Slow Down, Enjoy!

