

Family Adventures worldwide



Iceland

Icebergs & Volcanoes

Issued Sep 2002. Valid from 01 May 2003 to 31 Dec 2003

JOINING INFORMATION

Please consult your agent for flights to reach the joining point of this trip.

When a booking has been made a separate 'joining instructions' voucher will be forwarded to you giving details of our joining hotel and where to rendezvous with the Tour Leader. **NB You must bring a copy of your insurance policy with you to show to the tour leader at the start of the tour.**

NB The joining information is occasionally subject to change and must be checked with your agent immediately prior to departure.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

10 days/9 nights Land Only Reykjavik to Reykjavik

Join Reykjavik on Sunday (day 1)
End Reykjavik on Tuesday (day 10)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Reykjavik. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of joining point and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights on this tour, we particularly mention:

- * **SKAFTAFELL NATIONAL PARK** Opportunity to do some walking in one of Iceland's most beautiful parks
- * **JUKULARLON LAGOON** Boat trip to Glacier to see icebergs
- * **DETTIFOSS** Europe's most powerful waterfall
- * **LAKE MYVATN** A unique region for volcanic activity and prolific birdlife
- * **GULLFOSS WATERFALL** The Golden Waterfall
- * **THINGVELLIR** Lake and vast plain of fissures
- * **GEYSIR** Region of spouting hot springs

Situated just south of the Arctic Circle, Iceland is the habitat for an extraordinarily high population of seabirds, including some 15 million Puffins. In summer it is ablaze with mosses, lichens and colourful alpine flowers. Geologically, it is unique. A place of spectacular scenery with volcanic fires unleashed from beneath great glaciers, where the Earth's crust is still a blistering commotion of boiling mud pools, steaming geysers and fiery lava. In the mountainous and uninhabited interior are deserts every bit as barren and beautiful as the Central Sahara.

N.B. Accommodation is limited in remote areas of Iceland; and as the tourist season is short and limited, a practical solution is to convert small schools and farmhouses into comfortable summer guesthouses. As a result, rooms have shared facilities at most nightstops.

Walking Grades and Fitness:

Grading is a somewhat difficult topic as much depends on the individual's own perception of his or her abilities. The following is intended as a **general guide to our walking grades**. This is rated **Grade A**.

Grade A walks (Easy): tend to be short day walks and rambles at low altitudes which are suitable for people of all ages. They can be enjoyed by anyone who leads a reasonably active life and no special preparation is required. Many of the walks in this category are optional.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Note: While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route printed below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Day 1. Sunday. Join tour Reykjavik
Arrive Reykjavik and check into hotel.
Overnight hotel with breakfast. H.

Day 2. Drive to Hella

This morning we include a city sightseeing tour of Reykjavik, the world's most northerly capital. Though established by the Norse chieftain Ingolfur Arnarson around 874AD, real development only started at the end of the 18th century. The city is relatively small and can be explored on foot. The oldest part is near the harbour, around the lake known as Tjornin, a favourite spot for strolling. Duck, geese, swans and Arctic tern can be observed at close quarters and the harbour is always busy with trawlers and other vessels. From Reykjavik we drive on open roads by bus to Hella. From here one can see the distant Mount Hekla, Iceland's most active volcano, rising above the flat plain on which Hella lies.
Overnight guesthouse with dinner and breakfast. L+.

Day 3. Drive to Skaftafell National Park area

From Hella we drive to the beautiful Skaftafell region. We stop to visit Seljalandsfoss waterfall, where it is possible to walk behind the waterfall for a different perspective! We continue to Skogafoss waterfall and Skogar Folk Museum and arrive at the picturesque village of Vik. We'll stroll on a beautiful beach near Vik and look for sea birds including puffins, which nest on the cliffs during the summer. Later we cross the 'Black Desert', a part of the world's greatest lava field created in modern times (1783-4) and take a walk along the beautiful gorge of Fjadrargljufur canyon, carved out by water since the ice age ended in Iceland some 10,000 years ago. After crossing Skeidararsandur, the great sandy plain (which was flooded in 1996 by glacier meltwater from a volcanic eruption under Glacier Vatnajokull, Europe's greatest glacier) we arrive at our overnight accommodation in the Skaftafell region.
2 nights farm guesthouse with dinner and breakfast. L+.

Day 4. In the Skaftafell region

The day is spent walking and enjoying the space and silence of this remote area. Your tour leader will be able to recommend walks according to the interests and abilities of the group, but we will not miss Svartifoss - Black Waterfall - where a beautiful mountain stream flows over a natural wall of basalt stone pillars. The dramatic scenery is a tapestry of colourful flower-filled meadows

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and contrasting, stark, wasteland where the vegetation has been swept away by glacial floods. There may be the possibility of trying some ice climbing or horse-riding today.

Day 5. Bus to Egilsstadir region

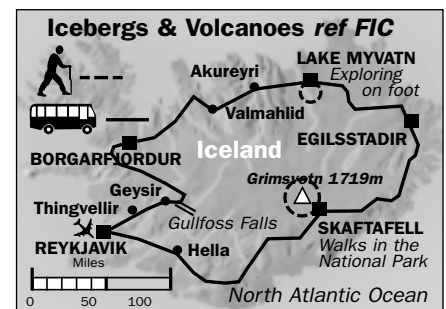
En route to the small town of Egilsstadir. We break our drive at Jokulsarlon lagoon where we include a 30-45 minute boat ride out on to the lake to enjoy the experience of floating amongst blue-veined icebergs. This is one of the highlights of our trip so don't forget your camera! The surrounding sandy plains are the northern hemisphere's principal nesting ground for the great skua and are also frequented by many other species. We then cross the Almannaskard Pass - a journey which affords a magnificent view of Vatnajokull, Europe's largest glacier. On reaching the northeastern fjordic coastline, we stop inland for the night in the area around Egilsstadir, close to Logurinn lake - reputedly home to a Loch Ness-type monster. **Overnight hotel with dinner and breakfast. H.**

Day 6. Drive via Dettifoss to the Lake Myvatn area

Today we travel through a desolate area to the northern reaches of this rugged island. The landscape is so lunar in appearance that Neil Armstrong and his colleagues trained on similar terrain south of here in the Askja region in 1968, prior to their landing on the moon. Driving towards our final destination, the small village of Laugar (20km from Lake Myvatn) we stop to view Dettifoss, Europe's most powerful waterfall which tumbles down the huge gorge of the Jokulsa-a-Fjollum river.
2 nights hotel with dinner and breakfast. H.

Day 7. Explore Lake Myvatn area

To visit the Myvatn area is like reading an open book on the history of the world's creation, where one wonder follows another. There are few places where so many and such diverse volcanic sites are found in such a small area. At about 38 square kilometres in area, the lake is the fourth largest in Iceland and probably the most fertile spot on the globe at a similar latitude. It was created after the ice age ended in Iceland some 10,000 years ago. However, it was really only formed about 3800 years ago when a lava flow blocked the valley to create a shallow lake. Some 2800 years ago there was another eruption and the lava added some onto the older one and changed the lake somewhat. During our time here we will see Viti crater - literally Hell crater - which last erupted as recently as 1984; there is still steam rising up from the ground.



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Day 7. (contd)

At another spot we see boiling mud pools or 'solfataras', where the earth's crust seems to ripple. We walk up to the rim of Hverfall crater and then descend through 'Lava Park' where natural sculptures have been formed through lava cooling at different rates. The lake is also a veritable paradise for birdwatchers as it is the main haunt of ducks in Iceland – in fact, there are more species of duck at Lake Myvatn than anywhere else in the world at a similar latitude. In summer between 100,000 to 150,000 ducks from 15 different species nest around the shores. There may also be the possibility of a whalewatching excursion during our stay.

Day 8. Drive to Borgarfjordur

Today's journey to the Borgarfjordur region includes a stop en route to visit Godafoss waterfall and time in the charming town of Akureyri. The principal town of northern Iceland stands on the shores of the country's longest fjord. It is a pleasant place in which to wander, famous for its botanical garden established in 1912, by a Danish lady. There are some galleries in the town centre and a Lutheran Cathedral with two small stained glass window pieces from the Cathedral in Coventry. In the afternoon we continue westwards and stop at one of the best preserved traditional Icelandic farmhouses called Glaumbaer before continuing to our nightstop. **Overnight hotel with dinner and breakfast. H.**

Day 9. Drive to Reykjavik; via Gullfoss, Thingvellir and Geysir

During our journey back to the capital we include visits to Thingvellir National Park, Gullfoss Waterfall and Geysir Geothermal Area. Gullfoss – the Golden Waterfall, cascades into a deep gorge with tremendous force. Regarded by many as one of the most beautiful falls in the world, its spray forms colourful rainbows in the afternoon sun. Thingvellir, meaning 'Parliament Plains' was the site of Iceland's first National Assembly in the year 930. It lies in a rift valley, about 5km wide with Lake Thingvallavatn bordering it on the south side and a mountain range to the north. The river Oxara, which flows past the site of the Parliament, supplied its participants with ample fresh water, and flows over the edge of a 9000 year old lava field, originating in a nearby volcano, into the rift valley. The largest of the ravines bordering the rift valley is called Almannagja Ravine near where the Parliament was held (there were at least three places where the Law Circle convened throughout the centuries however, they were all quite near to each other). Geysir started spouting in the 13th century and suddenly stopped spouting naturally in 1916. Geysir was indeed the first spouting spring which became known to Europeans and therefore all spouting springs were termed 'Geysir', after the one in Iceland in geological terms. There are some very small spouting springs in the area which spout one foot high, but Strokkur, meaning 'The Butter Churn',

spouts every 3-5 minutes up to 100 feet high and is the main attraction of the area. Having enjoyed the spectacle, we drive the final stretch back to Reykjavik. **Overnight hotel with breakfast. H.**

Day 10. Tuesday. Tour ends in Reykjavik

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll also need some extra money to cover meals other than those specified in the itinerary, other sightseeing, airport taxes, souvenirs etc. and all items of a personal nature. Credit cards are widely accepted in Reykjavik.

Local Payment

Payable in **Sterling or U.S. Dollars cash** to Explore tour leader on arrival in Reykjavik.

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: Meals other than those included in the itinerary are paid for separately by the traveller. You should calculate for buying 2 evening meals and 8 lunches. Examples of comparative costs are given below.

	UK	Iceland
Coffee/tea	£0.75	£1.50
Soft drink	0.80	1.00
Beer	1.00	4.00
Bottle water	0.75	1.00
Sandwich	1.75	2.50
2 Course Meal*	7.50	8.00
3 Course Meal**	15.00	25.00
Bottle of wine	7.00	25.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant

Other Sightseeing

The following tours and excursions are usually available and may be booked and paid for through the tour leader during your trip. Estimated costs are provided.

SKAFTAFELL NATIONAL PARK Ice climbing £25; Horse riding £13 per hour; Ice walking £14; Puffin Island tour £7
BLUE LAGOON £10
LAUGAR Whalewatching excursion £30

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

Iceland has a cool, temperate climate and, despite its situation just south of the Arctic Circle, its northerly latitude is counteracted by the warm waters of the North Atlantic Drift which encircles the island. Summer is generally cool but higher temperatures are common inland. The mean temperature for a summer afternoon is between 12°C and 15°C. The north and interior of the country are generally drier than the south and southern coastal regions. The summer enjoys continuous daylight, whereas late spring and early autumn have long twilights.

Visa Requirements

Entry visas NOT required by UK, AUS, NZ, USA, CAN. citizens – other nationalities should consult their travel agent or consular office.

Vaccinations & Protection

None compulsory. Tetanus recommended.

Special Note: Visa and Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information booklet**', available only after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of baggage, a soft grip bag is ideal (not a framed rucksack) and a small daysac. Total allowance **44lbs/20kgs**.

Clothing: Pack for '**All Tours**' plus '**Cold Conditions**'. July-August are the warmest months; but summer tends to be cool, especially inland at higher elevations. Weather conditions can change rapidly – sunshine, drizzle, rain and snow may all occur in the same day. You'll need warmer clothing for outdoors and cool evenings. A wind and waterproof jacket and trousers are essential.

Footwear: Walking boots/shoes and trainers. Soft indoor shoes are recommended as it is normal in Iceland to have special house shoes.

Equipment: Insect repellent – face/head mosquito nets are useful for Lake Myvatn due to high numbers of midges, medical kit.



At the Great Geysir

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : The following key is intended as a guide to the type of accommodation listed for each night stop. We stress that standards may vary and reserve the right to make changes as necessary without warning.

Hotels / Pensions / Lodges

H+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, normally with private facilities. Local grading 2/3/4 star.

H : Usually twin bedded rooms, sometimes 3-4 bedded rooms may have to be used. Normally with shared facilities. Local grading 1/2/3 star.

Local Style Accommodation

L+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, may be some 3-4 bedded. Normally shared facilities.

L : Could be twin bedded but more usually multiple share or dorm style sleeping arrangements. Normally shared facilities.

Camping – under canvas or bivouac

C+ : Designated campsite, usually with fixed WC/shower. Possibly with fixed pre-erected tents.

C : Natural/Rough/Wild/Bush Camp. Limited or no facilities. Temporary WC. Usually need to pitch own tents.

ROOMING : We would also stress that unlike resort-based family holidays, we use a variety of accommodation on any one tour. This means that although we will always do our best to find rooms that suit your family, the choice of accommodation in some places may be limited.

To help us with your rooming arrangements, please detail any preferences on the Booking Form (page 27 of the brochure). **For further details on Rooming, please see p.9.**

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