TOUR CODE

IC3

ADVENTURESABROAD

ICELAND

'Land of Fire & Ice'

12 days

Updated 09/02/2013

Day 1 ***Arrive in Reykjavik***

Arrival in Reykjavik. After settling into the hotel you may have free time to explore the city on your own.

The first people known to have inhabited Iceland were Irish monks or hermits who came in the eighth century, but left with the arrival of the pagan Norsemen, who systematically settled Iceland in the period AD 870 - 930. Iceland was thus the last European country to be settled. Iceland is Europe's second largest island (103,000 sq. km), and the present population is approximately 320,000. More than half of this population lives in or around the capital, Reykjavik. The rest of the population is dispersed around the coastal fringes, leaving the highland center of the country uninhabited.

Overnight in Reykjavik. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Reykjavik City Tour & Blue Lagoon***

This morning we will enjoy a city tour of Reykjavik, the world's northernmost capital, and one of the newest, having established itself only in the late 19th century. Our sightseeing tour will include a visit to the Old town and the Old Town harbour. The Old Town is centered around the Tjornin, a small pond on whose shores, Ingolfur Arnarson, founded the original settlement in 874. It is here where both the Town Hall and Althing, or National Assembly, is located.

At the National Museum of Iceland we will learn about the Norse and Icelandic culture. This museum houses objects of religious and folk relics, and tools dating from the period of settlement. On our tour we will enjoy a short walk along seafront, and we will also see the city Cathedral, the City Hall and the House of Parliament.

We include an afternoon visit to Blue Lagoon before returning to Reykjavik for dinner.

Overnight in Reykjavik. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Geysir - Gullfoss Waterfall - South Shore - Vik***

This morning we depart from Reykjavik and head towards some of the best-known natural phenomena in Iceland, a region often referred to as the Golden Circle. After passing through the village of Hveragerdi we will explore Gullfoss, the 'Golden Waterfall'. We then head to the nearby geothermal area spouting the hot springs of Geysir and Strokkur. This region is famous for its numerous hot springs and boiling mud pools.

We then continue along the south shore past the Eyjafjallajokull ice cap, famous for its eruption in early 2010. The glacier feeds many beautiful waterfalls and we visit two of them, stopping to admire the enchanting waterfalls of Seljalandsfoss and Skogafoss before continuing to the village of Vik.

Overnight in the Vik area. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Vik - Skaftafell National Park - Jokulsarlon Glacial Lagoon - Hofn*

Upon departure this morning we will make a short visit to the black sand beach south of Vik. We then cross Eldhraun, the largest mass of lava ever to flow on the face of the earth, before reaching the small village Kirkjubaejarklaustur, a former site of a 12th-century Catholic convent. Even before the times of first Norse settlement in Iceland, Irish monks are thought to have lived here. Since 1186, a well-known convent of Benedictine nuns was located in Kirkjubaejarklaustur, until the Reformation in 1550.

Our tour continues over Skeidararsandur sands to Skaftafell National Park. We continue on to the breathtaking Jokulsarlon Glacial Lagoon to see the birthplace of icebergs. We will have some time to view this stunning area before we take a boat tour on the glacial lagoon. Jokulsarlon started to form in the early 1920's and is getting bigger every year. You will see many amazing blocks of ice that have broken off Europe's biggest glacier, Vatnajokull, and sail slowly towards the ocean, which is only a kilometer away.

Today we will also enjoy a Jeep tour on Vatnajokull Glacier. Vatnajokull, translating as "glacier of rivers", is the largest glacier in Iceland and is located in the southeast of the country. At 8,100 square kilometres it is the second largest glacier in Europe and the average thickness of the ice is an incredible 400m. Under the glacier are numerous active volcanoes.

Overnight in the Hofn area. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Hofn - East Fjords - Egilsstadir*

Today we drive through some spectacular fjord scenery and visit charming fishing villages as we head to the capital of east Iceland, Egilsstadir. We will drive from Hofn through the Almannaskard pass, and stop and admire the majestic coastline.

We move on to witness the towering mountains plunging vertically into the sea that form the magnificent East Fjords. This stunning mountain region has been sculpted as much by glaciers as volcanic activity. The spectacular road winds from one fjord to another, passing a few farms in each fjord where there is enough flat land for hayfields. The bird life is rich and in late summer thousands of molting whooper swans feed in the sheltered lagoon of Alftafjordur (Swan fjord).

Along our route we will make a stop at Petra's stone collection in Stodvarfjordur. The area surrounding the town is abundant with different types of rocks and minerals, and many examples of these are displayed at this museum.

Overnight in the Egilsstadir area. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Egilsstadir - Jokulsargljufur - Asbyrgi - Husavik*

Today we will explore the empty vastness of the highland desert plateau Modrudalsoraefi before heading to the wonderful Jokulsargljufur Canyon National Park, visiting sites such as the most powerful waterfall in Europe, Dettifoss and the horseshoe-shaped canyon Asbyrgi. Prepare yourself to be amazed by the unique natural beauty of Husavik, the hub of northeast Iceland. A Swedish Viking, Gardar Svavarsson, first settled this charming fishing village in 870. The name Husavik means "Bay of Houses" and is believed to be one of the oldest local names in the country.

Overnight in Husavik. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Husavik Whale Watching - Godafoss - Akureyri*

Today we will begin the day with a whale-watching trip from Husavik. This is a beautiful coastal town and the 'whale watching capital of Europe'. Most commonly sighted are Minke whales and white beaked dolphins, but with luck we may see others such as humpbacks and even the giant blue whale. We will also be sure to visit the local Whale Museum.

Later we head towards the bustling northern port of Akureyri with a stop at the magnificent Godafoss waterfall and one of Iceland's best preserved turf farms at Laufas, dating from 1865. Akureyri, the 'Capital of the North', boasts some of the finest timber buildings in the country, beautifully restored to their original glory.

We will enjoy a stroll in the town center, which is always full of life during the summer. Located 60 km south of the Arctic Circle, this is the cultural, commercial and educational centre for northern Iceland. This northerly town is remarkably green and has the northernmost botanical garden in the world.

Overnight in Akureyri. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Akureyri - Lake Myvatn - Akureyri*

Today will be spent exploring the Lake Myvatn and its surroundings.

The lake and its surrounding wetlands, created by a large basaltic lava eruption, have an exceptionally rich fauna of waterbirds. Laxa River, one of the most bountiful and sought after fishing rivers of the country, runs from Myvatn.

This is an area of natural beauty, including the peculiar lava formations at Dimmuborgir and the pseudocraters at Skutustaair. Today we will also see the volcano Krafla. Krafla is one of Iceland's most spectacular and most active volcanoes. During the 1970's and 1980's, it became famous for its "Krafla Fires" -- curtains of lava fountains from a system of fissures inside the huge caldera. Today we will also visit Namaskard Pass with its boiling mud pools and vibrant colours.

Nearby is the massive symmetrical crater of Hverfell. This 2500-year-old crater rises 463 meters high and is 1040 meters across.

We end the day by relaxing in the Myvatn Nature Baths and enjoy bathing in a pool of geothermal water drawn from depths of up to 2,500 meters.

Overnight in Akureyri area. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Skagafjordur - Snaefellsnes Peninsula*

Today we make an early start as we head out to explore the western regions of Iceland.
Majestic mountains and narrow passes lead to Skagafjordur. A quarter of area residents here make their homes in the country, since Skagafjordur is one of Iceland's most prosperous agricultural regions, with widespread dairy and sheep farming in addition to the horse breeding for which the region is famed. Skagafjoraur is the only county in Iceland where horses outnumber people in population.

We will pass the small seaside village of Blonduos. The Blanda River, which divides the town in two parts, is one of the best rivers for salmon fishing in Iceland. Along the way we visit a reconstructed Viking house once home to Eirik the Red and his son Leif Eiriksson -- the two most famous travelling Vikings. The 'Eirikstadir' gives an interesting insight to

way of life for the early settlers and an introduction to the historic tradition of the 'Icelandic Sagas'.

We continue to cross westward towards the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, situated to the west of Borgarfjordur. The land around the fjord has been inhabited since the time of Icelandic settlement.

Overnight on the Snaefellsnes Peninsula in Grundarfjordur or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Snaefellsnes Peninsula Tour*

Today will be spent touring the Snaefellsnes Peninsula. Our journey will take us across the north coast and out to the tip of the peninsula before crossing the southern coastline.

The Snaefellsnes Peninsula is a veritable heartland of history. Some of the best and most important sagas took place here, and it is said that Christopher Columbus once spent a winter in Ingjaldsholl, where he heard stories of lands to the west. The enchanting landscape of Snaefellsnes is brimming with lava caves, waterfalls and mineral hot springs. We travel here to appreciate the natural beauty, see the ocean shores, mountains, rivers and waterfalls as well as the more dramatic lava formations. The landscape is a gallery of strange and beautiful lava formations, the skies are filled with birds, and the sea is alive with marine life.

The charming fishing village of Grundarfjordur on the north coast of the Snaefellsnes Peninsula is set within a region justly reputed for splendid scenery and the conically shaped Kirkjufell Mountain. Our journey will take us through small fishing villages and around the west edge of Snaefellsnes to the Snaefellsjokull National Park. The landscape here is characterized by sandy beaches, rocky shoreline and jagged mountains, crowned by the mysterious shimmering cone of the Snaefellsjokull glacier. We can take some time along the route to walk along the windswept beaches.

From the small fishing village of Arnarstapi with its amazing birdlife we will view Mount Stapafell, with the famous Snaefellsjokull glacier in the background. The harbour here is considered by some to be the most beautiful in Iceland.

Overnight on the Snaefellsnes Peninsula in Grundarfjordur or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Snaefellsnes Peninsula - Thingvellir National Park - Reykjavík*

Our sightseeing today will include the Icelandic Settlement Centre exhibition at the village of Borgarnes. This visit will be followed by a drive to Deildartunguhver, the most powerful hot spring in the world. We will make a stop to admire the beautiful Hraunfossar Waterfall. This is a series of waterfalls formed by rivulets streaming over a distance of about 900 meters out of the Hallmundarhraun, a lava field which flowed from an eruption of one of the volcanoes lying under the glacier Langjokull. We then continue over the breathtaking Kaldidalur mountain pass (depending on road and weather conditions).

We continue to Lake Thingvallavatn, Iceland's largest lake, and to Thingvellir National Park. The area became Iceland's first National Park in 1928 and a World Heritage area in 2004. Thingvellir World Heritage area is where the world's first 'democratic parliament' meeting took place. Geologically it is also unique as the American and European tectonic plates meet here. Sitting right on top of a major fault line, the area abounds with waterfalls, immense fissures and the largest lake in the country.

Overnight in Reykjavik. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Departure*

Departure from Reykjavik OR extend your trip to include Greenland.

GODA FERD! Meal plan: Breakfast.