TOUR CODE

IC4

ADVENTURESABROAD

ICELAND & GREENLAND

featuring Greenland Coastal Cruising

20 days

Updated 29/04/2013

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 *Reykjavik, Iceland - Narsarsuaq, Greenland - Narsaq - Embarkation*

Today we fly from Reykjavik, Iceland to Narsarsuaq, Greenland.

The name Narsarsuaq means great plain in Greenlandic, and this settlement was the principal city of Greenland in the times of Erik the Red. In a country as mountainous as Greenland, with only a few large flat areas, it was only natural to establish South Greenland's international airport here. Narsarsuaq was founded in 1941 as an American airbase just 9 km (5.5 miles) away from the ice sheet -- or around 3-4 hours on foot through the fertile "Flower Valley", where South Greenlandic sheep-farmers grow grass for winter fodder.

Upon arrival in Greenland we will travel from Narsarsuaq to Narsaq.

Along the route we will cross Eric's Fiord by boat and go ashore at the sheep breeding settlement of Qassiarsuk, situated on the very spot where Eric the Red in year 985 settled and named his farm "Brattahlia". We will visit the ruins of Eric's Farm and Thorhildur's church, the first Christian church on the American continent. (The duration of this excursion is approximately 3 hours).

Narsaq is a typical Greenlandic town with small wooden houses painted in bright colours on the shores of Narsaq Sund, where multi-colored icebergs are floating in the deep blue fiord. Narsaq's unique location is at the heart of a magnificent fjord system -- with green valleys surrounded by high mountains. Narsaq's modern development dates back to the founding of a trading post in 1830 called "Nordproven". Greenlanders who came to trade goods gradually settled on the outskirts of Narsaq. But it wasn't until Narsaq got its own fish processing plant in 1953 that the community really started to grow. By 1959, the population had risen to over 600 and Narsaq had achieved the status of a town.

On arrival we will enjoy a guided walk of Narsaq, and our local guide will describe to us about the daily life in a Greenlandic town. We will visit the newer part as well as the old kayak harbour where local hunters still bring in seals. A visit to one of the local stores and the local market "Braedtet" show us how the old way of life still exists alongside the modern way of life. Stroll among the town's colourful houses and admire the ice cap in the distance and the deep blue fjords filled with majestic icebergs. will also make a visit to the small local museum.

This evening we will board our AUL ferry. Departure time is set for 21:30.

M/S SARFAQ ITTUK
This vessel was built in 1992 and modernised and lengthened in the winter of 1999/2000. She is 73 metres long and 11 metres wide, with a crew count of 22 people. The vessel has cafeteria, stern saloon with panorama windows, and a hospital clinic. The vessel's capacity is 249 passengers. All of our accommodation will be in outside cabins with private facilities.

The sea connection provided by this passenger & freight vessel is a lifeline for the entire western and southwestern Greenland. During the sea voyage we will meet the local population as they travel from town-to-town visiting relatives and friends along the coast. We will enjoy the beautiful and varied landscape as this journey takes us through open waters and along narrow straits, so close that you can almost touch the mountains. Along the way the ship calls in at the major towns and some smaller settlements. At each stop, the arrival of the ship makes people rush to the harbor to welcome friends and relatives.

Accommodation: Outside Cabin on board. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Qaqortoq - Arsuk - Paamiut*

Our journey today will see us calling in to the following places: Qaqortoq, Arsuk, Paamiut (exact timings provided on board).

Arsuk is part of the region first settled by people of the Saqqaq culture who arrived from the north. The area was later resettled by the Norse between the 10th and the 14th century. Thule people were the second southbound Inuit migration to arrive in the region in the 15th century, and the area has been permanently settled since then. Arsuk has seen a declining population over the last two decades. The sharp decline in the 1990's was due to a mine closure and the related loss of employment. The weak growth in the late 2000's and slight stabilization of the population level prevented Arsuk from sharing the fate of Qassimiut, which lost more than two thirds of the population and is headed for abandonment -- and that of Kangerluarsoruseq in the same municipality, which was abandoned in 2009.

Paamiut -- "The town of the white-tailed eagle". As is the case for all the other towns in West Greenland, the sea around Paamiut does not freeze in the winter. The main occupation for the 2,000 inhabitants in the Paamiut settlement is fishing, and the great importance of the sea with the numerous white-tailed eagles is also emphasized by the fact that Greenland's maritime educations are all based in Paamiut. Archaeological remains indicate that the area has been inhabited at different times since 1500 BC. The town's name means "population at the mouth", and it was founded in 1742 at the mouth of the Kuannersooq Fjord. With its picturesque buildings, Paamiut's old quarter is an idyllic area containing the old shop, colonial administration building, a goat stable and the church.

Accommodation: Outside cabin on board. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 14 *Qeqertarsuatsiaat - Nuuk*

Our journey today will see us calling in to the following places: Qeqertarsuatsiaat, Nuuk

Qeqertarsuatsiaat was founded by the Danish merchant Anders Olsen in 1754 as a trading post. From there, the KGH, the Royal Danish trading company, could trade skins and blubber from hunters in the area. In 1815 the last known great auk in Greenland was hunted near Qeqertarsuatsiaat by one of the villagers.

We will enjoy a guided tour of Nuuk. This tour will end at the museum, and then you will have the balance of the day free. Nuuk is Greenland's capital, where the new and the old meet in their unique Greenlandic fashion. A short walk from the colonial harbour, with its beautiful old buildings, brings you to "the board" where the day's catch of seal, birds and fish is sold. Other attractions in the town include the award-winning cultural venue Katuaq, Greenland's University, the cathedral from 1849 and the National Museum, where you can spend time learning about Greenland's ancient history.

Nuuk means "the headland" and is situated at the tip of a large peninsula at the mouth of the gigantic fjord complex. As the oldest town in Greenland, Nuuk was founded by the missionary Hans Egede in 1728 after he had left his first settlement at the Isle of Hope all the way out in Davis Strait. Today Nuuk is a hectic city in Greenlandic terms, but that is rarely the impression that visitors get of the world's smallest capital city with just 15,000 inhabitants.

Accommodation: Outside cabin on board. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 15 *Maniitsoq - Kangaamiut - Sisimiut*

Our journey today will see us calling in to the following places: Maniitsoq, Kangaamiut, Sisimiut

Maniitsoq fully lives up to its name, which means "the rugged place." Deep, narrow fjords and some of the highest mountains in West Greenland are typical for the area. Maniitsoq is also surrounded by an impressive archipelago, where many of the town's almost 3,000 inhabitants have built hunting and weekend cabins. Archaeological remains reveal that the area around Maniitsoq has been inhabited at different periods throughout the last 4,000 years.

Kangaamiut, founded in 1755 is a beautiful small settlement located on an island in central west Greenland, just 50 kilometers north of Maniitsoq. The settlement has 362 inhabitants (2009), once the largest settlement in Greenland. One of the longest fjords in Greenland, Evighedsfjorden is located close to Kangaamiut.

Sismuit - Here we will enjoy a walk to the old town center. Sismiut is a coastal pearl on the Arctic Circle. Located just north of the Arctic Circle, this is the northernmost town in Greenland where the port remains free of ice in the winter and at the same time the southernmost town in Greenland where it is possible to drive on a dogsled in winter and spring. In Sisimiut's old quarter you can still see buildings from the first 100 years of the colonial period, for instance in the museum area with the portal built of enormous whale jawbones and the blue church, which is Greenland's second-oldest church dating back to 1775. Sisimiut means "the inhabitants at the foxholes". The town was founded in 1756 as a mission and trading station under the name Holsteinsborg. 6,000 inhabitants live in the town of Sisimiut and the settlements of Kangerlussuaq, Sarfannguaq and Itilleq. A high-tech factory, where prawns and crabs are processed, is evidence of the fact that fishing continues to be the main industry in Sisimiut.

Accommodation: Outside cabin on board. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 16 *Aasiat - Ilulissat*

This morning we will enjoy breakfast on board the vessel.

At 08:00 we will call in at Aasiat for approximately 30 minutes. Aasiaat is situated on an island in the southern part of Disko Bay at the edge of a very beautiful archipelago often referred to as "The land of a thousand islands". Many of the islands in the area are conservation areas and provide fantastic opportunities to study the unique bird life or the whales that were the original reason why Aasiaat was founded in the middle of the 18th century. Although fishing is the dominant business activity, Aasiaat is also North Greenland's centre of education, boasting a college of further education and a business school. The Municipality of Aasiaat has just over 3,000 inhabitants, 200 of which live in the settlements at Akunaaq and Kitsissuarsuit.

Later (approx 1300) we will arrive at Ilulissat. Upon arrival we will transfer to our hotel where we will meet with our local guide. Ilulissat is the town of the giant icebergs and home of the UNESCO World Heritage designated Ilulissat Ice Fiord. This is the third largest town in Greenland and a really big city where modern life meets old fashion life style, all surrounded by amazing nature. Here, ice is the main theme! Ilulissat means icebergs in Greenlandic, and the town has a beautiful
location at the mouth of the 56 km long ice fjord that is filled with enormous icebergs from the most productive glacier in the northern hemisphere, Sermeq Kujalleq. The biggest icebergs end up getting stranded at the mouth of the ice fjord at a depth of 225-250 metres, and they do not work free until the tide is sufficiently high or until they are so eroded that the iceberg's centre of gravity is altered.

This afternoon we will enjoy a city walk through Ilulissat. During this walk through town we will learn about the history of Ilulissat. We will visit the old part of town and will witness buildings from the very start of the Danish trading station. As well we will visit the busy fishing harbour, the old church and the local museum.

Overnight in Ilulissat. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Eqip Glacier / Ataa - Midnight Cruise*

We will head off on our first excursion today after breakfast at the hotel.

Eqip glacier is the only glacier in the Ilulissat area where we often experience a glacier calving. We cruise in front of the

5 km wide glacier for around 1 hour and hope for the unique sight of an iceberg "delivery". Afterwards we continue to the small settlement of Ataa, the former trading station. There will be time for a short walk in the area before returning to Ilulissat. On the way back to Ilulissat we will keep our eyes open, and hopefully spot some whales.

This evening we will experience a Midnight Cruise to the Ice Fiord. As we cruise between the icebergs, the midnight sun and the warm red colours reflecting in the gigantic icebergs is a fantastic sight (approximately 3 hours).

Overnight in Ilulissat. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 18 *Ilulissat by Air - Greenland home visit*

From Ilulissat we have a helicopter excursion where we fly over the mountains and fiord systems before we reach Ilulissat Ice Fiord, which is now on the UNESCO World Heritage list. (approximately 20 minutes flying time).

In the afternoon, we visit a Greenland home, enjoy the "Coffee-Mik" (a cup of coffee which by tradition is served to all visitors) and learn about Greenland and its population (approximately 2 hours).

Overnight in Ilulissat. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 19 *Icebergs of Sermermiut - Fly to Iceland*

After breakfast at hotel we will enjoy an excursion to the Icebergs of Sermermiut.

We will travel by bus as far as the road goes! We will then enjoy a beautiful walk along the UNESCO designated Ilulissat Ice Fiord to Sermermiut, where traces from the three old Eskimo cultures still can be seen. Sermermiut is a fertile valley next to the Ice Fiord, and here you can enjoy the flowers as well as the fantastic icebergs (the duration of this excursion is approximately 3 hours).

Upon our return to Ilulissat we will transfer to the airport for our flight from Ilulissat to Reykjavik, Iceland with Air Iceland. Estimated Flight Schuedle: 13:30-20:35 (lunch in-flight).

Upon arrival in Iceland we will transfer from the airport to our Reykjavik for our last night.

Overnight in Reykjavik. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 20 *Departure*

Departure from Reykjavik.

GOAA FERO !! Meal plan: Breakfast.