Tour Code
IC3

ADVENTURESABROAD

ICELAND

Glaciers, Waterfalls & Volcanic Landscapes

12 days

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Day 1 Arrive in Reykjavik

Welcome to Iceland. We arrive in Reykjavik, Europe's northernmost capital and one of its youngest, established only in the late 19th century. Iceland itself was the last European country to be settled—Irish monks arrived in the 8th century but departed when Norse settlers systematically colonized the island between 870 and 930 CE.

More than half of Iceland's people live in or around the capital, leaving the highland interior virtually uninhabited. This evening provides time to explore the compact city centre independently.

Overnight in Reykjavik.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Reykjavik City Tour

This morning, we embark on a walking tour of Reykjavik, starting in the historic Old Town, centered around the serene Tjornin pond, where Ingolfur Arnarson founded the original settlement in 874. As we stroll through this charming area, we'll pass by the modern Town Hall and Althing, Iceland's National Assembly, which occupy the shores of the pond, blending history with modern governance.

Next, we visit the National Museum of Iceland, where we'll uncover the Viking and Icelandic heritage through an impressive collection of artifacts, including religious relics, traditional tools, and objects from the settlement period. These exhibits reveal the ingenuity and adaptability of Iceland's early inhabitants, who thrived in this rugged environment.

As we continue our seafront walk, we'll take in the stunning city Cathedral, Parliament House, and the iconic Hallgrimskirkja church, a striking 73-meter-tall landmark that dominates Reykjavik's skyline.

The afternoon is ours to explore this vibrant, walkable city independently, discovering its quirky cafes, colorful buildings, and lively cultural scene.

Overnight in Reykjavik.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Geysir - Gullfoss Waterfall - South Shore - Vik

We depart Reykjavik for Thingvellir National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site where the world's first democratic parliament convened in 930 CE. The location holds geological significance as well—the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates meet here, creating dramatic fissures and Iceland's largest lake, Thingvallavatn.

We continue to the Golden Circle region to visit Gullfoss, the "Golden Waterfall," where the Hvita River plunges in two stages into a narrow canyon. Nearby, the Geysir geothermal area features Strokkur, which erupts every 5-10 minutes, shooting boiling water up to 30 metres into the air. Hot springs and bubbling mud pools dot the landscape, evidence of the volcanic activity beneath.

Travelling along the south shore, we pass Eyjafjallajokull ice cap, whose 2010 eruption disrupted European air traffic for weeks. The glacier feeds numerous waterfalls including Seljalandsfoss, where a path leads behind the cascading water, and Skogafoss, a powerful 60-metre drop. We continue to Vik, stopping at the black sand beach where basalt columns meet the Atlantic.

Overnight in the Vik area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Vik - VatnajÃ¶kull National Park - Jokulsarlon Lagoon - Hofn

As we journey through Iceland's breathtaking landscapes, we cross Eldhraun, formed by the largest lava flow ever recorded. In 1783-84, the Laki fissure eruption produced 15 cubic kilometres (3.6 cubic miles) of lava, covering 565 square kilometres (218 square miles) and causing widespread famine across Iceland and Europe.

Continuing across Skeidararsandur sands, we arrive at Vatnajokull National Park, home to the Jokulsarlon Glacial Lagoon. Here, icebergs calve from Vatnajokull glacier and drift slowly toward the ocean not far away. We board a boat to cruise among these majestic ice formations, some centuries old, ranging from brilliant blue to stark white, depending on air content and compression.

We also embark on a guided jeep tour onto Vatnajokull glacier itself, a breathtaking experience that brings us up close to this natural wonder. Translating as "glacier of rivers," Vatnajokull is Iceland's largest glacier, spanning an impressive 8100 square kilometres (3,126 square miles), with ice averaging 400 metres (1,312 feet) thick. Numerous active volcanoes lie beneath the ice, creating a unique landscape of fire and ice in literal terms.

As we take in the majesty of this incredible region, we'll overnight in Hofn, surrounded by the awe-inspiring beauty of Iceland's glacial landscapes.

Overnight in Hofn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Hofn & East Fjords

Today we embark on a journey through the East Fjords, where towering mountains drop precipitously into the sea, creating a breathtaking landscape of deep, tranquil inlets and narrow, rugged headlands. Glaciers and volcanic forces have sculpted this dramatic region over millions of years, crafting a unique and awe-inspiring scenery.

As we wind our way along the coastal road, we pass by scattered farms clinging to the rare patches of flat ground, where hayfields stretch towards the water's edge. The isolation and beauty of these East Fjord landscapes are memorable for their grandeur.

We make a fascinating stop at Petra's stone collection in Stodvarfjordur, a remarkable private museum showcasing an astonishing array of minerals and rocks found in the surrounding mountains. Petra's passion for geology is evident in her impressive collection, which reveals the incredible geological diversity that makes Iceland a paradise for rock hounds and nature enthusiasts alike. Marvel at the glossy basalt, gleaming obsidian, vibrant zeolites, and glittering crystals, all formed by the region's intense volcanic and geothermal activity.

As the day unfolds, we continue to Egilsstadir, the charming capital of east Iceland, nestled in the heart of this stunning region. Tonight, we'll rest in the tranquility of Egilsstadir, surrounded by the unspoiled beauty of Iceland's East Fjords.

Overnight in Egilsstadir.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Jokulsargljufur Canyon - Asbyrgi - Husavik

We cross the highland desert plateau Modrudalsoraefi before reaching Jokulsargljufur Canyon in Vatnajokull National Park. At Dettifoss, Europe's most powerful waterfall, 193 cubic metres (6,800 cubic feet) of glacial water thunder over a 44-metre (144-foot) drop every second, creating a roar audible from far away and sending spray high into the air.

We continue to Asbyrgi, a horseshoe-shaped canyon with sheer cliffs rising 100 metres (328 feet). According to Norse mythology, the canyon formed when Odin's eight-legged horse Sleipnir touched one hoof to earth. Geologists attribute it to catastrophic glacial flooding, but the mythological explanation seems equally plausible when standing in this dramatic amphitheatre.

By afternoon we reach Husavik, Iceland's whale-watching capital. Founded by Swedish Viking Gardar Svavarsson in 870, this fishing village occupies a sheltered bay on the northeast coast. Overnight in Husavik.

Overnight in Husavik.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Husavik Whale Watching - Godafoss - Akureyri

We set off on an a whale-watching cruise from Husavik, a charming coastal town that's renowned for its exceptional marine life. As we venture into the nutrient-rich waters, we're on the lookout for Minke whales and playful white-beaked dolphins, which are frequent visitors to these feeding grounds. Keep an eye out for humpbacks, orcas, and the majestic blue whale, which occasionally make an appearance in these bountiful seas.

After our whale-watching excursion, we visit the Whale Museum, which offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of these marine mammals and Iceland's complex whaling history. Gain a deeper understanding of the intricate relationships between these creatures and their habitats, and learn about the conservation efforts underway to protect them.

Next, we head south to Godafoss, the breathtaking "Waterfall of the Gods," steeped in history and legend. According to tradition, in 1000 CE, when Iceland's Althing voted to adopt Christianity, the lawspeaker threw his pagan idols into these falls, giving the waterfall its evocative name. The Skjalfandafljot River plunges 12 metres (39 feet) across a 30-metre-wide (98-foot-wide) arc, creating one of Iceland's most picturesque and photogenic cascades.

As the day unfolds, we arrive in Akureyri, the vibrant "Capital of the North," situated just 60 kilometres (37 miles) south of the Arctic Circle. This charming town of 20,000 inhabitants serves as northern Iceland's cultural and commercial hub, boasting beautifully restored timber buildings and a compact centre that's perfect for independent exploration. Tonight, we'll rest in Akureyri, surrounded by the warmth and hospitality of this lovely town.

Overnight in Akureyri.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Akureyri & Lake Myvatn

Lake Myvatn and its surroundings showcase Iceland's volcanic activity. The lake formed 2300 years ago from a basaltic lava eruption, creating exceptionally rich wetlands that support abundant birdlife. We explore Dimmuborgir's strange lava formations—hollow pillars and caves created when lava flowed over water, generating steam that formed these structures.

At Skutustadir we see pseudocraters, formed when lava flowed over wet ground, causing explosive steam eruptions that created crater-like formations without any actual volcanic vents beneath. These differ from true craters, which connect to magma chambers below. We visit Krafla volcano, famous for its "Krafla Fires" of 1975-1984 when fissures inside the caldera produced lava fountains.

At Namaskard Pass, boiling mud pools bubble and hiss, while mineral deposits paint the ground in vivid yellows, oranges, and reds. The massive Hverfell crater, formed 2500 years ago, rises 463 metres (1,519 feet) with a diameter of 1040 metres (3,412 feet).

We conclude our day relaxing in Myvatn Nature Baths, where geothermal water drawn from 2500 metres (8,202 feet) depth maintains a comfortable 38-40C (100-104°F) temperature.

We also visit Akureyri's Botanical Garden, one of the world's northernmost, showcasing plants adapted to extreme seasonal variations.

Overnight in Akureyri area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Skagafjordur - Snaefellsnes Peninsula

An early start takes us west through Skagafjordur, one of Iceland's most prosperous agricultural regions. Unlike most of Iceland where

residents cluster in towns, a quarter of Skagafjordur's population lives on farms. This is Iceland's horse-breeding heartland—the only county where horses outnumber people.

We visit the Skagafjordur Heritage Museum to see a 19th-century turf church, one of only six remaining in Iceland. These structures, with walls of stacked turf and grass roofs, provided insulation in a country with limited timber. We also visit Eirikstadir, a reconstructed Viking longhouse where Erik the Red and his son Leif Eriksson—the first European to reach North America—once lived. The reconstruction offers insight into settlement-era life and introduces Iceland's rich saga tradition.

We cross westward to the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, a microcosm of Iceland's diverse landscapes concentrated in one region. The peninsula has been inhabited since settlement times and features prominently in medieval sagas.

Overnight in the Snaefellsnes area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Snaefellsnes Peninsula Tour

We explore the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, circling from the north coast to the western tip and along the southern shore. Legend holds that Christopher Columbus spent a winter at Ingjaldsholl, where he heard stories of lands to the west—possibly influencing his later Atlantic voyage.

We visit Vatnshellir Cave, an 8000-year-old lava tube created when surface lava cooled and crusted while molten lava continued flowing beneath, eventually draining and leaving this hollow tube. Our 45-minute guided tour (helmets and flashlights provided) descends into the tunnel, revealing layered rock formations and explaining volcanic cave formation. Reasonable fitness is required for the stairs and uneven surfaces.

The fishing village of Grundarfjordur sits beneath the distinctive cone of Kirkjufell Mountain, one of Iceland's most photographed peaks. We continue through Snaefellsjokull National Park, where the Snaefellsjokull glacier crowns the peninsula. This 1446-metre stratovolcano inspired Jules Verne's "Journey to the Center of the Earth," in which the entrance to the earth's interior lay beneath this glacier.

At Arnarstapi, we walk among dramatic coastal rock formations where Atlantic waves have carved arches and pillars from the basalt cliffs. Arctic terns, fulmars, and kittiwakes nest on the cliffs in summer, filling the air with their calls.

Overnight in the Snaefellsnes area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Snaefellsnes Peninsula - Reykjavik

We visit the Icelandic Settlement Centre in Borgarnes, which recounts Iceland's colonization through interactive exhibits focusing on the sagas of Egil Skallagrimsson, one of Iceland's most famous Viking-age poets and warriors.

We continue to Deildartunguhver, Europe's most powerful hot spring, producing 180 litres (47 gallons) of boiling water per second. The water, heated by geothermal activity, supplies heating to communities 65 kilometres (40 miles) away.

At Hraunfossar, we see a series of waterfalls streaming from beneath Hallmundarhraun lava field. Rather than a single cascade, hundreds of rivulets emerge from the porous lava over a 900-metre (2,953-foot) stretch, creating a unique curtain of water.

We arrive in Reykjavik by early afternoon, allowing time for final exploration before our farewell dinner.

Overnight in Reykjavik.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Departure

Departure from Reykjavik.

GODA FERD!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

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