

EXCLUSIVE NATURE AND PHOTO TOUR OF SOUTH ICELAND  
July 11<sup>th</sup> to July 19<sup>th</sup> 2018

All-inclusive except airfare (all hotels, three meals a day, domestic & Icelandic transportation, guiding, ferries, admissions and boat rides). Participants: Minimum 6; maximum: 12.

(See "*HIGHLIGHTS: ICELAND TOUR*" at end of document for details on the unique nature of this tour)



Thingvellir on a summer day

**INTRODUCTION:**

We take you to Iceland in the summer, when nature is at its peak with all flowers blooming. The intriguing colors, the ever shifting weather, and the warm sunlight ambiance will create a lasting experience.

On this tour you will be spoiled with one culinary delight after the other. Iceland is getting famous for its excellent variety of great food. Our tour leader and guide, Bjorn Ruriksson, personally checks out each menu so that every night's dinner is quite different from the next: always an outstanding three-course meal with coffee or tea.

Our goal is to take excellent care of each participant during these eight days in Iceland. Throughout our journey you will ride in one roomy

coach where each of you will have your own double seat with ample space for your gear: camera equipment, binoculars, jackets, etc.

For two of the nights, you are staying at the excellent four star Hotel Selfoss, 50 km east of Reykjavik, situated on the banks of the powerful river of Ölfusá, the biggest river in the country. Hotel Selfoss has a magnificent, luxurious Riverside Spa richly equipped with steam room, sauna, hot pool, rainwater showers, relaxation room, lounge and bar. See the hotel's website at [www.selfosshotel.is/English/](http://www.selfosshotel.is/English/)

For the other nights, you are staying one or two nights at excellent tourist hotels like Hotel Hali in South-east Iceland close to the popular Glacial lagoon. Also at Hotel Gullfoss and Hotel Hamar in the Westman Islands. The surroundings of these hotels are diverse and are places where you can certainly enjoy leisurely after-dinner walks.

This program is rich in unique natural sites in the South of Iceland. You will enjoy a wide variety of waterfalls and mountains created from lava-flows and volcanoes, extraordinarily broad vistas (since nearly all native trees were cut down long ago), and vast beaches of black sands. A popular attraction, photographically and historically, is the scenic area of Thingvellir, where the cradle of Icelandic democracy began in the year 930, only 60 years after this mid-ocean ridge land mass was first settled. Thingvellir is a geological wonder, with open faults and fissures, the most conspicuous rift valley in the world with craggy lava and green moss covering the landscape. Nearby is the geyser basin with its spouting hot spring and pools of turquoise beauty, home to the 800 year-old Great Geysir.

We will enjoy great outdoor swimming pools, experiencing this fundamental culture of the Icelandic people. We will spend some delightful moments with the lovely Icelandic horse in its natural surroundings, taking advantage of the extraordinary, clear atmosphere and, hopefully, some sun on height of summer. One day will be spent in Reykjavik, the most northerly capital in the world. There are many museums and great shopping. This day will end with an outstanding multiple 8-course dinner at the legendary "Grillmarkaðurinn" restaurant downtown.

#### **BIO OF TOUR LEADER, BJÖRN RÚRIKSSON:**

Your tour is designed, directed, and guided by the veteran Icelandic tour director, Björn Rúriksson. He is a writer, publisher, photographer, naturalist, and an experienced pilot who knows his country and its natural history intimately from both the air and the ground. Björn has lived and worked in the U.S., has been leading tours of his native country since the 1980's, many with his co-leader friend and geologist,

Pete Cross, who set up two-week tours, designed by Björn, for: The New York Explorers Club and The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. Other institutions Björn brought to and guided in Iceland include the University of Northern Colorado, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

Björn is author of many trendsetting photobooks on Icelandic natural history, and has given lectures on Icelandic nature and geology at many museums, 60 institutes and universities worldwide; i.e. United States Geological Survey, Harvard University, Ohio State University, Northwestern University, and University of Colorado in the US; Mannheim University in Germany and The Royal Geographical Society in London. Björn has also held 35 private photographic exhibitions worldwide, many in the States including: Rockefeller Center, Lincoln Center, Nikon House, and Newark Museum of Art.

### [TOUR PROGRAM IN DETAIL](#)

1<sup>st</sup> day. Wednesday July 11<sup>th</sup>  
FLIGHT TO ICELAND FROM THE US

2<sup>nd</sup> day. Thursday July 12<sup>th</sup>  
WELCOME TO ICELAND – REYKJAVIK CAPITAL (B and D)



Reykjavik from Hallgim's Church



Reykjavik old city center

Arrival at Keflavik International airport from various Airports in the US and elsewhere. Most flights from US arrive in Iceland 6 and 6:40 AM in the morning (after 5-6 ½ hour flights). At the airport we will be met by our local tour guide, Björn Rúriksson. After a short drive, we will enjoy a refreshing light breakfast at an intimate restaurant at the scenic harbour in Hafnarfjörður. After this, we will drive around the sights of Reykjavik, before we arrive at our Hotel to check in. Lunch today is on your own. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to rest or wander about town checking out the waterfront, possible Whale-watching tour down at the harbor, architecture of the buildings, culture, museums, art galleries, bookstores, and the many unique retail enterprises. In the early evening, we will



finish the day with a visit to an excellent restaurant downtown Reykjavik. The prime recommendation is the ever-popular *Tasting Menu*. Our group will share a wide selection of different courses where the chefs allow their creativity to blossom. The menu contains four starters, three main courses and a mix from the dessert selection. Overnight at Hotel Frón and Hotel Leifur Eiriksson in downtown Reykjavik. [www.hotelfron.is/](http://www.hotelfron.is/)

3<sup>rd</sup> day. Friday July 13<sup>th</sup>

THE GLACIAL LAGOON AND THE DIAMOND BEACH

(B, L, D)



The Glacial Lagoon



The Diamond beach; stranded glacial ice

We leave Reykjavik in the morning, driving through several small, quaint villages stopping at the idyllic setting of the tiny village of “Vík” by the ocean, with its 300 inhabitants. Here we will encounter the best woolen store in the country, where wonderful garments are available. Continue across the vast ~300 sq. miles of volcanic sands and gravels that make up “Mýrdals-sands”.

Our tour takes us past “Vatnajökull” Glacier, the largest of all the glaciers of Europe. A possible stop at the beautiful Kvíarjökull valley glacier. We arrive at the Jökulsárlón Glacial lagoon to enjoy a boat ride among the floating icebergs. We visit the beautiful “garden” of stranded icebergs of all sizes. This beach is sometimes called “The Diamond beach”. This is the photographer’s and the naturalist’s paradise! We plan this to be the last highlight of the day – with ample time for photography and admiring, possibly lingering into the low-angle sunshine of the early evening. Overnight at Hali Country Hotel near the Glacier lagoon. Website: [hali@is](mailto:hali@is)

4<sup>th</sup> day. Saturday July 14<sup>th</sup>

SKAFTAFELL NATIONAL PARK - FJAÐRÁRGLJÚFUR CANYON (B, L, D).



The magnificent Fjaðrárgljúfur Canyon



Columnar basalt pillars

Today we start the day by enjoying the Glacial lagoon on our drive back west to the Mid-South Iceland. Another and possibly different atmosphere at the Glacial Lake allows for another stop. Our tour takes us past “Vatnajökull” Glacier, the largest of all the glaciers of Europe. We will visit Skaftafell National Park, with beautiful vistas looking south out over the vast sandur region that we crossed earlier. We'll see stunning glacier outlets of the Vatnajökull Ice Cap and Iceland's highest peak, Örfajökull, 2110 m. (6,920 ft.) high. Here we may have a short walk up to the grand amphitheater-shaped “Svartifoss” waterfall with its peculiar array of vertical basaltic columns. Discover the beautifully sculptured canyon, Fjaðrárgljúfur, carved by water torrents through the interglacial pile of volcanic material. This morning we cross the lava field of the infamous Laki eruption of 1783. This is one of the largest outpourings of lava in historic times anywhere in the world: 240 square miles of glowing rock poured out at this time and completely covered pastures and farms in one uninterrupted eight month sequence. The gases of this horrendous eruption killed 20% of the inhabitants of Iceland and 80% of its sheep and cattle. Furthermore, the gases and volcanic ash caused greatly diminished sunshine all over the northern hemisphere, triggering lasting famines in Japan, China, North America and in Europe. In France, it is believed to have caused the French Revolution! Now the lava is covered by thick beautiful green moss, a stunning experience to enjoy first hand! Overnight at Hotel Gullfoss. [hotelgullfoss.com](http://hotelgullfoss.com) (B, L, D)

5<sup>th</sup> day. Sunday July 15<sup>th</sup>

GOLDEN CIRCLE - THINGVELLIR, GULLFOSS, AND GEYSIR (B, L, D)



The Golden Waterfall



The Geysir "Churn"

Today we visit the premier of Icelandic waterfalls, the famous Gullfoss, the spectacular 100 foot-high waterfall which, in the sunshine, so often is embraced with a rainbow in the mist, giving the name to the fall. A few kilometers farther, we come to the magnificent Geysir area. During a series of earthquakes 800 years ago, the hot spring "Geysir" was born, later to give such phenomena its name nearly worldwide. The geysir "Churn" is an active spring and spouts every 3-5 minutes up to a height of 60-70 feet. We continue to the Thingvellir valley basin, located on the spreading Mid-Atlantic ridge. We visit the famous open parliament site of "Thingvellir", where Iceland fostered its independence in the medieval times and where the Icelandic parliament met for nearly 1000 years. This area boasts of some of the most magnificent volcanoes and tectonics in the world. Thingvellir is now a UNESCO world heritage site. The subsiding valley of "Thingvellir" lies astride the North-Atlantic ridge, where the Euro-Asian and North-American tectonic plates diverge from one another at the speed of ~1 inch per year; the same speed as your nails grow! Overnight at Hotel Gullfoss. [hotelgullfoss.com](http://hotelgullfoss.com) (B, L, D)

6<sup>th</sup> day. Monday July 16<sup>th</sup> THE WESTMAN ISLANDS (B, L, D)



The Westman Islands



The Puffin

Drive through the countryside for a morning ferry departure which takes us in 30 minutes to the town of Vestmannaeyjar in the Westman Islands. Watch for magnificent birds on the way, like the Gannet, Razorbills and Cormorants. Notice the colorful Puffins flying in and out of the cliffs. The islands are 7 miles off the coast of Iceland where a famous volcanic eruption in 1973 drove 5,370 inhabitants from Iceland's largest fishing port. We tour the town, the new volcano, rugged lavafields, and visit an excellent museum. Enjoy marvellous dinner at a great restaurant in the Westman Islands. Overnight at Hotel Hamar in the Westman. (B, L, D)

7<sup>th</sup> day. Tuesday July 17<sup>th</sup> LEAVING THE WESTMAN ISLANDS FOR THE SOUTH SHORE ADVENTURE (B, L, D)



Skógafoss waterfall



The Black beach

A morning for bird watching and touring recent volcanic remnants in the Westman Islands. Boat ride (weather permitting) around the main island. Take the early afternoon ferry to the mainland.

We stop at the picturesque Seljalands waterfall, where we can walk all around and behind the falls! Then on to the grand 180 foot-high waterfall of Skógafoss. We then stop at Reynisfjara, the black sand beach with the picturesque sea stacks of Reynisdrangar, standing like sentinels watching proudly over the south coast. Be careful when massive waves of the Atlantic Ocean break on the shore; they are indeed fast and powerful; the beaches have warnings when there are particularly strong undertows. We finish with a visit to the grand promontory of Dyrhólaey, ideal to get close to the Puffins!

This is followed by a short drive to Selfoss town where we spend the former of two consecutive nights at Hotel Selfoss.

[www.selfosshotel.is/English/](http://www.selfosshotel.is/English/)



8<sup>th</sup> day. Wednesday July 18<sup>th</sup>

LANDMANNALAUGAR IN ICELAND'S INTERIOR HIGHLANDS (B, L, D).



Walk by hot springs at Landmannalaugar



Landmannalaugar mountains

Today we enjoy a highlight! We explore some of the interior highlands of Iceland, not visited by most tourists. Landmannalaugar is a paradise of raw nature, shapes and myriad of colours and varied natural phenomena. We hike a spectacular, safe walking path through rough lava fields, hot springs, and fascinating rhyolite mountains with an incredible spectrum of colours. There is also a natural geothermal stream where you can enjoy a hot bath in natural pools among the vegetation. We visit the magnificent Tjörvapollur explosive volcanic crater formed some 500 years ago and encounter a true high latitude, arctic volcanic desert. Overnight at Hotel Selfoss. [www.selfosshotel.is/English/](http://www.selfosshotel.is/English/) (B, L, D)

9<sup>th</sup> day. Thursday July 19<sup>th</sup>

REYKJANES PENINSULA AND THE FLIGHT BACK HOME (B and L)



Old lighthouse at Gardskagi



Krýsuvík solfatara geothermal field

On our drive from Selfoss along the South-West coastline, we first visit the colorful mudpot fields at Krýsuvík. Enjoy the awesome Lunar landscape and the rough volcanic forms at Lake Kleifarvatn. Drive to the tip of Reykjanes peninsula for coastal features and dramatic scenery by the rugged coastline.



We will enjoy an excellent lunch at a good restaurant in the small Grindavík town. Then a short drive to the International Airport at Keflavik for the flights back home, departing around 5 PM to different destinations in the US on Icelandair.



Gullfoss, the Golden waterfall



Björn Rúriksson, your icelandic host



Razorbills



An old turf farm

*HIGHLIGHTS: SOUTH ICELAND JULY TOUR*

**The Iceland Program July 11<sup>th</sup> to July 19<sup>th</sup> 2018. Arrival in Iceland on July 12<sup>th</sup>.  
Eight days, seven nights in Iceland.**

**Unique highlights of Tour compared to many other tours to Iceland from the US:**

- Outstanding food Program (a delightful culinary experience), 22 carefully chosen full meals with tea and coffee (8 quality breakfasts, 7 lunches and 7 dinners) including an eight course delight the first evening in a fine downtown Reykjavík restaurant. Beginning with a light breakfast following the arrival and ending with a lunch before departure from Iceland. For practical reasons the lunch on the open Reykjavik day is on your own.
- Two consecutive nights at some of the (3 or 4 star) hotels.
- One same excellent bus conductor and quality coach throughout the tour accommodating each participant with one bench seat. Guiding during the whole tour program.
- Ferries and excursion boat trips, like the Glacial lagoon boat trip, Westman Island's boat trip and all other site visits.
- Reasonable daily mileage throughout the tour (c.a 170 daily miles on the average), allowing for some relaxed delightful after-dinner walks in nature.

**Other information:**

- Autographed Art book signed by your Icelandic host is included; "Iceland from above" – his decades of aerial odyssey through Icelandic landscapes.
- Price of tour for 6 participants Minimum and 12 Maximum: US\$ 4,280.- in double occupancy. Single room supplement is US\$ 790.-