

EXCLUSIVE NATURE AND PHOTO TOUR OF ICELAND

South and West Iceland

September 1st (Saturday) to September 11th (Tuesday) 2018

All-inclusive except airfare (three meals a day, domestic & Icelandic transportation, all admissions, hotels, museums outside Reykjavik). Minimum participants: 6; maximum: 14.

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



The Glacial Lagoon – Breiðamerkurlón

INTRODUCTION:

We take you to Iceland in the fall, when nature is slowly changing from summer to winter and we often see the flickering Northern Lights. The intriguing colors, the ever shifting weather, and nearly constant low angles of sunlight 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, Björn Rúriksson, 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 and tea.

Our goal is to take excellent care of each participant during these ten days in Iceland. You will enjoy the services of our wonderful driver and a roomy coach where each of you will have your own double seat with ample space for your gear: camera equipment, binoculars, jackets, etc.

For a total of four 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/

For the other nights, you are staying at excellent tourist hotels, a couple of nights each, like the one in Snaefellsnes and The Hotel Skaftafell in South-East Iceland close to the popular Glacial lagoon. The surroundings of these hotels are beautiful, where short walks are ideal to enjoy.

This program is rich in unique natural sites in the West and 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 Geysir 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, the low sun in the fall season. One day will be spent in Reykjavik, the most northerly capital in the world. There are many museums and great shopping. A Whale-watching tour in the afternoon is a possibility. In early evening we will gather for a multiple eight-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 Bjorn, 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, Braseth Gallery Seattle and Newark Museum of Art.



The northern lights dancing in the winter sky

[TOUR PROGRAM IN DETAIL](#)

1st day. September 2nd WELCOME TO ICELAND (Breakfast and Dinner)



Reykjavik



Downtown Reykjavik

Arrival at Keflavik International airport, from various US Airports 6-6:40 AM in the morning (after 5-6½ hour flights). At the Keflavik 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 and 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, or possible Whale-watching tour down at the harbor, architecture, culture, museums, art galleries, bookstores, and the many unique retail enterprises. In the early evening, we will meet at 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 a hotel in Reykjavik.

2nd day. September 3rd
DRIVING TO THE WEST

(B, L, D)



Hraunfossar Waterfalls



Scenery near Stykkisholmur

Today's drive takes us through the Hvalfjörður tunnel into the rolling fertile Borgarfjörður agricultural district known for its beautiful landscape and mountains.

We will learn of the history of the area at the Reykholt Cultural Center that emphasizes the importance of the medieval historian and novelist, Snorri Sturluson, (1178-1243). Snorri wrote famous works about Nordic mythology and is believed to have written some of the magnificent Icelandic Sagas. We stop at the most unique "Hraunfossar" waterfalls where pure spring water cascades from hundreds of springs at the base of a series of lava flows. Hraunfossar are at their most beautiful in the fall. In the afternoon we arrive at Hotel Rjúkandi on the Snaefellsnes peninsula, for wonderful quarters and another fabulous dinner.

3rd day. September 4th AROUND SNAEFELLSNES PENINSULA (B,L,D)



Thufubjarg bird cliffs



The Snæfells volcano capped by the Glacier

Today we will enjoy a full day around Snæfellsnes. We begin at the picturesque fishing village of Stykkishólmur with a boat excursion to the beautiful Breidafjörður Bay. You will enjoy this boat cruise around the islands to view the scenic splendor. We learn about the varied landscapes of this volcanic peninsula. The great structure of the glacier mountain of Snæfellsjökull dominates the scenery, built up by a succession of lavaflows during the last ice-age and countless flows during the past ten thousand years under open sky. We visit Ytri Vik on the southern coast, which is often a good site for spotting seals. A very enjoyable one-hour walk is planned between Arnarstapi and Hellnar, where we enjoy the craggy and colourful coastline. A myriad of unusual rock structures demonstrate the interaction of ancient, glowing hot lava flows and the cold ocean water. Second overnight at Hotel Rjukandi.

4th day. September 5th
THINGVELLIR, GULLFOSS, AND GEYSIR

(B, L, D)



The Golden Waterfall



The Geyser "Churn"

We leave Snæfellsnes peninsula in the morning. The tour takes us through farms set in glacier-cut valleys, adjacent to many rivers, and

through beautiful landscapes. 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 over 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! Today we also 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 golden 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 geyser “Churn”, is an active spring and spouts every 3-5 minutes up to a height of 60-70 feet. This is followed by a short drive to Selfoss where we spend the first of three consecutive nights at Hotel Selfoss. selfosshotel.is/English

5th day. September 6th

LANDMANNALAUGAR AND THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS (B, L, D)



Near the hot springs at Landmannalaugar



Geothermal area on our walk

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.

6th day. September 7th

A DAY IN THE MAGNIFICENT THORMÖRK VALLEY

(B, L, D)



The braided sands of Markarfljót



Thorsmörk nature reserve

Thorsmörk (Þórsmörk) is an incredibly beautiful Nature Reserve and a “must see” during your stay in Iceland. It is a favorite among hikers as it offers good access to endless hiking trails in beautiful volcanic landscape, with views over the three glaciers; Eyjafjallajökull, Mýrdalsjökull and Tindfjallajökull. Getting here is an adventure in itself and part of the way is driven in a specially equipped mountain bus that takes you into the rugged wilderness, safely crossing rough roads and many glacial rivers. On the way we will pass the former Gígjökull glacier lagoon where we will see the results of the famous Eyjafjallajökull volcanic eruption of 2010. Our final destination is the Básar cabin where we will take a leisurely 1½ hour walk through the mountains, viewing many volcanic phenomena. Drive back to Hotel Selfoss.

7th day. September 8th

SOUTH ICELAND, VÍK VILLAGE AND SKAFTAFELL NAT. PARK (B,L,D)



Skógarfoss



Svartifoss basaltic columns

We leave Selfoss in the morning, driving through several small, quaint villages stopping 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 Skógarfoss. Next is a visit to the valley glacier at Sólheimajökull. Here we will walk (weather permitting) to the glacier. 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.

Later on, we will enjoy 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. mls. of volcanic sands and gravels that make up “Mýrdals-sands”. Further across Skeiðarársands, another far bigger outwash plain. Here we will have a moderate walk up to the grand amphitheater-shaped “Svartifoss” waterfall with its peculiar array of vertical basaltic columns. Overnight at Hótel Skaftafell.

www.hotelskaftafell.is

8th day. September 9th

VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK & GLACIER LAGOON (B, L, D)



The Glacial lake



Stranded glacial ice – the Diamond beach

Our tour takes us 100 miles along “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, Öraefajökull, 2,110 m. (6,900 ft.) high.

In the afternoon we will visit the Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon to enjoy a boat ride among the floating icebergs. We will have the chance to photograph this beautiful “garden” of stranded icebergs of all sizes. This is a photographer's haven! We plan this to be the last highlight of the day – with ample time for photography, possibly lingering into the low-angle sunshine of the early evening. Overnight at Hótel Skaftafell.

www.hotelskaftafell.is

9th day. September 10th

FJAÐRÁRGLJÚFUR CANYON AND THE LAKI LAVA (B, L, D)

(B, L, D)



Pillars of columnar basalt



The magnificent Fjaðrár-canyon

Discover the beautifully sculptured canyon, Fjaðrárgljúfur, carved by water torrents through the interglacial pile of volcanic material. This morning we come to 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: 230 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 a few years later! Now the lava is covered by thick, beautiful, green moss, a stunning experience to enjoy first hand. Overnight at Hotel Selfoss.

10th day. September 11th

THE UNIQUE BLUE LAGOON AND FLIGHT BACK HOME (B and L)



The Blue Lagoon



Krýsuvík mudpot field

On our drive from Selfoss along the South-West coastline, we first visit the colorful mudpot fields at Krýsuvík. Enjoy the world famous “Blue

Lagoon” bathing facilities. The Geothermal spa is one of the most visited attractions in Iceland. The warm waters are rich in minerals like silica and sulfur and bathing in the Blue Lagoon is reputed to help some people suffering from skin diseases such as psoriasis. The water temperature in the bathing and swimming area of the lagoon averages 99–102 °F. The lagoon is man-made and is fed by the water output of the nearby geothermal power plant, Svartsengi. The water is completely renewed every two days through natural flow! We will have lunch at a good restaurant in Grindavik town. Then a short drive to the Airport in Keflavik for your flight back home, departing around 5 PM on Icelandair to Washington Dulles or other destinations in the US.



Björn Rúriksson, your Icelandic host



The Icelandic horse



The Golden Waterfall



A turf farm

*HIGHLIGHTS: SOUTH AND WEST ICELAND SEPTEMBER TOUR***The Iceland Program September 1st to September 11th 2018. Arrival in Iceland on September 2nd. Ten days (nine nights) in Iceland.****Unique highlights of Tour compared to many other tours to Iceland from the US:**

- Outstanding food Program (a delightful culinary experience), 28 carefully chosen full meals with tea and coffee (10 quality breakfasts, 9 lunches and 9 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 or three 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 two seats (like one bench seat per person). Guiding during the whole tour program.
- Glacier Lagoon boat trip and museum visits.
- Boat excursion from idyllic Stykkisholmur in Breidafjörður Bay of the 1000 Islands!
- There are many moderate walks to enjoy during the tour. None of these walks are strenuous or lasting longer than roughly one hour. And there is always the choice of after-dinner walks!
- Reasonable daily mileage throughout the tour (c.a 170 daily miles on the average), allowing for some relaxed moments at our hotels before dinner.

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 the tour – Min. 6 participants: \$ 6.490 in double occupancy. Single room supplement: \$ 1,090. Max. number is 14.

With warm greetings from Björn Rúriksson, Iceland
bjornrur@gmail.com

br 5.1/March 25th 2018

US letter size