

Iceland Expedition

Departure Notes



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We're very pleased to welcome you on our **Iceland Expedition** journey. From years of experience in operating hiking expeditions around the world, we have learned that the single most important "item" to bring along is a spirit of adventure. Full enjoyment of the trip depends on being prepared, both mentally and physically. You will be far from home and far from your standard routine of life. Flexibility and a sense of curiosity will prove invaluable for this type of travel.

This booklet is designed to convey the spirit of the trip and guide you in the more practical details of getting ready for your adventure. **We urge you to read all of this material carefully, as most of your questions about the trip will be answered in these pages.** If any further questions come to mind as you ready yourself for the trip, please give us a call or send an email—we're here to help.

Important Travel Information

THE ESSENTIALS

For your trip, you must have:

- Valid passport (valid for at least six months after your date of departure from the trip)
- One other picture ID, such as driver's license
- Photocopy of passport page to carry in wallet
- Air tickets and expense money

TIMETABLE OF ITEMS WE NEED FROM YOU

By return mail:

- Signed Medical Form
- Signed Trip Application Form
- Trip Insurance Payment (Trip Insurance is optional but highly recommended)

120 days before departure or earlier:

- Second Deposit of 20% of Land Cost. Your payment will be automatically charged to your credit card.

60 days before departure or earlier:

- Balance of Land Cost. You will be invoiced approximately 75 days before departure.
- Copy of your Air Itinerary. Please review your schedule with us before purchasing tickets.

FINAL DOCUMENTS

Approximately three weeks before departure, we will send you hotel contact information, trip roster, and final meeting and departure instructions.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We *strongly recommend* that you get coverage for medical expenses, baggage loss, and trip cancellation. Trip cancellation insurance reimburses you for non-refundable payments should you need to cancel your trip due to a covered sickness or injury to yourself, a traveling companion, or family member, or for some other unforeseen circumstances. For details, see the Description of Coverage brochure and enrollment form enclosed with your sign-up packet. Travel insurance must be paid for before final payment.

PASSPORT

A valid passport is required for your trip; be sure to check the expiration date. Your passport must be *valid for six months after your date of exit from Iceland*. It is a good idea to carry a photocopy of the photo page and the entry stamp page of your passport as an additional piece of identification. It is also a good idea to have two extra passport photos. If you lose your passport, or if you keep your passport in a hotel safe or send it to an embassy for visas, having a photocopy and extra passport photos will prove invaluable.

US citizens do not need a visa for Iceland. If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, check with a local consulate for entry requirements.

TRAVELING WITH MINORS

Although you may or may not be asked to show such documentation, a minor (individuals under the age of 18) traveling alone, with only one parent, or with someone other than his/her parents, must have a notarized letter of consent signed by both parents or the absent parent. If parents are divorced, a Parental Custody document is permissible in lieu of notarized letter. Inquire with your airline carrier in advance about its policies.

MONEY

The currency in Iceland is the Krona. Foreign currencies can be exchanged in all major banks, some of which are open 24 hours. Most hotels also provide their guests with exchange services. In general, it will be easy to change money during the trip. Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club, and American Express are widely accepted. You may also be able to use ATMs to withdraw cash. To use an ATM internationally, you must have a four-digit PIN. If you plan to use your credit cards, inform your credit card company before your departure that you will be using the card abroad. Travelers checks in US dollars are widely accepted, but they are *not* recommended as they can be difficult and time-consuming to cash. You will need to budget spending money for gratuities, for meals not included, for international and domestic airport departure taxes, and for personal items such as beverages.

GRATUITIES

During the trip, the Trip Leader takes care of tips for waiters at restaurants, for porters for luggage handling, and for local guides and drivers who are with the group for only a short time. Tipping for the Trip Leader is not formally organized. Should you wish to tip your Trip Leader, we suggest that you do so towards the end of the trip. Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward outstanding service.

A range of reference would be \$120-\$150 per trip member for one Trip Leader. If the trip has two Trip Leaders, a range of reference would be \$90-\$120 per trip member for each of the two Trip Leaders, and \$30-\$50 per person for the driver. The Trip Leader can be tipped in US dollars.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet connection is available at most of our hotels.

BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER

Please show respect for the cultures that we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.

Photography

For most people a compact digital camera with a fixed zoom lens works well. Many zoom out to 200 or 300mm and some have image stabilization, allowing you to hand-hold the camera with minimal camera shake. For good wildlife photography you need a longer telephoto lens, at least 200mm, which can be supplemented with a 28-70mm or similar lens for more general use. Pack your equipment well and use plastic bags to protect it from dust or moisture. Bring your manual with you. You may want to consider insuring your equipment.

For digital cameras, we recommend bringing two memory cards. If you are taking a lot of pictures and saving them at a high resolution, it can be helpful to carry a digital storage unit so you can download your pictures and free up your memory cards for reuse on a regular basis. Bring a backup battery or set of batteries so one is always charged and ready to use, and bring your battery charger (and if necessary a voltage converter and appropriate plug adapter). If your camera uses replaceable batteries, bring spares with you, although standard AA size batteries can often be purchased while on the trip. Note: for trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger.

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Heed your Trip Leader's guidelines for what is appropriate, and always use gestures or simple phrases to ask permission. If people do not wish to be photographed, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which only makes it harder for other travelers to take pictures and to have a personal interchange with local people uncolored by the demand for money.

Clothing & Equipment

LUGGAGE

- Soft-sided suitcase, with small padlock (must be unlocked for air travel).
- Daypack, large enough for a jacket or rain gear, water bottle, camera, and other items you want on the trail. NOTE: Very few daypacks or fanny packs are waterproof and any items that you need to keep dry should be put in a waterproof stuff sack inside your pack.
- (Optional) Small roll-up bag to carry home purchases.

Bring clothes you find most comfortable for walking. Quick-drying fabrics are the best for travel. The weather might be warm enough for shorts on many days, but include lightweight long pants for cool weather. Bring a sweater or pile jacket, a windbreaker, and breathable raingear (such as Gore-Tex)—a jacket with hood as well as overpants and gaiters. Waterproof your hiking boots before your trip. Remember, although these hikes take place during the summer, this is Iceland—expect cold, rainy weather at any time and prepare to layer accordingly. You will want a change of clothes for evenings, but nothing dressy is necessary. Casual wear is fine, and coats and ties are not required.

Please pack everything in one piece of luggage for the walking tour, as this simplifies transportation of luggage en route. Although airline service to Europe is generally reliable, it is best to *wear or carry* your hiking boots with you on your flights in the event that your luggage is lost or delayed. Likewise, don't pack valuables, such as travel documents, camera gear, or prescription medicines in your checked luggage.

CLOTHING

- Good quality breathable rain gear, such as a Gore-Tex rain/wind shell jacket with hood and Gore-Tex rain/wind pants—essential!
- Medium fleece jacket or similar warm outer layer
- Lightweight fleece or wool sweater or sweatshirt for layering
- Long-sleeved shirt. Quick-drying “travel” fabrics like nylon are recommended.
- T-shirts or short-sleeved shirts.
- Hiking pants. Lightweight cotton or synthetic hiking pants are a practical choice. Jeans are not recommended because they take a long time to dry if they get wet.
- Hiking shorts
- Shade hat with wide brim—preferably a waterproof one you can use as a rain hat as well
- Medium-weight hiking boots with Vibram-type soles. Boots must be well broken in and waterproofed (see *About Hiking Boots*)
- Tevas or water booties to use for occasional stream crossings on our hikes: ESSENTIAL!!
- Comfortable shoes for walking in towns
- Hiking socks. Some people like the thick Thorlo-type socks with padded toes and heels, or a combination of outer sock and synthetic liner sock.
- Gore-Tex gaiters—very important for keeping pant legs dry! Available through Recreational Equipment, Inc. (rei.com) and at many other outdoor stores.
- Lightweight fleece hat for cool days
- Lightweight fleece gloves
- Underwear/sleepwear. Synthetics dry faster.
- Bathing suit (for the Blue Lagoon, geothermal springs, and thermal pools during the trip)
- Casual city/hotel attire

EQUIPMENT

- Hiking Poles—HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Most of our hikes are on undefined, steep trails or through rough areas, and the terrain may be wet. Hiking with a collapsible hiking pole, such as those by Leki and REI, helps to distribute your body weight, takes pressure off your knees, and improves your balance. Some hikers like using one pole, and others hike with two poles.
- Waterproof stuff sack to carry inside your daypack
- Waterproofing material for leather boots (Sno-seal or a silicon product)
- One or two plastic water bottles, 1 qt. capacity
- Small, quick-drying towel for the hike to the geothermal springs
- Good quality sunglasses with case. A *spare pair* of sunglasses is a good idea should your first pair be broken or lost.
- Plastic bags to compartmentalize items in duffel, zip-lock style bags to carry small items during the day

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Voltage converter and plug adaptor for appliance use in hotels. Iceland has 220-volt current. Plugs usually have two or three prongs.
- Long underwear if you tend to get cold
- Laundry soap for hand-washing clothes
- Camera, spare batteries
- Reading/writing material
- Lightweight binoculars
- Texas or other sturdy sandals
- Travel clock
- Small umbrella
- Money belt or neck pouch. Always carry your passport, credit cards, and cash with you in a money belt or neck pouch tucked down inside your shirt or blouse.

HIKING BOOTS

Bring medium-weight boots with Vibram-type rubber lug soles. Ankle support is very important. Boots with leather uppers should be waterproofed with several applications of a suitable waterproofing product, such as Sno-seal (beeswax) or a silicon product, before leaving home. Waterproofing materials wear off over time and need to be re-applied. You might want to bring a can of waterproofing material with you. Gore-tex boots are considered waterproof for one year unless the membrane is punctured.

If you're buying a new pair of boots, make sure a qualified salesperson gives you proper guidance in determining fit. Don't buy any boots that you are not permitted to return after wearing for several hours around the house. *Blisters* caused by improperly fitted or insufficiently broken-in boots are the most common and painful problem normally encountered on hiking trips. Before you depart, you should be able to wear your boots for a full, active day with no discomfort. Even boots you have owned for years can sometimes produce blisters when you are doing this amount of hiking. Limber up feet and boots before departure, and bring a good supply of Second Skin. *Running shoes are not satisfactory for the hiking conditions you'll encounter.*

LIFE ON THE TRIP

We drive to a starting point for our walk and our vehicle picks us up at the end of the walk to drive us to our night's lodging. Some days combine sightseeing and hiking, but we usually don't spend more than a couple of hours in the van at one stretch. Where possible, those who are not up for hiking can usually opt out and spend time on their own exploring the small villages where we stay.

The hiking on this trip is rated as moderate to strenuous with rugged terrain. You might think hiking in Iceland is less rigorous than, for example, the Alps, because the daily mileage is not as great and the elevation gain and loss is not as extreme. However, some of the ascents and descents are steep, and terrain includes bogs that are ankle deep, stony paths and cross-country travel over open ground. The hiking might be a bit rougher than you expect for a region with such moderate altitudes. Rain can bring on mud, which makes footing tricky as well. Iceland's weather can also provide spectacular clear days but can also be very changeable, and we want you to be well prepared for all that you may encounter. We recommend you bring one or two collapsible walking sticks or poles.

A NOTE ON ACCOMMODATIONS

Nights will be spent at comfortable hotels and inns. Please keep in mind that on this trip we are crossing *rural* Iceland. The rooms in our hotels and inns will not always conform to international hotel standards and sizes.

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR TRAVELERS

There are good resources on the web for travel clothing and gear, travel literature, and travelers' health information. Wilderness Travel has compiled a list of useful websites at <http://www.wildernesstravel.com/toucan/links>

Medical Information

No inoculations are required. However, it is easy to get a small cut, so a tetanus booster is strongly recommended (good for 10 years). If you take prescription medicines, be sure to bring enough for the duration of your trip.

It is *vital* that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations that you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake a particular trip.

PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES

This list is just a suggestion; your own travel experiences will influence your choices.

- Sunscreen SPF #30 or higher and lip balm with sunscreen
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol for muscle pain or headache, Tylenol PM for sleep
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. "Liquid band-aids," such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Prescription medications properly labeled
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses
- Feminine protection

FITNESS

The shape you're in is an important factor in enjoying the trip. Make special efforts to get in good physical condition for the trip by hiking, running, bicycling, swimming or participating in other forms of exercise *beyond* your normal routine. The most effective way of getting fit for hiking is to hike. If you are overweight or smoke a lot, or if you have never taken a hiking trip before, consider taking one of the less strenuous trips.

MEALS

Please let us know at least eight weeks prior to departure if you have a restricted diet. We will try to accommodate you. However, certain limitations can make it difficult to accommodate your restrictions, so it is important to bring a flexible attitude. Inform your Trip Leader at the beginning of the trip of any special food requirements, and bring an adequate supply of your supplemental favorite foods.

Exploring Reykjavik

Iceland's capital, Reykjavik, believed to be the first permanent settlement in Iceland (AD 870), is a friendly city with many fine attractions that can be explored on foot. A scenic walking path circles the city, and you should plan a couple of hours for just wandering around. In between visits to Reykjavik's cultural gems, take a break with a coffee (or something stronger) at a cozy café or bar. The city is famous for its Friday night *runtur*, the legendary pub crawl that can go on all night; it's also the cultural center of Iceland with a hip music and arts scene.

RESTAURANTS

We suggest the following restaurants:

Fish Market (www.fiskmarkadurinn.is/english)

Grillmarkdurinn (www.grillmarkadurinn.is)

Both of these restaurants are owned by a young woman chef named Hrefna who takes pride in using products only from local small farmers for her menu. The flavors are incredible! As the names indicate, Fiskmarkadurinn specializes in fish and Grillmarkadurinn in meat but both restaurants offer both options.

3 Frakkar (www.3frakkar.com)

This is a famous Icelandic restaurant that has been around for more than 20 years. They serve traditional Icelandic fare.

Kolabrautin (www.kolabrautin.is/en)

This popular restaurant is located on the fourth floor of Harpa Concert Hall (www.en.harpa.is), which is also one of the must-sees in Reykjavik.

Pearlan (www.perlan.is)

This very nice restaurant is situated on the top floor of The Pearl, one of Reykjavik's most spectacular landmarks. The floor rotates, and during a two-hour meal, you can do a full 360° and see all of Reykjavik!

MUSEUMS

The National Museum of Iceland (www.thjodminjasafn.is/english)

The Reykjavik Museum (www.artmuseum.is); consists of three different museums

SHOPPING

Atmos (<http://atmo.is>)

This place is so new they don't even have their website in English yet! It was opened last year and has more than 40 Icelandic designers selling their wares. They aim to promote new and fresh talent as well as some more known and distinguished artists. Definitely a place to visit and do some local shopping. It is situated at the top end of the main street of Laugavegur.

OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

The Hop On Hop Off (www.re.is/CitySightseeing/)

This bus takes you to most of the main sites and as the name indicates, you can hop off where you like and jump back on when you're done. Ticket is valid the whole day.

Ride an Icelandic Horse

Viking Horse Tours (<http://vikinghorses.is/>)

Viking Horses is a small family-owned business offering popular small-group riding tours on Icelandic horses in Heidmork Nature Reserve, within the Reykjavik area. Pickup is from your hotel in the morning

(the ride is approx 1.5 hours). Email: ragga@vikinghorses.is

Climb up Hallgrímskirkja Church tower for a panoramic view of the city.

Swim in outdoor swimming pools and hot pots all around Reykjavik (www.swimminginiceland.com)

Rosenberg

For those interested in music, this place has concerts nearly every day of the week. Famous Icelandic bands can often be found here playing for a small crowd. It's located on Klapparstigur Street, which runs through the main street of Laugavegur (about halfway up).

Reading Guide

Much of the enjoyment of travel is in the planning and preparation—and there’s nothing like reading to enrich your travel experience. To order any of these items from our book partners at Longitude, and for the latest, most comprehensive recommendations for your trip, go to reading.longitudebooks.com/WT43 or call 800-342-2164.

ESSENTIAL

These 4 items are available as a set for \$73 including shipping, 15% off the retail price (Item EXICL09). Free shipping on any additional books ordered.

Halldor Laxness

Independent People, An Epic

1997, PAPER, 480 PAGES, \$16.00

The Nobel Prize-winning author’s masterwork about a hard-headed, independent-minded sheep farmer is a mock-epic redolent of rural Icelandic life in the early days of the 20th century. (Item ICL01)

Terry G. Lacy

Ring of Seasons, Iceland, Its Culture and History

1998, PAPER, 332 PAGES, \$25.95

A longtime resident of Reykjavik, Lacy weaves tales of family life, anecdote, lore and history into this illuminating personal portrait of Iceland. (Item ICL03)

Insight Guides

Insight Guide Iceland

2011, PAPER, 360 PAGES, \$22.99

This beautiful guide features wonderful photographs, maps and essays on history, attractions and culture by a team of experts. (Item ICL04)

ITMB

Iceland Map

MAP, \$13.95

A detailed double-sided map of Iceland, at a scale of 1:425,000. (Item ICL05)

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Andrew Evans

Bradt Guide Iceland

2007, PAPER, 384 PAGES, \$25.99

A detailed, personable guide in the venerable British series with a focus on natural treasures, including glaciers, lava flows and rugged coastlines. (Item ICL42)

T.K Derry

A History of Scandinavia: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland

2000, PAPER, 447 PAGES, \$25.00

Scandinavia from prehistory to the present with chapters on the Viking and Lutheran kingdoms, medieval times, monarchies, the World Wars and modern period, emphasizing the common cultural, political and social backgrounds. (Item SCN03)

Yves Cohat

The Vikings, Lords of the Seas

2010, PAPER, 175 PAGES, \$15.95

An indispensable reference that fits in your pocket, this slim volume is packed with maps, archival photographs, and illustrations. It tells of the Norse homeland, discoveries and settlements, and also features a useful chronology and excerpts from the Viking Sagas. Part of the "Discoveries" series. (Item VIK01)

Einar Mar Jonsson, Guillaume Cannat, Patrick Desgraupes (Photographer)

Iceland

2005, HARD COVER, 180 PAGES, \$45.00

The French landscape photographer Desgraupes captures the natural beauty of Iceland in 175 color-saturated photographs. (Item ICL38)

John McPhee

The Control of Nature

1989, PAPER, 272 PAGES, \$16.00

A best-seller in the classic McPhee tradition, this book explores our generally feeble attempts to combat all-powerful nature, including efforts by Icelanders to control the flow of a volcano. (Item NAT01)

Nancy Marie Brown

The Far Traveler, Voyages of a Viking Woman

2008, PAPER, 320 PAGES, \$15.00

Brown's intriguing account of the life of the young Viking woman Gudrid sheds light on early Norse settlements in Iceland, Newfoundland and beyond. It's an archaeological mystery, a history of ancient seamanship and a biography all rolled into one. (Item VIK26)

Jon Krakauer (Photographer), David Roberts

Iceland, Land of the Sagas

1998, PAPER, 160 PAGES, \$24.00

Krakauer and colleague David Roberts hike and climb around Iceland in this classic travel narrative, reissued as a paperback and featuring Krakauer's color photographs. The book interweaves the natural and cultural history of the island with the authors' own adventures. (Item ICL07)

Tim Moore

Frost on My Moustache, The Arctic Exploits of a Lord and a Loafer

2001, PAPER, 280 PAGES, \$16.99

In this inspired folly, a British comic heads to Iceland, Spitsbergen and other northern locales in pursuit of a fictitious Arctic hero. (Item ARC74)

Jane Smiley (Introduction), Robert Kellog (Illustrator)

The Sagas of Icelanders

2000, PAPER, 544 PAGES, \$25.00

Nine sagas and six tales composed between the years 1000 and 1500, including an account of Leif Eriksson's voyage to North America, all newly translated. With an introduction by Jane Smiley. (Item ICL13)

Arnaldur Indridason

Jar City

2006, PAPER, 288 PAGES, \$15.00

Indridason's first moody police procedural finds Reykjavik detective Erlendur Sveinsson investigating the brutal murder of a lonely pensioner, and the man's connection to the deaths of a number of young women. The series continues with *Silence of the Grave* (ICL36), *Voices* (ICL53), *The Draining Lake* (ICL52) and more. (Item ICL27)

Arnaldur Indridason

Silence of the Grave

2007, PAPER, 288 PAGES, \$15.00

Reykjavik police inspector Erlendur Sveinsson uncovers an old skeleton and unsavory secrets in Indridason's excellent second crime novel translated into English. Winner of the 2005 Gold Dagger award. (Item ICL36)

Halldor Laxness, Magnus Magnusson (Translator)

The Fish Can Sing

2008, PAPER, 256 PAGES, \$15.00

A quirky, moving coming-of-age tale set in Reykjavik at the turn of the last century, featuring an unforgettable cast of Icelandic characters. Laxness, who also wrote *Independent People* (ICL01), won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955. (Item ICL14)

Barry Lopez

Arctic Dreams

2001, PAPER, 417 PAGES, \$16.00

A dazzling meditation on the Arctic, breathtaking in scope. Lopez draws on his travels throughout the North, including Baffin Island, the Chukchi and Bering seas, Alaska, the Yukon and Greenland, interweaving natural history, accounts of early exploration, anecdote and lore into an indelible portrait of place. (Item ARC11)

Richard Fisher

Volcanoes, Crucibles of Change

1998, PAPER, 344 PAGES, \$29.95

A complete primer for the volcano lover, this heavily illustrated book covers types of volcanoes and eruptions, worldwide distribution and the physics of their formation. (Item GEO02)

Chris Kightley

Pocket Guide to the Birds of Britain and North-West Europe

1998, PAPER, 299 PAGES, \$27.00

A compact field-friendly guide to the birds found in the British Isles and the Faroes, Scandinavia and Northwest Europe. (Item EUR50)

E.C. Pielou

A Naturalist's Guide to the Arctic

1994, PAPER, 327 PAGES, \$22.00

Our best-selling book on the Arctic, this guide covers the geography and climate, plants, birds and wildlife of the circumpolar north. (Item ARC03)

Carl Christian Kinze

Marine Mammals of the North Atlantic

2003, PAPER, 192 PAGES, \$26.95

A guide to the marine mammals of the North Atlantic featuring 250 color illustrations. (Item FG60)

TO ORDER

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www.longitudebooks.com

Shipping charges via UPS or Priority Mail: \$4.95 for first book, \$1 per additional book up to a maximum of \$9.95 Book prices and availability are subject to change. Checks, Visa, MasterCard, AmEx, and Discover accepted.

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