

*Tour:*

## Fire & Ice

*Destination:*

ICELAND

*Specialization:*

Science, History & Culture

*Itinerary:*

6-days / 5-nights with add-on days available

Iceland: Fire & Ice - Sample Itinerary				
	Morning	Afternoon		Evening
1	Travel to Iceland, clear customs, meet transport and transfer to Reykjavik	Vikingaheimar Museum & Viking Ship Islandingur	Check into Hotel; Visions Welcome & Safety Meeting	Dinner at Hotel
2	Iceland's Golden Circle Tour - Gullfoss, Geysir, Strokkur, Þingvellir National Park, Almannagja Fault & Alþingi Parliament - plus a visit to the Friðheimar Greenhouse		Hellisheiði Geothermal Power Plant, Hveragerði Geothermal Park	Dinner & Icelandic Folklore Story Telling - Fairies, Elves & Trolls!
3	Waterfalls & Volcanoes Tour - Vik í Mýrdal, Seljalandsfoss Waterfall, Þorvaldseyri Farm Volcano Visitor Center, Skógafoss Waterfall, Skógar Folk Museum, Cliffs of Dyrhólaey, Reynisdrangar Rocks, Mýrdalsjökull Glacier			Dinner at Hotel
4	Reykjavik Guided City Tour	Icelandic Whale Watching Cruise		Dinner at the Hamburger Factory
5	The Blue Lagoon	Transfer to Keflavik Airport	Depart Iceland for Home	



## Specialists in STEM Student Travel

As with all sample itineraries, please be advised that this is an 'example' of a schedule and that the activities and hotels shown may be variable dependent upon dates, weather, special requests and other factors. Itineraries will be confirmed prior to travel.

**Iceland....** Few visitors can travel around Iceland without being deeply touched by its sheer beauty, and few can leave the country without a strong vow to return. It's just that sort of place. Perched on the edge of the Arctic, this wonderful little island contains some of the most impressive natural wonders in Europe. The continent's biggest waterfalls thunder down with such force that the ground trembles under your feet; the barren highlands form Europe's largest, loneliest desert; and the awesome ice cap Vatnajökull is the biggest outside the poles. Other spectacular phenomena include smoldering volcanoes, slow-flowing glaciers, extruding lava, gushing geysers, bubbling mud pots, soothing thermal pools and, in the darkness of winter, the magical northern lights.

Situated on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Iceland is a hot spot of volcanic and geothermal activity: 30 post-glacial volcanoes have erupted in the past two centuries, and natural hot water supplies much of the population with inexpensive, pollution-free heating. Rivers, too, are harnessed to provide hydroelectric power.

Until about 20 years ago, Iceland's fantastic scenery, friendly natives and eerily remote wilderness were a well-kept secret. Today the country is one of Europe's hottest destinations. As well as having awe-inspiring nature, it boasts the compact capital Reykjavik, a city filled with Viking history and renowned for its high-energy nightlife and kaleidoscopic music scene.



If you have the time, indulge in a little horseback riding, white-water rafting, glacier walks, caving, whale watching, sea kayaking and a spot of elf hunting. That's right - elf hunting! Elves are nothing new to Icelanders who have told folk tales of "little people" since the time of the medieval sagas and have even today, had roads rerouted and building plans redesigned or abandoned to avoid disturbing rocks where elves are said to live.

Whale watching is a big here too. In the summer, Iceland is probably the best place in Europe to see minke and humpbacks. The sea cliffs around the country are a paradise for birdwatchers, but even if you're not a 'twitcher' you'll be blown away by the sight of 20,000 puffins nesting on a cliff top. No matter if it snows, rains or blusters, or if you spend your whole visit basking in the sweetest spring sunshine, Iceland is a ravishingly beautiful place that you'll long to return to.

**With an amazing mixture of stunning scenery and natural wonders, mythical traditions, Viking heritage and the warmth of the Icelanders', this country is a must on any bucket list.**

For more information on Iceland, visit [www.visiticeland.com](http://www.visiticeland.com).

# Scientific Iceland

## Nature's variety show

Geologically speaking, Iceland is a very young country; its creation began less than 20 million years ago and is still progressing today. Volcanic eruptions in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, created a mountain which grew above sea level, resulting in an island. Iceland truly has a volcanic origin. This is illustrated by the presence of picturesque lava fields, craters, volcanoes, table mountains, mountains of pumice and fields of volcanic ash.

## Iceland's wildlife

Iceland's wildlife reflects the youth of the country. There are relatively few insect species and only a handful of wild mammals. In the ninth century, when the first settlers arrived in Iceland, the only native mammal was the arctic fox, but later, other species were introduced by man. Birds are still discovering Iceland and new species are regularly observed. There are no reptiles or amphibians, and there are simply no dangerous animals!

## Interaction between volcanic activity and ice or water

Due to the northerly location of the country, there is a good deal of interaction between volcanic activity and ice or water. In the Kverkfjöll area, hot springs rising beneath the glacier has created impressive ice caves. At times, volcanic eruptions occur under glaciers, causing massive melting of the ice, often dramatically fast.

## Vegetation

Another consequence of Iceland's location in the Arctic is the vegetation. The summer is short, so flowers that bloom in different months further south all bloom at the same time in Iceland. They do not always grow as tall as they do further south: orchids and gentians are plentiful in Iceland but are smaller than elsewhere. The energy and heat in Iceland's soil create conditions that are unique at this latitude and make the vegetation much richer than one would expect.

## Thinner earth crust

The Earth's crust is much thinner under Iceland than it is under Europe or America. As a result, the molten rock is closer to the surface and heats up the groundwater deep in the earth, giving rise to numerous hot springs. In many places, the natural hot water is used for space heating and to fill swimming pools, and of course the boiling, bubbling hot springs are an extraordinary sight. This is particularly true in the Geysir area, where the geyser Strokkur produces a high column of boiling water every 15 minutes or so.

## The environment is important to the Icelanders

Over the millennia, glaciers, erosion and the tectonic movement of the Earth's crust have helped to shape the landscape. Great rivers have formed, containing countless waterfalls, of all shapes and sizes. In fact, there are so many that not all the waterfalls even have names. The rivers are a great source of environmentally friendly energy, of which the Icelanders gratefully avail themselves. The environment is important to the Icelanders and they are continually searching for newer and better solutions. The use of hydrogen and other new sources of energy, in some countries considered a dream for the future, is already a reality in Iceland.

## Glaciers

Ten percent of Iceland is covered with glaciers... vast, magnificent worlds of ice. Every year they move and change a little, sometimes growing in cold periods and sometimes, as in recent years, shrinking. Glaciers are naturally white, but in some areas volcanic ash has fallen or been blown on to them by the wind, turning the glacial tongues black. In many places, you can see layers of white and black in the ice, because in winter any layers of black ash or sand on a glacier will be covered with fresh snow. The glaciers move forward, pushing soil, sand and stones before them, but they can also retreat. This can result in picturesque lakes where icebergs float. There are quite a few of these in Iceland, the most spectacular being the Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon in the southeast. This is part of the new Vatnajökull National Park, the biggest in Europe, which encompasses the Vatnajökull ice cap.



## The Itinerary....

### Day 1

*Breakfast in flight, lunch on own; dinner included*

Fly to Keflavik, clear customs and meet your coach. First stop – the Vikingaheimar Museum!



***The Vikingaheimar (Viking World) Museum & Viking Ship Islanding*** – The Vikingaheimar Museum is home to the Viking Ship Islanding (The Iclander). The Iclander is an exact replica of the famous Gusted ship, a remarkable archaeological find of an almost complete Viking ship excavated in Norway in 1882. Vikingaheimar is also a home to a Viking millennium exhibition produced by the Smithsonian Institution - ***Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga***. This exhibition sheds light into the Norse settlement and explorations of unknown lands. These two fine projects, both celebrating Iceland's central role in the discovery of North America 1000 years ago by the Norse Vikings, have now found a permanent home in Vikingaheimar. [www.vikingaheimar.is/en](http://www.vikingaheimar.is/en)



Later, transfer to Reykjavik, approximately a 45-minute drive. Arrive at your Iceland hotel, check-in and get settled.

**Sample Hotel:** Hotel Cabin, <http://hotelcabin.is/en>

This student-friendly hotel allows for all pupils to sleep in individual beds. Although a basic European-style hotel, a restaurant, gift shop, complimentary wi-fi and other amenities allow this hotel to be a super, cost-conscious option for our groups. If you prefer a different lodging property, please let us know!



After settling in, we'll have our Visions Welcome & Safety Meeting and an early dinner to get acclimatised to our new time zone.

*Icelandic is the official language of Iceland. It is an Indo-European language, belonging to the subgroup of North Germanic languages. It is closely related to **Norwegian** and Faroese, although there are slight traces of Celtic influence in ancient Icelandic literature. Don't worry though, nowadays you will have no problems communicating in **English** in most all situations.*

## Reykjavík - Iceland's Capital: Pure Energy

Shaped by the energy of the earth, bustling with the energy of a cosmopolitan capital, surrounded by the pure unpolluted energy of nature, Reykjavík is a city of striking contrasts. Small corrugated iron houses nestle next to futuristic glass buildings; state-of-the-art facilities lie minutes away from rugged volcanic terrain, and international influences mingle with Icelandic national traditions to create a unique culture where old embraces new. Whether you are seeking the bustling energy of a cosmopolitan city, the thundering thermal energy in the ground beneath your feet, or the quiet green energy of the landscape surrounding the city, Reykjavík promises a memorable visit. Pure Energy!



### Day 3

*Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own*

Today we'll have an opportunity to see all the sights Iceland is famous for in Iceland's Golden Circle Tour.

## The Golden Circle Tour

On today's drive, we'll get to know much of the natural features the country is known for – waterfalls, geysers, and remarkable geology. You'll visit Gullfoss, a popular and impressive waterfall along the Hvítá



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river with an interesting history behind it; Geysir, which originated the term 'geyser' and is a geothermally active area with regular geyser eruptions and other steamy natural features; and Þingvellir National Park, the site of the country's first parliament along the edge of the great rift created by the Eurasian and American continental shelves drifting apart. You'll also visit an active geothermal energy plant to learn more about the science behind harnessing the earth's powerful heat as well as the Friðheimar Greenhouse.

**Þingvellir National Park** - National Park of Geological Wonders (UNESCO) - Iceland is a country of enormous geological interest because it straddles the Mid-Atlantic Ridge where the European and North American continental plates meet. No single place epitomizes the history of Iceland and the Icelandic nation better than Þingvellir by the river Öxará. In the last few decades, research has made it clear that Þingvellir is a natural wonder on an international scale, with the geologic history and the bio system of Lake Þingvallavatn forming a unique entity and a magnificent showcase. The faults and fissures of the area make evident the rifting of the earth's crust. We walk through the Almannagjá fault to the site of Alþingi, the world's oldest parliament, established in 930. [www.thingvellir.is/english.aspx](http://www.thingvellir.is/english.aspx)



**Alþingi** – The Alþingi (anglicized as Althing or Althingi) is the national parliament (literally: "[the] all-thing", or general assembly) of Iceland. It is one of the oldest parliamentary institutions in the world. The Althing was founded in 930 at Þingvellir, the "assembly fields" or "Parliament Plains", situated approximately 45 km east of what later became the country's capital, Reykjavik. This event marked the beginning of the Icelandic Commonwealth. Even after Iceland's union with Norway in 1262, the Althing still held its sessions at Þingvellir until 1799, when it was discontinued for 45 years. It was restored in 1844 and moved to Reykjavik, where it has resided ever since. [www.visitreykjavik.is/althingi](http://www.visitreykjavik.is/althingi)

Next, we'll explore Gullfoss & Geysir - Gullfoss (Golden Falls) as well as the Geysir Geothermal Area teeming with hot springs, exploding geysers and bubbling pools of mud!



**Gullfoss** - Gullfoss is in the river Hvítá (The White River), which has its origin in the glacier lake Hvítávatn at Lángjökull glacier about 40km north. Glacial water is brownish since it carries lots of sediments that the glacial ice has carved off the earth. Gullfoss is called the "Golden Falls" because on a sunny day when the water is plunging down the staircase and then tumbling farther down into the 32m deep crevice, it truly looks golden. To stand at Gullfoss and wallow in the beauty and the wonder of nature is an uplifting experience. It is claimed that you feel more energetic when leaving Gullfoss than when arriving due to the impact these unique nature sites have on the human body! [www.gullfoss.org](http://www.gullfoss.org)

**Geysir & Strokkur** - One of the greatest natural attractions of Iceland, the Great Geysir, or Stori-Geysir, has been dormant since 1916 when it suddenly ceased to spout. It came to life only once in 1935, and as quickly went back to sleep. It is not exactly known when Geysir was created. It is believed that it came into existence around the end of the 13th century when a series of strong earthquakes, accompanied by a devastating eruption of Mt. Hekla hit Haukadalur, the geothermal valley where Geysir is located. What is known is that it spouted regularly every third hour or so up to the beginning of the 19th century and thereafter progressively at much longer intervals until it completely stopped in 1916. Whether its silence is eternal or temporary, no one knows. When it was alive and shooting, it could thunderously blast a spectacular jet of superheated water and steam into the air as high as 60 to 80 meters according to different sources. Its opening is 18 meters wide and its chamber 20 meters deep.



The Great Geysir was among the most notable geysers in the world, such as those in Yellowstone Park, New Zealand and North Iceland. The English word "geyser" is derived from the Icelandic word "geysir" which means gusher. Though the Great Geysir itself is now inactive, the area surrounding it is geothermically very active with many smaller hot springs.

The attraction of the area is now Strokkur (The Churn), another geyser 100 meters south of the Great Geysir, which erupts at regular intervals every 10-minutes or so and its white column of boiling water can reach as high as 30 meters. The whole area is a geothermal park sitting on top of a vast boiling cauldron. Belching sulfur mud pots of unusual colors, hissing steam vents, hot and cold springs, warm streams and primitive plants can all be found here. A short distance away to the west stands the small Laugarfjall Mountain with a panoramic view overlooking the Geysir area. King Christian IX of Denmark visited the area in 1874 and by the foot of the mountain are the rocks where he leaned while his hosts tried to impress and amuse him by boiling eggs in the hot springs. The rocks are now called Konungssteinar ("The King's Stones").

**Friðheimar Greenhouse** – Friðheimar grows tomatoes all year round, despite Iceland's long, dark winters. Visitors are encouraged to tour the greenhouses, enjoy a taste of the crop, and purchase delicious food souvenirs made of their tomatoes and cucumbers. They also breed horses, and put on a horse show – in fourteen different languages! <http://fridheimar.is/en/horticulture>



In 1995 Knútur and Helena bought Friðheimar with the aim of combining their different areas of expertise – horses and horticulture. The farm already had two greenhouses, and a large house stood unoccupied. Horticulture using natural hot water had commenced at Friðheimar in 1946. Visits to the greenhouses enable an insight into the processes of greenhouse horticulture, with a short and



informative talk on the subject – growing vegetables in this cold climate by creating warm Mediterranean conditions. And some even like to raise a glass of tomato schnapps!

Iceland is also known for its **horses**. Groups visiting Friðheimar will get to visit their stables to hear a short presentation about the Icelandic horse and a one-horse show of the gaits. The Icelandic horse is known for its diversity of gaits, coat colours, strength, health and good spirit. If you're lucky enough to visit in the summer, you'll want to check out an actual horseshow. The show provides an insight into the story of this remarkable breed which was brought to Iceland by the first settlers from Scandinavia around 900 AD. Whether on the farm or for overland transport, the horse has been the trusty companion of the Icelanders down the centuries, and even today farmers ride into the highlands to round up their sheep in autumn.

***The Geothermal Energy Exhibition at Hellisheiði Power Plant*** - an exploration into the utilization of geothermal energy in Iceland. Located on Hengill volcano in the South of Iceland, Hellisheidarvirkjun heat and power plant constitutes the largest power station in Iceland and the second largest geothermal power station in the world. The geothermal power plant was created to provide electricity to the city of Reykjavik. Only 11 kms separate the Hellisheidarvirkjun geothermal plant from Nesjavellir, the second largest geothermal power in Iceland. Get ready to start understanding geothermal power!

[www.geothermalexhibition.com](http://www.geothermalexhibition.com)



#### **OPTIONAL ADD-ON**

***Silfra Snorkel Tour*** - The Golden Circle is home to one of the most fascinating underwater sites in the world. A trip to Iceland is just not complete without a visit to the natural diving site of Silfra, in the heart of Þingvellir National Park. Snorkel your way through its blue waters and encounter many wonders beneath you, with up to 262 feet (80 m) visibility. *Please note this is not part of the standard tour and additional fees apply to cover the excursion and rental equipment. Full instruction included.*



***Icelandic Folklore Story Telling*** - This evening we'll have dinner at our hotel and then we've scheduled a little fun! In Iceland, cultural beliefs include fairies, elves and trolls. This evening we'll have a storyteller meet us at the hotel to share these folktales and more as we soak in the Icelandic culture!



## Day 4

*Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own*

Today we're off in search of natural wonders and amazing history!

## Waterfalls & Volcanoes Tour

We'll drive along the south coast of Iceland, one of the country's most scenic regions, as far as Vík, a charming village surrounded by beautiful high bird cliffs. Along the way, we'll stop at the gorgeous Seljalandsfoss waterfall, which is unique in that you can walk through it, to the other side. We also stop at the majestic and much-photographed Skógafoss waterfall, with its 60m drop, before returning to Reykjavik. Other highlights include the stunning Mýrdalsjökull Glacier and the black sand coastline and impressive Reynisdrangar Rock Formations.

**Vík** – Located in Mýrdalur, the southernmost district in Iceland, Vík's natural environment is diverse: turbulent seas, black sands, grassy meadows, green mountains, wilderness notched with gullies, and over all of this, towers the majestic Mýrdalsjökull glacier, which embraces Katla Volcano, last erupting in 1918. The Gulf Stream passes by the coastline, ensuring shorter and milder winters than other areas of the country. Birdlife is diverse with easy access to many ideal watching spots. About 500 people live in Mýrdalur, of which approximately 300 in Vík, a trading post since 1887.

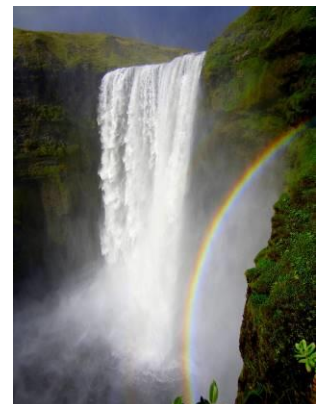
[www.south.is/en/inspiration/towns/vik](http://www.south.is/en/inspiration/towns/vik)



**Reynisdrangar Rocks** – Just outside the tiny town of Vík, three black basalt columns called the Reynisdrangar protrude from the stormy North Atlantic. Legend has it that the rocks are three trolls, caught out too late and frozen by the early morning sunlight. From the wild black beach at the foot of Vík, the towers can be seen off the misty coast to the west.

[www.atlasobscura.com/places/reynisdrangar](http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/reynisdrangar)

**Seljalandsfoss Waterfall** - one of the best-known waterfalls in Iceland. It is 65 meters high and breathtakingly beautiful! It's possible to walk behind the waterfall so bring a raincoat as you'll get wet from the drizzle. It is awesome walking behind Seljalandsfoss, especially on a sunny day when one can catch a rainbow. The behind-the-waterfall walk is generally only allowed in non-winter months.



**Skógafoss Waterfall** - is 60 m high and 25 meters wide and you can walk right up to. There are staircases leading up to the top of the hill above Skógafoss and from there you can look down at this powerful, incredible waterfall. There is a legend connected to Skógafoss waterfall... It is believed that behind it you can find a chest filled with gold and treasures. The story goes that Þrasi Þórólfsson, the Viking Settler at Skógar (Eystriskógar) in around 900, hid the chest and it is said that the first man who goes there will find great treasures.

**Myrdalsjökull Glacier** - the southernmost glacier in Iceland, the fourth largest glacier, with an area of about 596 sq. km. It is located to the north of Vík í Mýrdal and to the east of Eyjafjallajökull (Eyjafjallajökull). The popular walking route, Fimmvörðuháls (Fimmvorduhals) Pass, lies between these two glaciers.



The Myrdalsjökull ice cap conceals the upper part of a large volcano, the Katla caldera. Katla is estimated to be around 30 km in diameter, and the caldera itself is estimated to have a diameter of about 10 km. Katla is oval in shape with the longest axis NW-SE and covers an area of 110 sq. km. The highest points of the ice cap lie on the caldera rim and include Goðabunga, Háabunga, Austmannsbunga, Enta and Entukollar. Within the caldera, the ice is hundreds of meters thick. Eruptions can start in many places outside or within the caldera and cause great glacial outburst floods. Quite a few glacier snouts flow down onto the lower lying areas and discharge a great volume of water.

**Skogar Museum** - is in Southern Iceland and is a cultural heritage collection of 15,000 regional folk craft artifacts exhibited in 3 museums and 6 historical buildings. It is divided into three parts: the folk museum which offers a huge variety of tools and implements used for fishing and farming as well as artifacts dating back to the Viking age. In the rebuilt turf houses in the open-air museum you can catch the atmosphere of times long gone and experience how Icelanders lived through the centuries. The museum of transport, which also houses a souvenir shop and the Skógakaffi cafeteria, tells the story of technology and transportation and its development in Iceland in the 19th and 20th century.

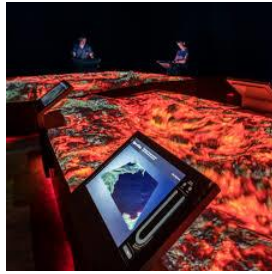


Skógar Museum opened December 1st, 1949. Originally housed in Skógar Regional School, the museum was founded on the initiative of Þórður Tómasson, who curated the museum since its inception until his retirement in 2013, at the age of 92. [www.skogasafn.is/en/skogar-museum](http://www.skogasafn.is/en/skogar-museum)

**The Lava Centre – Iceland's inside story!** The Lava Centre is an interactive, high-tech educational exhibition depicting volcanic activity, earthquakes and the creation of Iceland over millions of years. Examine the various volcanos—eruptions and lava flows, volcanic and rift systems, faults and glacial floods that make Iceland a showcase of volcanism. The Centre introduces the Katla Geopark plus Iceland's elaborate monitoring system for surveying volcanos and earthquake zones. Explore an interactive display of nature's epic forces that shape our planet and created Iceland. Features include:

*Volcano Corridor*  
*Earthquake Corridor*  
*Lava Corridor*  
*Ash Corridor*

*Geology Globe*  
*The Fiery Heart of Iceland*  
*Intro to Volcanology*  
*Site of Actual Volcanos*



This evening we'll have dinner at our hotel and then the evening is ours for exploration.

## Day 5

*Breakfast included; lunch & dinner on own*

Today we'll have an opportunity to explore Reykjavik and then search the seas for whales!

**Reykjavik** – Enjoy a guided tour in Reykjavik reviewing the history, culture and customs and experiencing what the city has to offer. Visit Laugardalur that was once the main source of Reykjavik's hot-water supply: it translates as 'Hot-Springs Valley', and in the park's center you'll find relics from the old wash house. The park is a favourite with locals for its swimming complex: Laugardalslaug, including a large outdoor pool, various hot tubs, a steam bath and a twisting water slide. Stroll the city streets, shop the stores and fall in love with Iceland!

**Whale Watch Tour** - In the afternoon we'll have an incredible whale watching tour from Reykjavik Harbour. Before the tour, we'll enjoy the onboard multimedia show that includes images, videos and facts about the whales and marine life. Once onboard we'll find several outdoor viewing platforms and a large indoor saloon with toilet facilities and a café for light refreshments. During the cruise, you might be able to see the Humpback whale, Minke and the Blue Whale along with over 20 other species all around the coast. You could also spot other fun and unique sea creatures such as seals, dolphins and sharks. Don't forget to keep an eye out to spot the beautiful puffins!



Tonight, we'll have a casual dinner in Reykjavik at the Hamburger Factory (or similar) before heading back to the hotel.

## Day 6

*Breakfast included but dependent upon departure time*

This morning we'll pack up for our departure but keep our bathing suits accessible because we're heading to the Blue Lagoon before arriving at the airport!



**The Blue Lagoon** – One of Iceland's premiere attractions and the perfect way to end this wonderful week! Enjoy bathing and relaxing in geothermal seawater, known for its positive effects on the skin. Guests of The Blue Lagoon bathe between two continents as the Eur-Asian and American tectonic plates meet at The Blue Lagoon. [www.bluelagoon.com](http://www.bluelagoon.com)

Videos to watch: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEWKKRzx0c0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEWKKRzx0c0)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmTyAUBY1U8&t=88s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmTyAUBY1U8&t=88s)



The Blue Lagoon Geothermal Spa is one of the most visited places in Iceland. The spa is located in a lava field in Grindavik on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwestern Iceland. Their operation is based on the unique properties of the geothermal seawater, the closed eco-cycle it belongs to, and represents an exceptional relationship between nature and technology. The result of this extraordinary relationship results in a unique experience based on healing power, wellness, and beauty.

The origin of the geothermal seawater is from 2,000 meters beneath the surface. In its travels through porous lava, a blend of sea and fresh water undergoes mineral exchange and then near the surface, concentration occurs, due to vapourisation, evaporation and finally, sedimentation.



The warm waters are rich in minerals like silica and sulphur and bathing in the Blue Lagoon is reputed to help people suffering from skin diseases such as psoriasis. The water temperature in the bathing and swimming area of the lagoon averages 37–39 °C (98–102 °F). The Blue Lagoon also operates a Research and Development facility to help find cures for other skin ailments using the mineral-rich water.

The lagoon is man-made and is fed by the water output of the nearby geothermal power plant Svartsengi, renewed every 2 days. Superheated water is vented from the ground near a lava flow and used to run turbines that generate electricity. After going through the turbines, the steam and hot water pass through a heat exchanger to provide heat for the municipal water heating system. The water is then fed into the lagoon for recreational use. Enjoy!

Later, we'll end our tour and head to the airport for our flight home, taking memories away that will last forever.

# Practical Information for Iceland



**Background** - Settled by Norwegian and Celtic (Scottish and Irish) immigrants during the late 9th and 10th centuries A.D., Iceland boasts the world's oldest functioning legislative assembly, the Althing, established in 930. Independent for over 300 years, Iceland was subsequently ruled by Norway and Denmark. Fallout from the Askja volcano of 1875 devastated the Icelandic economy and caused widespread famine. Over the next quarter century, 20% of the island's population emigrated, mostly to Canada and the US. Denmark granted limited home rule in 1874 and complete independence in 1944. The second half of the 20th century saw substantial economic growth driven primarily by the fishing industry. The economy diversified greatly after the country joined the European Economic Area in 1994, but Iceland was especially hard hit by the global financial crisis in the years following 2008. **Iceland's literacy, longevity, and social cohesion are first rate by world standards.**

The country is governed by the Althing (parliament), whose 63 members are elected every four years. Four-year elections are also held for the presidency; the head of state plays no part in day-to-day politics.

**Geography** - Iceland is an island of 103.000 km<sup>2</sup> (39,756 sq. miles), about one-third larger than Scotland or Ireland. Its highest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur, rises to 2,119 m and over 11% of the country is covered by glaciers, including Vatnajökull, the largest in Europe.

**Languages** - Icelandic, English, Nordic languages, and German are widely spoken. Iceland was settled by Nordic people in the 9th century - tradition says that the first permanent settler was Ingólfur Arnarson, a **Norwegian Viking** who made his home where Reykjavík now stands. The Icelanders still speak the language of the **Vikings**, although modern Icelandic has undergone changes of pronunciation and, of course, vocabulary. Iceland is alone in upholding another Norse tradition - the custom of using patronymics rather than surnames; an Icelander's Christian name is followed by his or her father's name and the suffix -son or -dóttir, e.g. Guðrún Pétursdóttir (Guðrún, daughter of Pétur). Members of a family can therefore have many different surnames.

**Religions** – The Lutheran Church of Iceland (official) 80.7%, Roman Catholic 2.5%, Reykjavík Free Church 2.4%, Hafnarfjörður Free Church 1.6%, other religions 3.6%, unaffiliated 3%, other or unspecified 6.2% (2006 est).

**Population** - 331,778 (July 2016 est.); country comparison to the world: 179. Out of a population numbering more than 300,000, half live in the capital Reykjavík and its neighbouring towns in the southwest. Keflavik International Airport is located about 50 km from the capital. The highland interior is uninhabited (and uninhabitable), and most centers of population are situated on the coast.

**Health** - Life expectancy at 81.3 years for women and 76.4 for men; one of the highest in the world and a comprehensive state health-care system aims to keep it that way.

**Season and Climate** - The Icelandic climate is warmer than the name suggests, thanks to the Gulf Stream. Summers in Iceland are rather cool, while the winters are relatively warm. The average monthly summer temperature ranges from 10 to 13 °C. During the summer, the climate is mild but unstable with possible rain and frequent weather changes. The daily temperature can fluctuate from a minimum 5 °C at night to a maximum of 25 °C during the day.

Average Temperatures in Celsius:												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Reykjavik	-0.5	0.4	0.5	2.9	6.3	9	10.6	10.3	7.4	4.4	1.1	-0.2
Akureyri	-2.2	-1.5	-1.3	1.6	5.5	9.1	10.5	10	6.3	3	-0.4	-1.9

Sunrise & Sunset Times												
Sunrise	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Reykjavik	11:19	9:55	8:21	6:42	4:39	3:15	3:07	4:50	6:16	7:36	9:24	10:51
Akureyri	11:31	9:51	8:09	6:23	4:09	2:22	2:02	4:20	5:55	7:22	9:19	10:59
Sunset	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Reykjavik	15:44	17:29	18:59	20:22	22:12	23:39	23:55	22:15	20:37	18:57	16:58	15:44
Akureyri	15:01	17:03	18:40	20:11	22:12	0:03	0:27	22:14	20:26	18:40	16:32	15:05

**Time** - Iceland is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) throughout the year and does not go on daylight saving time.

**Telephone Calling** - Direct calls can be made to all parts of Iceland. The code into Iceland from overseas is +354 + seven-digit number. Direct long-distance calls can be made to Europe and the USA by dialing 00 plus the country code, and the telephone number you wish to reach.

**Tax free shopping/tax refund** - A refund of local Value-Added Tax (VAT) is available to all visitors in Iceland. The refund will result in a reduction of up to 15% of the retail price, provided departure from Iceland is within 3 months after the date of purchase. The purchase amount must be no less than ISK 4,000 (VAT included) per store. All goods (except woollens) need to be shown at customs before check-in at Keflavik Airport. This applies only to tax-free forms whose refund value exceeds ISK 5,000. All other forms can be refunded directly in cash at Landsbanki Íslands in the departure hall.

**Shopping** - The shops in Iceland are of international standard, and carry a wide variety of merchandise. Local specialties are woollen knitwear (for example sweaters, cardigans, hats and mittens), handmade ceramics, glassware and silver jewellery.

**Currency** - The Icelandic Krona is the currency of Iceland. The currency code for Kronur is ISK, and the currency symbol is kr. Coins are in denominations of 100 kr., 50 kr., 10kr., 5 kr. and 1 kr. Bank notes are in denominations of 5000 kr., 2000 kr., 1000 kr., and 500 kr. All Icelandic banks provide foreign exchange. To determine current exchange rates, visit [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).



**Medical & Emergency Assistance** - Icelanders enjoy a healthy life, thanks to clean air and water and quality fish. Water is safe to drink throughout Iceland. Pharmacies are called "Apótek" and are open during normal business hours; many are also open at night. Reykjavík has a great many general practitioners, as well as specialists, many of whom will receive patients at short notice. There are also many health centers in Reykjavík, with officially appointed family doctors who receive patients at short notice during the day. For information tel.: +354-585-1300 or go to [www.heilsugaeslan.is](http://www.heilsugaeslan.is). There is a medical center or a hospital in all major cities and towns in Iceland. **The emergency phone number (24 hours) in Iceland is 112.**

**Electric Current** - The electric current in Iceland is 220volts, 50 HZ AC.

**Tipping** - Service and VAT are invariably included in prices in Iceland.



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# Fire & Ice, Iceland

## **Minimum Booking Numbers:**

16 students

## **What's Included:**

International roundtrip flights  
4-nights' accommodation in Reykjavik  
Airport transfers & group transportation as detailed  
Breakfasts, lunches & dinners daily (starting with lunch on your day of arrival and ending with breakfast on your day of departure)  
Vikingaheimar Museum & Viking Ship Islandingur  
Golden Circle Tour, private guide  
Guided Waterfalls & Volcanoes Tour, private guide  
Reykjavik City Tour, private guide  
Friðheimar Greenhouse & Horse Farm admission  
Hellisheiði Power Plant & Geothermal Presentation  
Icelandic Storytelling Evening  
Skógar Museum, admission  
Þorvaldseyri Visitor's Center, admission  
The Lava Center, admission  
Blue Lagoon, admission  
Whale Watching tour from Reykjavik  
Egg Boil at Hveragerði GeoPark  
Taxes and service fee  
Dedicated Visions Tour Ambassador  
24-hour emergency cover

## **What's Not Included:**

Airline baggage fees (paid directly to airport at check-in, both ways)  
Airport transfers in your home city  
**BEVERAGES WITH MEALS, pay on own**  
Fully comprehensive insurance (mandatory)  
Transfers to/from home airport  
Transportation to activities not shown in itinerary  
Meals not shown as included above (lunches + dinner on Day 5)  
Cost of visas, full or collective passports  
Cost of inoculations or medication required for travel  
Sightseeing / Entertainment Options not shown in Itinerary  
Hotel incidental deposits & bills – meals, mini-bar items, recreation charges, purchases billed to room,  
Any gratuities – coach drivers, maid/ bellman services, Visions Ambassador, local guides

As always, our staff are always available to you to answer any questions you may have regarding programming. If we may serve you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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