

ARCTIC - ICELAND DISCOVERY



INTRODUCTION

Travel to Iceland and delve into the ancient land of Vikings and volcanoes on this 10-day Icelandic adventure. Marvel at geothermal hot springs, witness the steamy eruptions of a giant geyser, touch the tongue of Europe's biggest glacier, see lava that's still warm after 20 years and scale giant waterfalls. Travel through Iceland's desolate lands, so mysterious and ethereal that they have inspired artists, poets and musicians for centuries. The ancient, untamed beauty of Iceland will stay with you forever.

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DEPARTURE

Selected dates April -
October

DURATION

10 Days

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Iceland



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DAY 1: Reykjavik

Hallo! Welcome to Iceland. The world's northernmost capital of Reykjavik lies just below the Arctic Circle. The city sees around four hours of sunlight a day in winter and 22 hours or more in summer. Surrounded by volcanic peaks and crystalline ocean, and boasting a vibrant arts and nightlife scene, Reykjavik's contrasts are utterly beguiling. Your adventure begins with a Welcome Meeting at 6pm today - see reception for more details. If you can't arrange a flight that will arrive in time, you may wish to arrive a day early. We'll be happy to book additional accommodation for you (subject to availability). If you're going to be late, please inform the hotel reception. We'll be collecting your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting, so please have these on hand. You can check in at the joining point hotel anytime after 2pm. While early check-in is not guaranteed, feel free to store your luggage until needed. Please note that the guest rooms may be spread across a number of buildings all situated along a quiet street in central Reykjavik, a 5-minute walk from each other. Why not arrive early and head to the National Museum, which depicts the history of Iceland from the 9th century (when the first Vikings from mainland Scandinavia arrived and settled) to the present day, or join locals who gossip and chatter in the Laugardalslaug Geothermal Pool.



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DAY 2: Reykjavik / Golden Circle / Hvolsvöllur Area

Today take a one-hour guided city tour of Reykjavik, passing the city's eclectic mix of architecture and delightfully coloured houses, and the famous Hallgrímskirkja church and the Pearl monument. Following the route of the 'Golden Circle' head out to Þingvellir National Park, home to the Parliament Plains. Þingvellir was the location of Iceland's first parliament, founded in 930 and ostensibly the world's oldest, and is the location of the Silfra fissure, where the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates slowly pull apart. The resulting gap is partly filled with fresh water and is clearly visible. From here head to the Geysir geothermal area, checking out the Strokkur Geyser - get a thrill as the geyser swells with blue water before erupting and shooting a cloud of water some 20-30 metres in the air. Finally, be spellbound by the immense beauty and sheer power of the Gullfoss (Golden) double waterfall on the Hvítá River, before proceeding to your overnight stay in the Hvolsvöllur region.



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DAY 3: South Coast

Begin the day with a visit to two breathtaking waterfalls, Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss. The narrow cascade of Seljalandsfoss drops 60 metres over the cliffs of a former coastline, and for a unique view it's even possible to trek behind the waterfall. On a sunny day you should be able to spot a rainbow or two in the spray. Skógafoss is a giant of a waterfall, 25 metres wide and also dropping down 60 metres. You can get up close and feel its power, and also climb a (long) windy set of stairs up to a stunning viewpoint. Afterwards, there is time to see the lovely Skógasafn Museum, which houses a large collection of cultural folk artefacts and period buildings. From here, continue along Iceland's beautiful South Shore to take in more of the country's renowned natural wonders, spotting sea bird colonies on the promontory of Dyrhólaey, which is rich in birdlife and Iceland's southernmost point. You'll also see the amazing stepping-stone rock formations of Reynisdrangar and its night black sand beach Reynisfjara, as well as the dramatic otherworldly landscape of the Solheimajokull glacier along the way. Today's journey ends at our guesthouse near the seaside township of Vík, Iceland's most southerly village.



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DAY 4: Skaftafell National Park/Jökulsárlón/Höfn Area

Today your journey continues over the squeaky black lava sands formed by the eight-month long Laki eruption in 1783-1784. Head to Skaftafell National Park, where you'll take an invigorating short walk (approximately 1.5 hours return) to the beautiful Svartifoss (the Black Waterfall). The surrounding black hexagonal basalt columns make it one of the most striking waterfalls in the world. Another walk will take you to Svínafellsjökull (one of the tongues of Vatnajökull, Europe's largest glacier), where you'll see glacial ice sculptures, deep crevasses, and wonderful shades of blue. Continue to the one of Iceland's undisputed highlights, the glacier lagoon of Jökulsárlón, where you will board an amphibian vehicle to cruise the lagoon and be amazed by some of Mother Nature's finest work as you're surrounded by floating icebergs. From here it's not far to your overnight stay, picturesquely located on another lagoon sheltered by a black sandbar.



DAY 5: East Fjords / Egilsstaðir / Möðrudalur

After breakfast, you'll have a full day to appreciate the stunning Icelandic countryside. Drive on a road that tightly curves with the sea through the coastal region of the East Fjords, enjoying spectacular views of high steel-grey mountains, deep fjords, spectacular waterfalls, glaciers, winding mountain passes, and quaint fishing villages. Stop at the wooded village of Egilsstaðir, before continuing along mountain roads into the Icelandic interior and the highland farm village of Möðrudalur. At 469 metres (1,539 feet) above sea level, Möðrudalur Valley is the highest inhabited place in Iceland, and snow can be seen almost year round. There are majestic views across Herðubreið, one of the most beautiful mountains in the whole country. Notes: Total driving distance approximately 400-500 kilometres / 5-8 hours. The actual driving time today depends on the time of year, as some roads may be closed early or late in the season due to snow.



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DAY 6: Husavik / Lake Myvatn

From Möðrudalur you will drive to the magnificent Dettifoss waterfall, Europe's mightiest cascade. 96,500 gallons of water flow through it per second, often black from sediment, and it's so powerful that the vibrations can be felt in the nearby rocks. The falls are 100 metres wide, with a 45-metre drop down into the craggy shores of Jökulsárgljúfur canyon below. You'll also pay a visit to the nearby natural phenomenon of the Ásbyrgi canyon, a massive horseshoe-shaped gorge formed by a glacial flood after the last ice age, some 8,000 years ago. Legend has it that the gorge was formed when Sleipnir, Odin's eight-legged horse, stamped one of its feet to the ground here. Continue on towards the town of Husavik at the south end of Skjalfandi Bay, before driving towards the glassy surface of Lake Myvatn. Recent and old volcanic activity has shaped the landscapes of the area, making it one of the most interesting geological regions in the northern hemisphere. See boiling and bubbling mud pools, the lava labyrinth of Dimmuborgir and the interesting pseudocrater group at Skutustadir. If you like, you can even take a soak in the hot blue waters of the Myvatn Nature Baths.



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DAY 7: Akureyri / Trollaskagi Peninsula / Gauksmýri

This morning, drive to the impressive Goðafoss waterfall (the Waterfall of the Gods). It's said that into this 30 metre wide, gently curving waterfall, a pagan priest called Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði symbolically threw the idols of the Norse gods in the year 1,000, signifying Christianity becoming Iceland's official religion. From Goðafoss continue on to Akureyri. Situated at the head of Iceland's longest fjord, Akureyri is the nation's second largest city. Embark on a short guided tour of the town before enjoying some free time to explore. Wander the streets of arts and crafts galleries and shops, passing wooden houses in pastel colours, and perhaps dropping into the Folk Museum. In the afternoon, journey on to the town of Siglufjordur and then around the dramatic north coast of the Trollaskagi Peninsula, where there are beautiful landscapes of deep valleys carved by the glaciers. Continue on to Gauksmýri, where you'll spend the night.




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DAY 8: Hrútafjörður / Snaefellsnes Peninsula

Continue your journey into Snaefellsnes National Park, home to the magnificent Snaefellsjökull Glacier. The glacier tops a 700,000-year-old volcano – a magnificent sight when the fogs clears to reveal it – and it played a starring role as the entrance to the Earth’s core in Jules Verne's 1864 novel ‘Journey to the Centre of the Earth’. The mystical power of the glacier has long inspired many folk and fairy tales, and this ruggedly beautiful sight is one of the best known in Iceland. Visit Djúpalónssandur and check out the smooth, black basaltic pebble beach, which is set to a backdrop of glaciers and strange lava formations. On the beach lie four 'aflraunasteinar' (lifting stones) weighing from 23 to 154 kilograms, and once used to measure a fisherman’s strength for working on the boats. Continue on to Arnarstapi, where a short stroll along the coastal cliffs exposes you to rich bird life and stunning lava formations. Look out for the large stone monument to the pagan figure Barður Snaefellsás who, according to local legend, still lives in Snaefellsjökull and protects the area from evil. Visit a picturesque rural church and white beach at romantic, windswept Búðir, which is surrounded by Búðahraun lavafield.




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DAY 9: Grábrók / Reykjavik

Today head back towards Reykjavík to complete your circuit of Iceland. Your first stop is at the old Grábrók volcano, where you'll climb the many steps to the crater summit. Soak up views of the valley and rugged lava fields, and look down into the crater from the rim - it's still active but hasn't seen any eruptions for 3,500 years. Continuing on your journey, check out the waterfalls of Hraunfossar (Lava Waterfall) and Barnafossar (Children's Waterfall). The former makes for great pictures - a gentle series of rivulets that tumble over bright green mossy cliffs into bright turquoise waters - while the latter is a series of rapids as the Hvita river makes its way through a small canyon. Barnafossar gets its name from the story of two children who disappeared into the falls many years ago, and whose mother destroyed the arch crossing the falls, cursing any who should try to cross. Next stop is a visit to steamy Deildartunguhver, Europe's hottest and highest flow thermal spring. 180 litres of 97 degree hot water emerges here per second, billowing steam into the air in an impressive sight. Much of the water is tamed and piped to the surrounding villages, heating some as far as 60 kilometres away. From here, you will head back to Reykjavík, passing beautiful Hvalfjörður (Whale Fjord) along the way. Back in the capital, perhaps gather together you fellow travellers to celebrate your last night as a group.



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DAY 10: Reykjavik

Today is departure day and time to say 'sjáumst'. As there are no activities planned, you are able to depart the hotel at any time. Check out time is at midday. If you are departing later, you can arrange to store your luggage at the hotel. As limited time is spent in Reykjavik on this trip, it's recommended to stay a few extra days. We are happy to book additional accommodation for you (subject to availability). Please ask your travel consultant for details. Iceland's capital has an eclectic arts and music scene, an abundance of quirky cafes and a laid-back vibe. Perhaps browse some of the city's great art galleries. If you feel like something more active, you can take a ride on an Icelandic horse or see killer whales just off-shore on a whale watching expedition. Alternatively, while away the hours with a soak in the geothermal waters of the famous Blue Lagoon, or maybe chase the Northern Lights outside of town. Note: The Blue Lagoon has limited availability, and during peak times tickets sell out far in advance. We recommend you book your time slot online in advance if you would like to be sure of a certain time/date for your visit: <http://www.bluelagoon.com>.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation

Standard

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Inclusions	Meals 9 breakfasts, 3 dinners Transport Private minibus Accommodation Guesthouse (9 nights) Included activities: Reykjavik City Tour Golden Circle (Thingvellir National Park, Strokkur Geysir, Gullfoss Waterfall) Museum at Skogar Waterfalls of Seljalandsfoss and Skogafoss Dyrholaey & Reynisdrangar Skaftafell National Park Glacier Boat Tour - Jokulsarlon East Fjords, Egilsstadir & Modrudalur Lake Myvatn Dettifoss Waterfall Namaskard boiling mud pools Town of Akureyri Trollaskagi Peninsula Godafoss Waterfall Snaefellsnes National Park Hraunfossar and Barnafoss Waterfalls Grabrok Volcano Deildartunguhver Hot Spring & Hvalfjordur Fjord
Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request
Notes	Contact us for more details
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability

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SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu's "Pass it on" programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.
- 4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise

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your impact on both local environments and communities.

5) Chimu Adventures’ offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure’s internal processes are also structures to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.

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