THE ARCTIC - ICELAND CIRCUMNAVIGATION | SYLVIA EARLE

TRIP CODE
ACAECMI
DEPARTURE
21/05/2024
DURATION
11 Days
LOCATIONS
Iceland

INTRODUCTION

Discover the rugged and scenic beauty of Iceland on this incredible 11 day voyage. As we circumnavigate Iceland, prepare to be blown away by a land of dynamic contrasts and indescribable beauty, a place where you can witness the inspiration of old sagas and hear the tales of mysticism.

This land of exploration and adventure is home to a unique landscape characterised by volcanoes, roaring waterfalls, geothermal beaches, and lava fields. You can kayak through deep pristine fjords before landing on beaches of jet black sand, uncover the wonders of Vatnajokull, the largest glacier in Europe, or step foot on the island of GrÃ-msey, the northernmost inhabited point of the country sits within the Arctic Circle itself. This is a truly remarkable experience that will show you hidden secrets and wonders of Iceland, far removed from the well-trodden tourist path.

Save up to 20% on 24 Arctic departures valid for new bookings until 30 Sep 2023
Discount is valid only on selected cabin categories on selected departures.
**Not combinable with any other promotion. Offers apply to new bookings only. Cabins are subject to availability and currency fluctuations. Further conditions apply, please contact us for more information.*

PLEASE NOTE: Pricing is subject to change and availability at the time of booking. Contact us for more information.

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ITINERARY

DAY 1: Reykjavik

Having made your way to Keflavik airport, you will be met by a representative of Aurora Expeditions and transferred to our pre-voyage hotel. Please visit the Aurora Expeditions hospitality desk, located in the lobby. Our team will run through your embarkation day, answer your questions, and give advice on the local area. They will also provide you with cabin tags for your luggage. Please clearly label the tags with your name and ship cabin number. Enjoy free time, and in the evening, dine at your leisure (dinner not included).

DAY 2: Embarkation & Hvalfjordur

Enjoy breakfast and check-out. Please ensure your cabin luggage is fitted with cabin tags clearly labelled with your name and cabin number. Your luggage will be transferred directly to the port for clearance and delivered to your cabin ahead of your arrival on board. Please keep any valuables or personal items with you throughout the day. Join your fellow expeditioners in the lobby in the early afternoon. Discover this unique city on the fringe of the Arctic, on a locally hosted walking tour. Your guide reveals unique characters, and charming stories as you visit the expressionist architecture of Hallgrimskirkja Church, the geometric mass of The Harpa Concert Hall and the home of the oldest surviving parliament in the world – the Althing. Moving indoors you'll view Iceland from a whole different angle as we interact with the nation's history and geological treasures from above, at FlyOver Iceland. See majestic waterfalls, glaciers, and volcanoes from a bird's perspective as state-of-the-art technology simulates the feeling that you're flying. Late afternoon we transfer to the port to board the ship. This evening, get to know your expedition team and crew at the Captain's Welcome Dinner to celebrate the start of a thrilling adventure.

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DAY 3: Stykkisholmur & Latrajarg Cliffs

Stykkisholmur is the starting point of our adventures on the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, gateway Snæfellsjökull National Park. Stykkishólmur is located by Breiðafjörður Bay on the north of Snæfellsnes peninsula and is surrounded by wonderful views of the innumerable islands. One of the defining landmarks in Stykkishólmur are the old houses in the old city centre, some of which were owned by Danish traders, and every year in August there is a Danish town festival in Stykkishólmur called Danskir dagar or Danish days. The oldest house in Stykkishólmur is the Norwegian house, which dates back to 1832. The inhabitants take great pride in preserving the old houses and walking in the centre of town is like walking in another era. Snaefellsnes Peninsula is an area of diverse landscapes that is characterised by lava fields and glistening fjords and home to bird-rich Breidafjordur Bay. The area is crowned by the magnificent, ice-capped Snæfellsjökull volcano, a 700,000-year-old dormant subglacial volcano, visible from Reykjavik on a clear day and immortalised in Jules Verne's Journey to the Centre of the Earth. At Bjarnarhöfn you will enjoy a guided tour of the shark museum and have the opportunity to taste cured shark. Though Grundarfjörður is not the most well-known town in Snæfellsnes, Mount Kirkjufell is certainly one of the most famous mountains in Iceland, if not the world. It is not unusual for photographers from all over the world to make their way to Grundarfjörður for the sole purpose of photographing this unique landmark which has even starred in a number of films. However, there is a lot more on offer in Grundarfjörður than just Mount Kirkjufell. Nature abounds, with vibrant birdlife and spectacular waterfalls.

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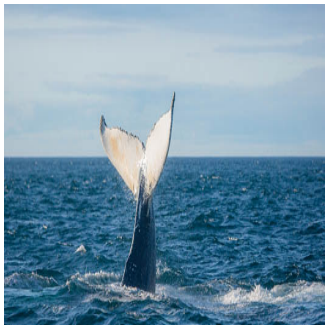
DAY 4: Westfjords

Over the next three days, we explore the Westfjords region featuring outstanding landscapes with jaw-dropping views of dramatic fjords carved by ancient glaciers, sheer table mountains that plunge into the sea and pristine North Atlantic vegetation. In genuine expeditionary style, we keep our itinerary flexible to allow for spontaneity. There are countless fjords to explore in the region. Your experienced expedition team will determine the day-by-day itinerary based on the unpredictable weather conditions of the region. Hornstrandir peninsula is located here and is one of Iceland's remotest and most pristine regions filled with many deep and dramatic fjords, towering bird cliffs, stunning natural beauty and opportunities for wildlife encounters. Enjoy the bountiful silence and magnificent landscapes as we sail past this stunning region seen by the few adventurers that make their way here. At Patreksfjordur, a shore excursion by coach takes us to Latrabjarg cliffs. As Europe's largest bird cliff, Latrabjarg is home to millions of seabirds, such as puffin, razorbill, fulmar and guillemot. Enjoy the impressive variety of natural wonders and unspoiled nature. Latrabjarg also happens to be the westernmost point in Europe, east coast of the North American continent on the other side of the Atlantic. We might visit places such as Isafjordur and Djupavik, where kayakers can paddle in the peaceful waters surrounded by towering mountains while others can enjoy walks and hikes of varying levels of difficulty, soaking in the stunning surrounds including impressive waterfalls and deep fjords. You might sample some local delicacies or perhaps visit an abandoned herring museum converted into an exhibition and gallery space.



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DAY 7: Grimsey Island & Husavik

Located approximately 40 km (25 miles) off the mainland, Grímsey is a verdant grassy island, probably best known for its proximity to the Arctic Circle, which cuts across the island. Many people travel to Grímsey just to say they have stepped across the imaginary line. With a tiny population of approximately 100 inhabitants, it's a fantastic place for Zodiac cruising, kayaking, and photographing seabirds such as guillemots, gulls and puffins. Leaving Grímsey to return closer to the mainland, we spend time scanning the waters of Skjálfandi Bay around Húsavik, a town known as the Iceland's 'whale watching capital', home to up to 24 different whale species, as well as dolphins and 30 variety of birds. The largest animal on Earth, the blue whale, has also been spotted in Skjálfandi Bay, and if you are lucky, you might catch a glimpse of this magnificent creature as well as others, such as orcas, fin whales and pilot whales.

DAY 8: Hjalteyri

Located near Akureyri, Iceland's second largest town, Hjalteyri is a small village on the western shores of Eyjafjörður. It was one of the main centres of the herring fishing industry, but these days, you're more likely to find art than fish in the old herring factory buildings. Sheltered from big waves, Hjalteyri is an ideal place to enjoy activities such as kayaking, cold-water snorkelling and diving, featuring famous geothermal struts located just offshore. Husavík might be internationally renowned as Iceland's whale-watching capital, but locals believe that Hjalteyri is North Iceland's hidden gems. Enjoy a fantastic day of adventure and exploration, but try not to tell too many people about this place or you could ruin its charm.

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DAY 9: Seydisfjordur

We spend some time exploring Seydisfjordur, a picturesque fishing village that is renowned for its charming collection of colourful wooden buildings located around the lagoon. Take a stroll around town and discover the timber houses that are remnants from when the Norwegians settled here and established the herring fishing facilities from 1870-1900. From the valley above the town, the river Fjardara tumbles down in beautiful cascades to the lagoon. There are a number of delightful hiking trails to explore, or alternatively, you can discover a flourishing cultural scene with an arts centre, the famous blue church that stages music concerts and the only two cinemas in the east of Iceland. Back in town, browse the stores where you will discover handicrafts by local artists and artisans – perfect as a souvenir or gift. As we sail out of the fjord, we stop at Skalanes, a tiny town that features a research centre hosting university students from around the world. Skalanes features stunning cliffs that are home to thousands of seabirds during the nesting season that you can see on walks or by Zodiac. The area has a large colony of nesting eider ducks and arctic tern. Seals, whales and reindeers are also commonly seen here.

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DAY 10: Westman Islands

Located off Iceland's south coast, the Westman Islands were formed by volcanic eruptions around 10,000 years ago. Sail past Surtsey Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site that emerged from the sea in 1963 and is one the youngest land masses on earth. Westman Islands are surrounded by 15 other uninhabited islands and around 30 rocks and skerries offering refuge for rich array of seabirds. Westman Islands are considered to have the largest Atlantic puffin colony in the world, and when sailing around the islands it is not uncommon to see puffins but also whales and seals. Heimaey is the main island in the archipelago, and it has the population of around 4,200. Ashore on Heimaey, the only inhabited island in the archipelago, we see half-buried houses that remain from a violent 1973 eruption of Eldfell volcano, which you can hike up if you wish. A visit to the weather station offers bird-watching opportunities and splendid views of the surrounding islands. Eruptions are a big part of the history of the Westman Island, where there are two volcanoes – one that erupted some 6,000 years ago, and Mount Eldfell that erupted in 1973, forcing all of the island's inhabitants to evacuate for the mainland. Serendipitously, due to bad weather the day prior to the eruption, all the fishing boats remained in the harbour and were able to help transport the inhabitants of Heimaey to the mainland. You can learn more about the story of the eruption and the aftermath at the fascinating Eldheimar museum, which includes a display of a house that was buried in ash during the eruption.

DAY 11: Disembarkation in Reykjavik

During the early morning, we cruise into Reykjavik and disembark at approximately 8.00 am. Farewell your expedition team and fellow passengers as you continue your onward journey. Transfer to Keflavik airport or to your centrally located hotel. Note: We do not recommend booking flights departing prior to 12.00 pm on the day of disembarkation, as we may experience delays at the conclusion of the voyage.

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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Cabin on board ship
Inclusions	**INCLUSIONS** • All airport transfers mentioned in the itinerary. • One night's hotel accommodation including breakfast, in Reykjavik on Day 1. • Half-day tour of Reykjavik on Day 2, prior to embarkation. • Onboard accommodation during voyage, including daily cabin service. • All meals, snacks, tea and coffee during voyage. • Beer, house wine and soft drinks with dinner. • Captain's Welcome and Farewell receptions including four-course dinner, house cocktails, house beer and wine, non-alcoholic beverages. • All shore excursions and Zodiac cruises. • Educational lectures and guiding services provided by Expedition Team. • Complimentary access to onboard expedition doctor and medical clinic (initial consultation). • One 3-in-1 waterproof, polar expedition jacket. • Complimentary use of Muck Boots during the voyage. • Comprehensive pre-departure information. • Port surcharges, permits and landing fees. • Gratuities for ship's crew and local guides. **EXCLUSIONS** • International or domestic flights – unless specified in the itinerary. • Transfers – unless specified in the itinerary. • Airport arrival or departure taxes. • Passport, visa, reciprocity and vaccination fees and charges. • Travel insurance or emergency evacuation charges. • Hotel accommodation and meals – unless specified in the itinerary. • Optional excursions and optional activity surcharges. • All items of a personal nature, including but not limited to alcoholic beverages and soft drinks (outside of dinner service), laundry services, personal clothing, medical expenses, wi-fi, email or phone charges.
Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request, contact us for more details.

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Notes	Prices are based on per person, twin share* (unless otherwise stated for triple/quad cabins) Prices are correct at time of publishing but are subject to change at any time. Itinerary is subject to change depending on weather and ice conditions In order to experience some of Iceland's incredible scenery, a number of the shore excursions on this itinerary require overland coach travel away from the coast.
Price Dependent upon	Departure date, fuel surcharges, cabin category, currency fluctuations, seasonality and availability.

SUSTAINABILITY

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