

# NATURAL WONDERS OF ICELAND

A tour all around the island  
June 2, 2018 ~ 18 Days



a world to experience



## Fares Per Person:

**\$11,595** double/twin

**\$14,150** single



> This tour is exempt from GST.

> **Experience Points:** Earn 194 points from this tour.

Redeem **194 points** if you book by **February 22, 2018**.

## Includes

- Coach transportation to/from Seattle Airport
- Non-stop Icelandair flight from Seattle to Keflavik and return
- Current air transport taxes, fees & fuel surcharges
- 16 nights accommodation and hotel taxes
- Coach transportation in Iceland for 15 days
- Knowledgeable and bilingual Icelandic guide for 15 days
- Swim in the Blue Lagoon
- Sightseeing tour of Reykjavik
- Strokkur Geysir and Gullfoss
- Deildartunguhver Hot Springs
- Snorrastofa Museum
- Bird watching boat excursion at Breiðarfjörður
- Snæfellsjökull National Park
- Bjarnarhofn Shark Museum
- Glaumbaer Folk Museum
- Horse show at Gauksmýri Farm
- Sightseeing tour of Akureyri
- Ferry to/from Hrisey Island
- Tractor-drawn wagon tour of Hrisey Island
- Goðafoss — waterfall of the gods
- Skútustadir crater and Námaskarð mud pots
- Whale watching boat excursion at Husavik
- Jökulsárgljúfur National Park and Asbyrgi Gorge
- Hallormstadir Arboretum
- Petra's stone collection
- Vatnajökull — largest glacier in Europe
- Boat excursion at Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon
- Vatnajökull National Park and Visitor Centre
- Eyjafjallajökull Volcano visitor centre
- Þingvellir National Park
- Iceland government 11% VAT (value added tax)
- Gratuities for Icelandic guide and drivers
- Wells Gray tour director throughout tour
- Luggage handling in Seattle only
- **31 meals:** 17 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 11 dinners

Kamloops > 250-374-0831  
Kelowna > 250-762-3435  
[www.wellsgraytours.com](http://www.wellsgraytours.com)

Penticton > 250-493-1255  
Vernon > 250-545-9197  
Toll Free > 800-667-9552



## Iceland

Iceland is a remote island of nearly 104,000 square kilometres in the North Atlantic. Its highest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur, rises to 2,110 metres and over 11 per cent of the country is covered by glaciers, including Vatnajökull, the largest in Europe. Situated on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Iceland is a hot spot of volcanic and geothermal activity: 30 volcanoes have erupted in the past two centuries and a recent eruption, Eyjafjallajökull, caused havoc with the ash fallout in Europe in 2010. Natural hot water supplies much of the population with cheap, pollution-free heating. Many rivers have been harnessed for inexpensive hydro-electric power. The coastline is pierced by more than 100 fjords with green fertile valleys extending inland. Iceland also has countless waterfalls and numerous hot springs.

Out of a population numbering more than 300,000, half live in the capital of Reykjavík and its neighbouring towns in the southwest. The highland interior is uninhabited and most communities are situated on the coast. Iceland was settled by Nordic people in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Tradition says that the first permanent settler was Ingólfur Arnarson, a Norwegian Viking who made his home where Reykjavík now stands. The early settlers founded one of the world's first republican governments which lasted until 1262 when Iceland lost its independence. The present republic was founded in 1944. The country is governed by the Althing (parliament) whose 63 members are elected every four years.

The chilliest thing about Iceland is its name! In January, the average temperature in Reykjavik is higher than that in New York. July is the warmest month with an average daytime temperature of about 14 degrees Celsius in Reykjavik and even warmer further north in Akureyri. These mild temperatures are thanks to the Gulf Current which sweeps around Iceland. The midnight sun can be experienced during our June visit because the sun rises at 2 am and sets at midnight in Reykjavik, and never sets further north. Early June is also a wonderful time to visit Iceland because the weather is generally good, the summer crowds do not arrive until later in June, and the birdwatching opportunities are thrilling.

Iceland's economy was robust with income per capita among the highest in the world until 2008 when its three privatized banks collapsed due to unwise foreign investments. In the following years, the kronur currency lost 60% of its value. Previously Iceland had a reputation as a very expensive place to vacation and Wells Gray customers experienced this on our first tour in 2007. A second tour in 2009 found amazing bargains by comparison, and the 2010 *Lonely Planet* "best of" guide ranked Iceland as the #1 value destination. In the seven years since, the economy has steadily improved and so has the kronur, bringing higher prices each year. The government introduced 11% VAT (like our GST) in 2015 which hiked all prices. There are not enough hotel rooms from June to August for the huge demand (Wells Gray books rooms two years in advance), and lodging prices have increased 20% in the last year. These factors make this tour expensive, but Iceland should be on everybody's bucket list, so we urge you to join us in 2018.

## Itinerary

### Saturday, June 2:

Meals: L

We cross the border at Sumas and stay overnight at the **Embassy Suites** in Lynnwood.

### Sunday, June 3:

Meals: B

The morning is leisure time and we check in at Seattle Airport by 2 pm. The flight on **Icelandair** is non-stop to Keflavik International Airport, located 50 km west of Reykjavik.

### Monday, June 4:

Meals: B

After arrival at **Keflavik**, our Icelandic guide and driver are waiting to greet us and we drive into the town of Keflavik for breakfast. Afterwards, we enjoy a soothing swim in the **Blue Lagoon**, a natural geothermal pool in the middle of a dramatic lava field. The 40-degree Celsius mineral-rich water and white sediment is known for its healing properties. Then we drive into **Reykjavik**, the northernmost capital of Europe. The name trans-

lates as "Smokey Bay" because the first settlers of Iceland saw steam rising from a cove in a geothermal area. We stay two nights at **Fosshotel Lind** which has an excellent downtown location.

### Tuesday, June 5:

Meals: B

During the morning, there is a sightseeing tour of Reykjavik. Weaving through narrow alleys framed with old timber houses, we learn about the life of the city from its beginning to the present. We visit the landmark **Hallgrímskirkja Church**, the harbour, the University, the giant relief map of Iceland at City Hall, and **Höfði House** where the Reagan/Gorbachev summit took place in 1986. We also enjoy the panoramic view over Reykjavik from the Pearl. The afternoon is leisure time to enjoy the multitude of shops along Laugavegur.

### Wednesday, June 6:

Meals: B,L,D

We drive through an agricultural area with a mixture of farms and summer cottages. **Hveragerði** has many greenhouses that grow vegetables and

flowers, and are heated with natural warm water. Next is the Geysir area where we walk around boiling hot springs and hissing fumaroles, and admire **Strokkur Geysir** which erupts every 5-10 minutes. Nearby is one of Iceland's favourite waterfalls, **Gullfoss**, which plunges 30 metres into Hvítá Canyon. Entering **Pingvellir National Park**, we learn about the National Assembly which was founded here in 930 AD to rule the country, and we take a walk through the old parliament site. Pingvellir is not only important for Icelandic history, but also for geology because the meeting of two drifting continental plates can be seen here. Later, we admire two more waterfalls, **Barnafossar** which tumbles under a natural bridge, and Hraunfossar which pours from under a lava flow. Nearby **Deildartunguhver** is one of the world's most powerful hot springs producing 198 litres per second that is piped to coastal towns for heating. Next is Snorrastofa Museum, named after Snorri Sturluson, a poet, historian, and 13<sup>th</sup> century Icelandic character. Our overnight stop is at Fosshotel Reykholt.

**Thursday, June 7:** *Meals: B,D*

It is a short drive to **Stykkisholmur** where we take a boat excursion around the rocky islands of **Breiðarfjörður**, viewing many nesting birds including puffins, kittiwakes, cormorants, fulmars and possibly the king of Icelandic birds, the white-tailed eagle. After some net fishing by the crew, enjoy a taste of some very fresh scallops. At Helgafell, we see the grave of Guðrún dating from 1008. Legend says that you can get three wishes fulfilled by climbing the hill above the grave. Our last stop is at the **Bjarnarhofn Shark Farm**. We stay two nights at Hotel Stykkisholmur.

**Friday, June 8:** *Meals: B,D*

Today is spent on **Peninsula Snæfellsnes** with views of Snæfellsjökull where, according to Jules Verne, the entrance to the centre of the earth is found. Along the south coast, we see a rare light coloured beach at Búðir and walk the clifftop at Arnarstapi past two natural bridges and lots of birdlife. The tip of Snæfellsnes and its north coast feature magnificent seascapes with dramatic cliffs, black sand beaches, and pounding surf.

**Saturday, June 9:** *Meals: B,D*

We head east through green valleys, across ancient lava and past nicely sculpted fjords before arriving in **Skagafjörður**, known as the "valley of horses". We learn the secrets and importance of the Icelandic horse during the **Gauksmýri Farm horse show**. Next is Glaumbaer Folk Museum where turf buildings of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have been preserved. Our destination is **Akureyri**, capital of the north and a big city on the Iceland-

ic scale with 15,000 people. The next two nights are at Hotel Kea in the shopping district.

**Sunday, June 10:** *Meals: B,D*

We take the short ferry ride to **Hrísey**, Iceland's second largest island. The bird life is fantastic with lots of plovers, arctic terns, and ptarmigans. The island is also unique because cars are rare and most people get around on bicycles. We take a tour of the island on a wagon pulled by a tractor. Back in Akureyri, there is a short driving tour, then the rest of the afternoon is leisure time.

**Monday, June 11:** *Meals: B,D*

On arrival in Husavik, there is a boat excursion for **whale watching**, most likely seeing the minke. During the drive all around shallow **Lake Mývatn**, we explore natural wonders such as the moon-like crater Hverfjall and the colourful boiling mud pots at **Námaskarð**. Next is **Goðafoss** (waterfall of the gods) where, in the year 1000, a chieftain threw his pagan statues to prove his loyalty to the new Christian God. Our overnight stop is at Fosshotel Husavik.

**Tuesday, June 12:** *Meals: B,D*

Our drive follows the impressive coastline of the **Tjörnes Peninsula** from where the island Grímsey can be seen – the only place in Iceland located above the Arctic Circle. In **Jökulsárgljúfur National Park**, we take walks into Asbyrgi Gorge and to awesome **Detifoss**, Europe's largest waterfall. We follow the long valley of Jökuldalur to the farming region of Fljótsdalshérað. The next two nights are at Hotel Hallormsstaður near Lake Lagarfljot.

**Wednesday, June 13:** *Meals: B,D*

**Lake Lagarfljot** is said to be home to a legendary giant Lake-Worm. Near the hotel, we take an interesting walk through the **Arboretum**, a rare Icelandic forest. Next is an exciting drive over a rugged pass to the fishing village of **Borgarfjörður-Eystri** on the east coast. It is noted for a church altar painted by Jóhannes Kjarval, an art gallery with local stones, and a colony of puffins.

**Thursday, June 14:** *Meals: B,D*

Today's drive goes through one of Europe's longest road tunnels between Reydarfjörður and Faskrúdsfjörður. We admire Petra Sveinsdóttir's vast local stone collection, then drive through green valleys and along the wild coastline to reach **Berufjörður**. The town was a busy place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with Danish traders and offshore is the Island of Papey where Irish monks lived a thousand years ago. We stay overnight in the fishing village of Höfn at **Hotel Höfn**. The icy tongues of Skalafellsjökull are across the seaplain.

**Friday, June 15:***Meals: B,D*

An awesome sight awaits – **Vatnajökull**, the largest glacier in Europe at 8,300 square kilometres or covering about 8% of Iceland. Numerous tongues descend from its main ice cap which is an amazing contrast to the farmlands we have seen. At the **Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon**, we board an amphibious boat and sail among huge floating icebergs. As we continue along the south coast, there are more views of Vatnajökull and Iceland's highest peak, **Hvannadalshnjukur**. The next two nights are at remote Hotel Geirland.

**Saturday, June 16:***Meals: B,D*

The day is devoted to the Skaftafell region of **Vatnajökull National Park**. The park offers fascinating landscapes contrasted with glaciers, moors, mountains, birch forests, glacial rivers and sandy plains. Approaching the park, the road crosses **Skeiðarársandur**, a vast expanse of glacial outwash with a kilometre-long bridge. After time in the visitor centre, there are recommended walks to the snout of Skaftafellsjökull and to Svartifoss which tumbles over basalt columns.

**Sunday, June 17:***Meals: B*

We continue along the south coast across the black sands of Mýrdalssandur and enjoy a walk on the sandy beach at Vik. Other stops are impressive 60-metre tall Skogafoss and the visitor centre for the renowned **Eyjafjallajökull Volcano**. There is a shopping opportunity for handicrafts at a woolen mill. This brings us back to **Reykjavik**, completing our grand circle drive around Iceland. We stay overnight at the Fosshotel Baron.

**Monday, June 18:***Meals: B*

The morning is leisure time and we head to the airport at noon. It has lots of shops and restaurants, and you may want to claim a VAT refund on major purchases. We fly on Icelandair at 5 pm to Seattle and stay at the Quality Inn near the airport.

**Tuesday, June 19:***Meals: B,L*

We drive home to Kamloops and the Okanagan.

## Tour Notes

**BOOK EARLY.** There is huge demand for Iceland and this tour is expected to sell out early as it did for the 2017 departure.

**CHANGES.** This tour has been planned 2 years in advance and released for sale 11 months out. Some days may have changes with such early planning. Air fares, taxes, and fuel surcharges are estimates only and are based on rates at time of planning. The exchange rate for the Icelandic Kronur (ISK) is always subject to fluctuation. Hotels named can change, usually to equivalent or upgraded hotels. Wells Gray Tours will notify you of changes to fares (up or down), hotels or the itinerary. Experienced international travellers are always flexible and expect changes.

**PASSPORT & VISAS.** A valid passport is required and must not expire until 3 months after return date. A visa is not required.

**WELLS GRAY TOUR DIRECTOR.** As of July 2017, your tour director is Aina Juzups who has done this tour four times previously.

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:** Moderate activity including walking trails to natural attractions, many with uneven surfaces, boardwalks and steps. Those with mobility challenges will miss some of the highlights. You must handle your own luggage in Iceland. There can be longer walks in the airports; request a cart or wheelchair in advance if this could be an issue for you. If you are not able to participate in Activity Level 2, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director and driver have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance.



## Tour Policies

**Payments:** A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due February 22, 2018.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to January 22, 2018, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$50 per person. From January 23 to February 22, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From February 23 to March 22, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From March 23 to April 23, the cancellation charge is 70% of the tour fare. After April 23, there is no refund.

**Travel Insurance:** A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

**Experience Points:** This tour earns 194 points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points. One point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until February 22.

**Consumer Protection BC Licences:** Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924