

NATURAL WONDERS OF ICELAND

A tour all around the island
June 2, 2021 - 16 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person:

\$10,430 double/twin

\$12,660 single



> Please add 0.4% GST.

> **Experience Points:** Earn 196 points from this tour.

Redeem **196 points** if you book by **February 24, 2021**.

Includes

- Non-stop Icelandair flight from Vancouver to Keflavik and return
- Current air transport taxes, fees & fuel surcharges
- 14 nights accommodation and hotel taxes
- Coach transportation in Iceland for 15 days
- Knowledgeable and bilingual Icelandic guide for 14 days
- Swim in the Blue Lagoon with mud mask & towel
- Sightseeing tour of Reykjavik
- Hallgrímskirkja Church
- Perlan viewing deck
- Gullfoss
- Strokkur Geysir
- Deildartunguhver Hot Springs
- Snorrastofa Museum
- Bird watching boat excursion at Breiðarfjörður
- Snæfellsjökull National Park
- Bjarnarhofn Shark Museum
- Glaumbaer Folk Museum
- Turf church of Víðimýri
- Horse show at Gauksmýri Farm
- Sightseeing tour of Akureyri
- Ferry to/from Hrísey Island
- Tractor-drawn wagon tour of Hrísey Island
- Goðafoss — waterfall of the gods
- Skútustadir crater and Námaskarð mud pots
- Mývatn Nature Baths
- Whale watching boat excursion at Húsavík
- Húsavík Whale Museum
- Jökulsárgljúfur National Park and Asbyrgi Gorge
- Hallormsstaður Arboretum
- Petra's stone collection
- Vatnajökull — largest glacier in Europe
- Boat excursion at Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon
- Vatnajökull National Park and Visitor Centre
- Seljalandsfoss and Skaftafell fees
- Lava Centre
- Þingvellir National Park
- Iceland government 11% VAT (value added tax)
- Gratuities for Icelandic guide and drivers
- Wells Gray tour director throughout tour
- **27 meals:** 15 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 11 dinners

Kamloops > 250-374-0831
Kelowna > 250-762-3435
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Iceland — A bucket list country

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 the 2010 eruption of Eyjafjallajökull caused havoc with the ash fallout in Europe. 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 Reykjavik 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 9th century. Tradition says that the first permanent settler was Ingólfur Arnarson, a Norwegian Viking who made his home where Reykjavik 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 11 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 2021.

Itinerary

Wednesday, June 2:

Meet the other members of the group at Vancouver airport in late afternoon. We fly on **Icelandair** non-stop to Keflavik International Airport, located 50 km west of Reykjavik.

Thursday, June 3:

Meals: B

After arrival at **Keflavik**, our Icelandic guide and driver are waiting to greet us and we drive to Viking World for breakfast under the Viking ship Íslendingur. 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. A mud mask and towel are included. Then we drive into **Reykjavik**, northernmost capital of Europe. The name translates as "Smokey Bay" because the first settlers saw steam rising from a cave in a geothermal area. We stay two nights at Fosshotel Lind which has an excellent downtown location.

Friday, June 4:

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 panorama of Reykjavik from the Perlan viewing deck. The afternoon is leisure time to enjoy the multitude of shops along Laugavegur near our hotel.

Saturday, June 5:

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. 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 of boiling water that is piped to coastal towns for heating. Next is Snorrastofa Museum, named after Snorri Sturluson, a poet, historian, and 13th century Icelandic character. Our overnight stop is at Fosshotel Reykholt.

Sunday, June 6: *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 **Bjarnarhöfn Shark Museum** which produces hákarl (fermented shark meat), a traditional Icelandic dish. There are exhibits about this culinary curiosity, the family's fishing boats, and their tools. You can also taste a sample of shark meat. We stay two nights at Hotel Stykkisholmur.

Monday, June 7: *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.

Tuesday, June 8: *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 18th and 19th centuries have been preserved. We also visit the turf church of Víðimýri which was built in 1834 under the guidance of Jón Samsonarson. Our destination is **Akureyri**, capital of the north and a big city on the Icelandic scale with 15,000 people. The next two nights are at Hotel Kea, located in the shopping district. Get your picture taken with the troll statues nearby!

Wednesday, June 9: *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.

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

Our first stop is at **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. During the drive all around shallow **Lake Mývatn**, we explore natural wonders such as the moon-like crater Hverfjall, the bunkhouse for trolls, and the colourful boiling mud pots at **Námaskarð**. A special treat is the soothing 40 degree waters of **Mývatn Nature Baths**. We stay two nights at Fosshotel Husavik.

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

The city of **Húsavík** is on the north coast and best known for an abundance of whales. We take a **whale watching excursion**, most likely seeing the minke. The Húsavík Whale Museum has impressive exhibits about the habitat and ecology of whales, including several gigantic skeletons.

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

Our morning drive follows the rugged coastline of the **Tjörnes Peninsula** and the island of 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 **Dettifoss**, Europe's largest waterfall. We follow the long valley of Jökuldalur to the farming region of Fljótsdalshérað. The next two nights are at Icelandair Hotel Hérað in Egilsstaðir.

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

Lake Lagarfljot is said to be home to a legendary giant lake-worm. Near the lakeshore, we take an interesting walk through a rare Icelandic forest at **Hallormsstaður Arboretum**. 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 puffin colony.

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

Today's drive goes through Fáskrúðsfjarðargöng, a 6-km long road tunnel between two fjords, Reyðarfjörður and Fáskrúðsfjörður. 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 16th 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 Skalfajökull are visible across the sea plain.

Tuesday, 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 along the coast. At the **Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon**, we board an amphibious boat and sail among huge floating icebergs. Further along the south coast, there are more views of Vatnajökull and Iceland's highest peak, **Hvannadalshnjukur**. The Skaftafell region of Vatnajökull National Park offers fascinating landscapes contrasted with glaciers, moors, mountains, braided rivers, and sandy plains. The road crosses **Skeiðarársandur**, a vast expanse of glacial outwash with a kilometre-long bridge. Tonight's lodging is at remote Hotel Laki.

Wednesday, June 16:

Meals: B

We stroll the sandy beach at Vik, walk to the base of 60-metre tall Skogafoss, and venture behind the Seljalandsfoss waterfall. The newly-opened **Lava Centre** is an interactive, high-tech exhibition depicting volcanic activity, earthquakes and the creation of Iceland over millions of years. 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. There is a shopping opportunity for handicrafts at a woollen mill. This afternoon, we are back in **Reykjavik**, completing our grand circle drive around Iceland. We stay overnight at the Fosshotel Lind.

Thursday, June 17:

Meals: B

The morning is leisure time and we head to the Keflavik 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 to Vancouver, arriving at 6 pm.



Tour Notes

Please Book Early: There is huge demand for Iceland and this tour is expected to sell out early as it has in past years. This tour was last offered in 2018.

Tour Changes: This tour has been planned 2½ years in advance and released for reservations 18 months out. Some days may have changes with such early planning. Air fares, taxes, and fuel surcharges are estimates only and are based on published rates for 2020; airline seats for 2021 cannot be confirmed until late July 2020. The exchange rate for the Icelandic Kronur (ISK) can be subject to major fluctuations. 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.

Documentation: A valid passport with sufficient blank pages is required and must not expire until 3 months after return date. A visa is not required.

Rooms for Singles are often a different style or smaller size than twin rooms. Many hotels limit the number of single rooms allocated to a group. Please book early if you prefer to travel single.

Triples are not available on this tour.

Luggage Handling: There are no luggage porters (bell staff) at any of the hotels where we stay in Iceland. Please be prepared to carry your own luggage from the coach to your room and back.



Activity Level: Moderate activity including walking trails to natural attractions, many with uneven surfaces, boardwalks and stairs. There are short walks at Gullfoss, Barnafossar, Arnarstapi, Lake Mývatn, Námaskarð, Dettifoss, Asbyrgi, and Þingvellir. Those with mobility challenges will miss some of the highlights. You must handle your own luggage at all hotels in Iceland. There can be longer walks in the airports; request a cart or wheelchair in advance or at airport check-in if this could be an issue for you. The coach cannot carry a scooter. 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, Icelandic guide, and driver have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due February 24, 2021. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Cancellation Policy: Up to January 22, 2021, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From January 23, 2021, to February 24, 2021, the cancellation charge is \$400 per person. From February 25, 2021, to March 24, 2021, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From March 25, 2021, to April 23, 2021, the cancellation charge is 70% of the tour fare. After April 23, 2021, 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.

Home pickups are available within Greater Vancouver for an additional charge of \$40 per person round trip. Please request no later than at final payment.

Photo Credit: Roland Neave (eruption of Strokkur Geysir)

Experience Points: This tour earns 196 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 24, 2021.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842