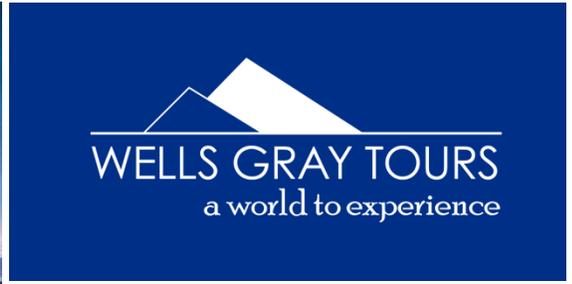




Kirkjufell Mountains



NATURAL WONDERS OF ICELAND

June 7, 2023 – 16 Days

A tour all around the island!

Iceland offers unspoiled nature, breathtaking landscapes, and vibrant culture. Everywhere you turn, there are glaciers, waterfalls, lava fields, ocean beaches, and rugged mountains. We begin by exploring the capital city of Reykjavik, and then visit the boiling hot springs and hissing fumaroles in the Geysir area. We take a boat excursion around the rocky islands of Breiðarfjörður, viewing many nesting birds, including puffins. An awesome sight awaits at Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Europe. At the Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon, we board an amphibious boat and sail among huge floating icebergs. Other highlights are relaxing in the Blue Lagoon and Mývatn Nature Baths, an Icelandic horse show, a whale watching excursion, a wagon tour on the Island of Hrisey, and the awesome plunge of Dettifoss. Iceland's Ring Road is an incredible 2-week adventure all around the island.

Activity Level: 2



TOUR
25

27 Meals Included:

15 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 11 dinners

Fares per person:

\$10,435 double/twin; \$12,250 single
Please add 0.4% GST.

Experience Points:

Earn 208 points on this tour.

Redeem 208 points if you book by March 2, 2023.

Departure from: Lower Mainland



ITINERARY

Day 1: Wednesday, June 7

Meet the other Wells Gray travellers at Vancouver Airport. We fly in mid-afternoon on **Icelandair** 6½ hours to Keflavik International Airport, located 50 km west of Reykjavik.

Accommodation: Icelandair overnight flight

Day 2: Thursday, June 8

Welcome to Iceland! The time change is 8 hours ahead of Pacific Time. 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, enjoy a soothing swim in **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**, the northernmost capital of Europe. The name translates as "Smokey Bay" because the first settlers of Iceland saw steam rising from a cave in a geothermal area. We stay two nights in downtown Reykjavik.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Fosshotel Lind

Day 3: Friday, June 9

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.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Fosshotel Lind

Day 4: Saturday, June 10

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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Fosshotel Reykholt



Day 5: Sunday, June 11

It is a short drive to **Stykkisholmur** where we take the Viking Sushi 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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Stykkishólmur

Day 6: Monday, June 12

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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Stykkishólmur



Black sand beach on Peninsula Snæfellsnes

Day 7: Tuesday, June 13

We head east through green valleys, across ancient lava, and past nicely sculpted fjords such as Skagafjörður. At **Glaumbaer Folk Museum**, several 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 18,000 people. We stay two nights in the shopping district. Get your picture taken with the troll statues nearby!

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Kea



Trolls in Akureyri (2 on right!)

Day 8: Wednesday, June 14

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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Kea

Day 9: Thursday, June 15

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 Skútustadir, the bunkhouse for trolls, and the colourful boiling mud pots at **Námaskarð**. A special treat is the relaxing 40-degree waters of **Mývatn Nature Baths**.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Fosshotel Húsavík



Námaskarð mud pots

Day 10: Friday, June 16

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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Fosshotel Húsavík

Day 11: Saturday, June 17

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 and stay two nights in Egilsstaðir.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Icelandair Hotel Hérað



Dettifoss (note person at top of falls)

Day 12: Sunday, June 18

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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Icelandair Hotel Hérað

Day 13: Monday, June 19

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 in the fishing village of Höfn where the icy tongues of **Skalafellsjökull** can be seen across the sea plain.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Höfn

Day 14: Tuesday, June 20

An awesome sight awaits – **Vatnajökull**, the largest glacier in Europe at 8,300 square km, 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



Jökulsárlón Lagoon

peak, **Hvannadalshnjúkur**, rising to 2,110 metres. 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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Laki



Day 15: Wednesday, June 21

We stroll the sandy beach at Vik, walk to the base of 60-metre tall Skógafoss, and venture behind the Seljalandsfoss waterfall. The **Lava Centre** is an interactive, high-tech exhibition depicting volcanic activity, earthquakes, and the creation of Iceland over millions of years. At the **Fridheimar Farm horse show**, we learn all about the small Icelandic horse. Next is **Pingvellir National Park**, site of 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.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Fosshotel Lind

Day 16: Thursday, June 22

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. In late afternoon, we fly on Icelandair to Vancouver, arriving about 6 pm.

Meals included: Breakfast

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 a little cooler than Vancouver. 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. May and June are the driest and sunniest months. 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 12 years since, the economy has steadily improved and so has the kronur, bringing higher prices each year until 2020 when Covid-19 hit. 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 2½ years in advance), and lodging prices have increased 20% in the last few years. These factors make this tour expensive (although the 2023 price is similar to 2021), but Iceland should be on everybody's bucket list, so we urge you to join us in 2023.



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Icelandair flight Vancouver to Keflavik & return
 - Current air 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 Blue Lagoon with mud mask & towel
 - Sightseeing tour of Reykjavik
 - Hallgrímskirkja Church
 - Perlan viewing deck
 - Strokkur Geysir & Gullfoss
 - Deildartunguhver Hot Springs
 - Snorrastofa Museum
 - Viking Sushi bird-watching boat excursion
 - Snæfellsjökull National Park
 - Bjarnarhofn Shark Museum
 - Glaumbaer Folk Museum
 - Turf church of Víðimýri
 - 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
 - Asbyrgi Gorge & Dettifoss
 - Hallormsstaður Arboretum
 - Petra's stone collection
 - Boat excursion at Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon
 - Vatnajökull National Park and Visitor Centre
 - Seljalandsfoss and Skaftafell fees
 - Lava Centre
 - Horse show at Fridheimar Farm
 - 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
-

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 2022.

Accommodation in Iceland is generally at the 3-star level, therefore expect basic, comfortable lodging. The only luxury hotels in Reykjavik are not downtown, so we have chosen a 3-star hotel that is close to shopping and restaurants. Elsewhere, many communities only have one hotel.

Meals: You will notice that only 1 lunch in Iceland is included. Lunch in a sit-down restaurant can cost \$30-\$40. It is much cheaper to stop at grocery stores and gas stations where there is a deli with seating and order your own lunch. All breakfasts and all dinners outside Reykjavik are included. There are lots of restaurants near the hotel in Reykjavik.

Tour Changes: This tour has been planned 1½ years in advance and released for reservations 14 months out. Please understand the need to be flexible and expect changes with such early planning. Air fares, taxes, and fuel surcharges are estimates only and are based on published rates for 2022. The exchange rate for the Icelandic Kronur (ISK) can be subject to major fluctuations; in April 2022, a Canadian dollar was worth 102 ISK. 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.

Flight Changes: Airline seats and 2023 flight schedules with Icelandair cannot be confirmed until late July 2022. Flights from Vancouver to Reykjavik departed daily in 2019, but only 4 days a week in 2022. It is possible that a Seattle departure or return could be substituted and cost may be higher.

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.

TOUR NOTES CONTINUED

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.

TOUR 25 This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning capacity of the tour is limited to 25 participants, a more intimate travel experience.

 **Activity Level 2:** 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. 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 or motorized wheelchair. If Activity Level 2 could be challenging, you are urged to 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 March 2, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Cancellation Policy: Up to February 2, 2023, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From February 3 to March 2, the cancellation charge is \$400 per person. From March 3 to March 31, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From April 1 to May 2, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After May 2, 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.

Food Allergies: You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. This tour goes to some remote places where restaurants may not be able to satisfy all food allergies. For some allergies, please consider bringing your own snacks or food items so you are not dependent on what restaurants are able to serve.

Home pickups are available within Greater Vancouver for an additional charge of \$50 per person round trip. Transfer is to and from YVR. Please request no later than at final payment.

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Experience Points: This tour earns 208 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 March 2, 2023.

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