

# ICELAND



June 28 - July 8, 2021



*Wild* **LATITUDES**  
WORLDWIDE NATURE TOURS

# ICELAND

## BIRDS, BOTANY, & GEOLOGY

Greetings, fellow explorer!

You've probably heard that Iceland is a great place to visit for nature travelers. It's true! This small island nation in the North Atlantic is like nowhere else in the world. Iceland's combination of geologic wonders, abundant and ever-present bird life, and a subtle but fascinating flora make it a delightful country to explore.

Iceland emerged from the sea less than 20 million years ago as a great cluster of lava-spewing volcanic fissures. During the last Ice Age, the entire island was covered in thousands of feet of glacial ice. All life on the island today has descended from colonizing plants and animals that arrived after the Ice Age, which ended only 12,000 years ago.

The plants and wildlife of Iceland are an interesting mix of European and North American species, as well as species representing either boreal or arctic environments.

What this far-flung land lacks in bird species diversity, it makes up for in sheer avian spectacle. Birds are singing, nesting, and foraging seemingly everywhere you go in Iceland. Millions of puffins and other seabirds crowd seaside cliffs while shorebirds and waterbirds are practically underfoot in many fields and wetlands. Their songs and cries fill the air 24 hours a day in the perpetual summer daylight.

Naturalists who also love geology will get their fill of stunning volcanic landscapes, many of which have been sculpted over millenia by glaciers or the pounding sea.

Iceland is sure to impress you deeply and leave you with lasting memories of a hauntingly beautiful, wild island. We hope you'll join us on this great adventure!

We are opening this tour exclusively to members of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, so if you're interested, **please contact Dawn Lemoine** at [travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org)



Steve Robertson and Ivan Phillipsen  
Co-owners and Lead Guides at Wild Latitudes

### TRIP DETAILS

**Start Date:** June 28, 2021

**Duration:** 11 days (10 nights)

**Number of participants:** Max of 14

**Cost of main trip:** \$4,795 per person

**Deposit:** \$2400

**Single Supplement:** \$1400

#### Included:

- Double-occupancy lodging
- Ground and water transportation
- Breakfasts and lunches
- Excursions and park fees
- Guiding services

#### Not Included:

- Airfare to/from Iceland at trip beginning/end
- Dinners
- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal items
- Optional gratuities for guides



## ITINERARY

*Tentative and subject to change depending on weather, road, or other conditions.*

### Day 1 - June 28 - Arrival in Iceland

Welcome to Iceland, the realm of fire and ice! The group arrives in the morning at Keflavik Airport, 45 minutes west of Iceland's largest city, Reykjavik. We'll sit down for a light breakfast and then do some birding along the coast nearby. Right away, you'll be amazed at how many birds are active in the area and how bold they are, allowing for close looks.

We'll drive into Reykjavik to drop bags at our hotel, have a brief orientation meeting, then go out for lunch. Reykjavik is a vibrant, artsy city, with many great museums and shops. After checking in to our hotel near downtown, we'll have time to rest, wander the city, visit a museum, or do a little birding. For dinner, you can choose from the many restaurant options near our hotel.

Lodging: Centerhotel Plaza, Reykjavik

## Day 2 - June 29 - Sites on the Golden Circle

Today we'll visit several "must-see" sites on the Golden Circle, a famous tourist route east of Reykjavik. Although these sites can be crowded, they truly are worth seeing and provide a great introduction to the country. First, we'll visit Thingvellir, the site where Iceland's original parliament met over 1000 years ago. This is also a great place to witness the incredible geology of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Here is where great cracks in the ground (i.e. fissures) reveal the process of rifting between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. Thingvellir is also a good place to find plants and birds. Harlequin Duck, Red-throated Loon, Arctic Tern, Whimbrel, Redwing, and more can be seen here easily.

Next we'll visit Geysir, the geological wonder that gave its name to all Geisers. We'll have lunch at the cafe here, then watch the spectacle of the boiling eruption of water, which occurs every 10 minutes or so. Our last major stop for the day will be the massive, roaring waterfall Gullfoss. We return to Reykjavik, where we'll meet in our hotel to begin filling out our bird list, before heading out to dinner on our own.

Lodging: [Centerhotel Plaza, Reykjavik](#)

## Day 3 - June 30 - Snaefellsnes Peninsula and Flatey Island

Checking out of our hotel in Reykjavik, we now head north into wilder country. We'll hit several birding spots and geological sites on the beautiful Snaefellsnes Peninsula. In the afternoon, we'll board the ferry and cruise north to Flatey Island. This tiny island is home to a small, charming community. After checking in to our hotel, we can wander the shore to look for Atlantic Puffin, Snow Bunting, Red Phalarope, and more. We'll enjoy dinner at our quaint hotel.

Lodging: [Hotel Flatey](#)



## Day 4 - July 1 - Látrabjarg Cliffs

This morning we'll have an optional pre-breakfast bird walk around the island. After breakfast, we'll board the ferry and continue north. We make land in the beautiful, remote Westfjords region. To the west waits the spectacular Látrabjarg Bird Cliffs, one of the largest seabird nesting cliffs in Europe and the westernmost point of Europe. Walking along the cliff edge we hope to get close-up views of nesting Atlantic Puffin as well as Razorbill, Thick-billed Murre, and Northern Fulmar. Then we'll make our way to our hotel in Isafjordur.

Lodging: Hotel Isafjordur, Isafjordur

## Day 5 - July 2 - Hornstrandir Nature Reserve

This will be a truly epic day: a hike in the Hornstrandir Nature Reserve. This is the wildest, most remote place we will visit on the tour. From the town of Isafjordur we'll take a 2.5 hr boat cruise to the isolated Hornvik area. Along the way we'll pass some massive bird cliffs teeming with millions of seabirds. Once on shore, we'll take a 5-mile hike through a wildly scenic landscape. Here is our best chance of seeing Iceland's only native land mammal: the Arctic Fox. The wildflowers are lovely here and we'll stop to photograph and identify them here and there. Hornstrandir is a truly magical place that will give you a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

For those who don't feel they can do the entire hike, we will offer a shorter, easier version.

Lodging: Heydalur Guesthouse, Westfjords

## Day 6 - July 3 - Exploring the Westfjords

Today we have the opportunity to visit nearby sites in and out of numerous awe-inspiring fjords and highlands. Each fjord was carved out by a massive glacier during the last Ice Age, over 10,000 years ago. We'll make stops along the way for photography,

## Our Commitment to Conservation

On every Wild Latitudes tour, we aim to make a positive conservation impact wherever we travel. We utilize the services of local guides and stay in environmentally-sensitive, locally-owned lodges. On every trip, we make a significant contribution to a local conservation effort that works to protect a native species or ecosystem. When you travel with Wild Latitudes, you are helping to protect the wild regions we visit and the amazing species that call them home.

botanizing, and to look for White-tailed Eagle, Common Eider, and other interesting birds. Optionally, you can choose to stay back and enjoy the peaceful landscape around the lodge, or we may be able to arrange other activities such as horseback riding.

Lodging: Heydalur Guesthouse, Westfjords

## **Day 7 - July 4 - Transit Day to Northern Iceland**

We have a long drive today, as we move from the Westfjords to our hotel in the town of Husavik in Northern Iceland. The landscapes along the way are wonderfully scenic. We'll make several stops to look for birds, to stretch our legs, and to take in the scenery. Pink-footed Geese may be found on this route, so we'll be on the lookout. In the early evening we'll arrive at our Hotel, in time for dinner in town.

Lodging: Fosshotel Husavik, Husavik

## **Day 8 - July 5 - Birding Lake Mývatn**

After breakfast we'll head out for a big day of birding around Lake Myvatn. This beautiful, shallow lake, situated in a significant geothermal area on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, is one of the top birding sites of the world. The key attraction is the great number





of ducks that breed around the lake. Here we hope to find Long-tailed Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Eurasian Wigeon, Tufted Duck, and more. If we're lucky, we may also find Rock Ptarmigan and Gyrfalcon today, which is Iceland's National Bird. We'll return to our hotel in Husavik, where we'll catch up on our bird list before dinner.

Lodging: Fosshotel Husavik, Husavik

## **Day 9 - July 6 - Asbyrgi Canyon and Dettifoss Waterfall**

We'll enjoy a little leisure time in Husavik this morning, with options like visiting the Whale Museum, walking around the harbor, or sipping coffee at a cafe. Leaving Husavik we head north around the peninsula to look for Great Skua and Northern Gannets. Then we'll have a picnic lunch and go for a nice walk at the fabulous Asbyrgi geological site. This is a strange box canyon with lofty walls of basalt. Sheltered in the canyon is a beautiful birch woodland-- or *kjarr*-- representing a forest ecosystem that was once much more widespread in Iceland. Our last major stop today will be at Dettifoss, Europe's largest waterfall. It is fed by the vast Vatnajökull Icecap in the island's central highlands. We'll arrive at our guesthouse by dinner time.

Lodging: Guesthouse Storu-Laugar

## Day 10 - July 7 - Exploring the Geology of the Lake Mývatn area

Today we focus on the marvelous geological wonders of the Myvatn area. This area is an active volcanic system with recent lava flows, boiling mud pots, sulfur fumaroles, craters, and cinder cones. We'll see these features up close as visit numerous sites. We'll also stop at the Krafla Power Station is one of the biggest in Iceland. A leisurely hike through the maze of trails at Dimmuborgir will expose us to a fantastical landscape of towering lava structures covered in moss and native flowers. We'll finish off our bird list before our last dinner together. There will be an option after dinner to take a relaxing dip in the Myvatn Nature Baths (approx. \$50 entrance fee). Such geothermally-heated pools are an important part of Icelandic culture.

Lodging: Guesthouse Storu-Laugar

## Day 11 - July 8 - Fly Home from Akureyri

We'll check out of our guesthouse and head to Akureyri this morning. At the airport, we'll say our goodbyes as this wonderful tour comes to a close.



# ICELAND

---

## YOUR GUIDES

### IVAN PHILLIPSEN

---

Ivan is a passionate naturalist with a background in scientific research. He holds a M.S. in biology from Cal State San Bernardino and a Ph.D. in zoology from Oregon State University.

He is the co-owner of Wild Latitudes, a nature tour business based in Portland, Oregon. He also lead many domestic and international tours for the Audubon Society of Portland and works for Lindblad Expeditions as a shipboard naturalist in Southeastern Alaska and Baja California, Mexico. In recent years, Ivan has led birding tours to Uganda, Ecuador, Mexico, Fiji, Iceland, and Australia.

Natural history is Ivan's true passion and what he is most excited to teach to others. Although he is fascinated by just about every aspect of nature, Ivan is particularly fond of birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, plants, and geology. Everything is interconnected in nature and Ivan does his best to take a holistic approach when teaching about the natural world.



# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

---

## THE PACE AND STYLE OF OUR TOURS

The primary goal of our trips is to experience and learn about the natural world, especially the region's birds and other wildlife, and of course, to have fun! As birding is often a primary focus of our tours, and birds are active in the morning, we will sometimes have early morning outings before breakfast. That said, our style of birding may not be ideal for hard-core "listers." We prefer to spend time observing the species we encounter, and learn a bit about their natural history, rather than rushing through the field to add the maximum number of species to our bird list. We also make diversions for interesting, non-avian wildlife, plants, geological wonders, and cultural activities. The pace of most of our trips is moderate, and we encourage anyone in good health to attend and enjoy the experience. Please contact us about if you need specific information on the types of physical activities on a tour and their physical requirements.

We strive to immerse participants in the local culture and to that end, wherever possible, we stay in locally owned and operated hotels that are designed and run in an environmentally sustainable way. Though some accommodations may be more basic than others, all are safe, clean and comfortable. We also utilize the services of local guides, visit local markets, and other culturally significant sites.

## TOUR DATE AND TRIP LEADER CHANGES

Leaders and schedules are determined up to a year in advance of our tours. In the event that we have a change in a tour's dates or leaders, we reserve the right to do so, and will strive to inform participants as early in the process as possible. Additional leaders may be added to tours according to the group size, and will be specified in the tour itinerary. We also reserve the right to cancel any trip for which there are insufficient reservations.

## HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE TOUR

We are opening this tour exclusively to members of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, so if you're interested, **please contact Dawn Lemoine at [travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org)**

Then we'll send you the link to our online registration form. You can choose to pay your deposit by credit card or check. See 'Deposit Policy' below.

## DEPOSIT POLICY

A deposit is due at the time of registration. ***A deposit is the only thing that guarantees your place on the trip.*** Registration can be made over the phone with a credit card: 971-361-4629. *Note:* there is an additional 3.0% fee for credit card payments. This is only what we are charged by the credit card company.

Checks are happily accepted and should be made out to *Wild Latitudes LLC*. Include the tour name on the memo line of the check and send to:

---

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

---

Wild Latitudes, PO Box 25115, Portland, OR 97298.

## **PAYMENT POLICY**

Full payment is required **90 days** prior to the tour departure date for international tours or any tour involving flights; and **30 days** prior to the tour departure date for local (i.e. in the Portland, Oregon area), van-based tours.

## **CANCELLATION POLICY**

In the event a participant needs to cancel a reservation for any tour, the following policies will apply:

- **90 days** or more prior to tour departure date, the deposit will be refunded, minus an administrative fee of \$100.
- **Less than 90 days but more than 60 days** prior to tour departure date, all payments refunded, minus 50% of deposit.
- **Less than 60 days** prior to tour departure date, no refunds will be given.

**We *strongly* recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself from unforeseen circumstances.**

If for any reason, Wild Latitudes cancels a tour, prior to its start, full refunds, minus the cost of any internal (i.e. in-country) airline tickets purchased, will be given to all participants. In the event the tour is cancelled while underway due to unforeseen events such as but not limited to natural disaster, military activities, social uprising, or other extremely dangerous conditions not within the control of Wild Latitudes, no refund will be issued.

---