



Exceptional Iceland – The Golden Circle, Glacier Lagoon and Reykjavik



HOLIDAY TYPE: Flexible Dates

VISITING: Iceland

BROCHURE CODE: 5302

DURATION: 5 nights

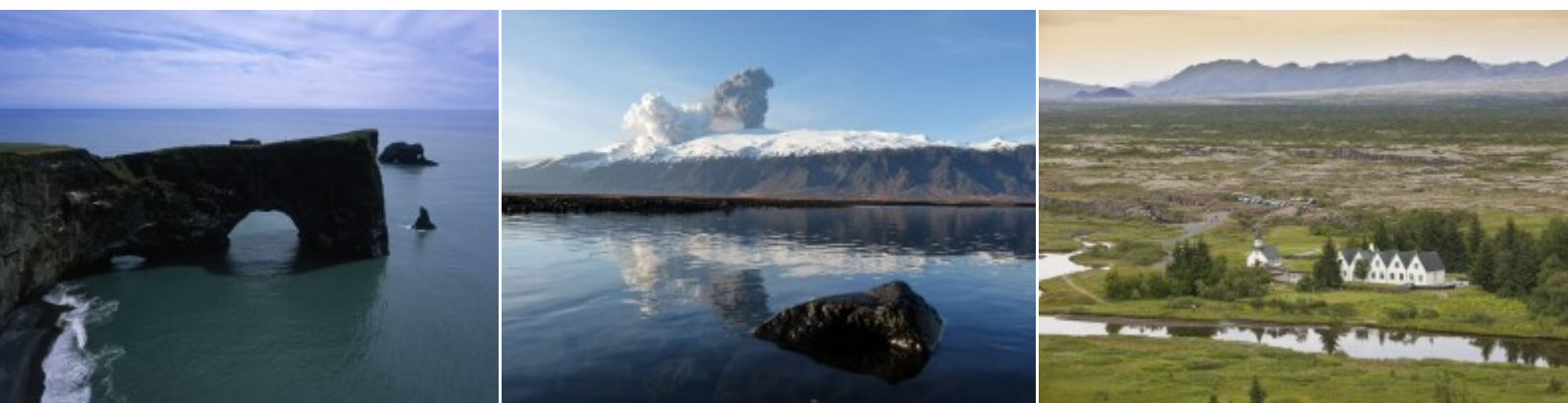
In Brief

During this 5-night self-drive tour, you'll discover a spectacular region of Iceland. As well as being famed the 'land of fire and ice' with its active volcanoes and glittering glaciers, the south shore also shows off incredible mountain views, dazzling waterfalls, dramatic black beaches and traditional villages.

Our Opinion

“ *In my opinion, Iceland is one of the most picturesque places I have ever seen and the landscape here just makes my heart soar as there is really nothing else like it. The variety of the South Shore is endless with scenery including volcanoes, mountains, glaciers, black beaches and so much more – you are sure to return home with hundreds of photos and some lifelong memories.* ”

Dawn Kitson



What's included?

- **Car hire:** 5 nights/6 days hire is included including Sat Nav, collision waiver and unlimited miles (from October to April a compact 4x4 (Suzuki Vitara or similar)) is included in the price. From May to September we include a compact 2-wheel drive car (VW Golf or similar) with the option to upgrade if clients wish - see '[Personalise](#)' tab for details
- **Accommodation:** 2 nights Frost and Fire, 2 nights Hotel Ranga and 1-night Reykjavik Centrum Hotel
- **Meals:** 5 breakfasts
- A comprehensive guidebook, detailed map of Iceland and driving instructions are provided
- **A note on flights:** flights are not included in the holiday price so that the best possible fares and schedule can be found at the time of booking. There are low cost and scheduled flights operating this route and our travel experts will happily provide a quotation and arrange the flights as part of the package

Trip Overview

Known as 'The Land of Fire and Ice' the island of Iceland offers its visitors natural wonders in abundance. This Iceland self-drive itinerary has been designed by our experts to take in some of the most exceptional sights and some of our favourite accommodation.

Iceland's natural attractions are available to be enjoyed at any time of the year and so whether you want to go in the depths of winter when the Northern Lights may shine or during the summer when the days are never ending – this Iceland holiday will provide unforgettable experiences.

As this is a self-drive holiday we have outlined what we would recommend as the ideal itinerary, based on our expertise and that of our local partners, but you can travel at your own pace and pick your own priorities for your holiday. The opportunities to witness the power of nature within this holiday are plentiful and so you can take your pick.

Many people choose to visit the world-famous Blue Lagoon (payable locally) on their way from the airport to the first hotel. Here you can unwind in the misty waters and enjoy one of Iceland's most unique attractions. You can also choose to include this visit on the last day depending on the most

convenient flight times. From your initial base in the beautiful Hveragerdi, you can watch the steaming hillsides in this geothermal hotspot before setting out to complete The Golden Circle of Thingvellir National Park, Gullfoss waterfall and the explosive hot springs at Geysir.

Along the south shore, you can take in the striking black sandy beaches, the mountains and the glaciers which create some of the most dramatic scenery in Europe before retreating to your base at the world famous Hotel Ranga.

A visit to the glacier lagoon is also a must-do item on any Iceland holiday in our opinion, getting up close to such vast chunks of glacial ice as they float in the water is a wonderful experience.

By the time you board the flight home, you will have had the opportunity to appreciate this incredible landscape and a fantastic variety of its natural wonders up close and completely at your own pace.

Image credits: Iceland Pro Travel & Visit Iceland

Agenda

Please note the order of activities is subject to change

DAY
1

ARRIVE AND SETTLE IN

Upon arrival at Keflavik Airport, your car will be waiting to be collected.

Our carefully planned route begins at Keflavik Airport in the south-west corner of Iceland. Aside from the main airport, Keflavik is also renowned for the world famous Blue Lagoon where many people enjoy a dip in the soothing and mineral-rich hot springs; an ideal way to relax into your holiday. We recommend to book this activity in advance, please contact our Travel Experts for a quote. Due to its proximity to the airport it is normally either a wonderful welcome or farewell activity and a real highlight of your time in Iceland.

At your leisure, you can then continue to Hotel Frost and Fire in Hveragerdi your base for the next two nights. It's only around an hour and a half drive to the hotel from the airport but you will feel like you have arrived on another planet.

Hveragerdi is known as one of the most active geothermal areas on the planet and so you'll witness steaming mountain sides and streams as you travel but will also be able to gaze at them from the comfort of this riverside hotel.

This evening you may wish to take advantage of the outdoor hot tubs. If you are travelling between September and March then you should also keep an eye on the skies in case the Northern Lights are visible.

Included Meals: NoneDAY
2

THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Whilst we do not dictate a set itinerary for this element of the holiday, this agenda outlines the highlights that our travel experts feel you simply must not miss out on!

Today you will enjoy a hearty breakfast (including homemade bread that is cooked in the nearby geothermal oven every morning!) before setting off to explore.

Our recommendation is that you set out on a route that encompasses three of Iceland's most spectacular natural and historical wonders – Þingvellir, Gullfoss and Geysir which are known collectively as The Golden Circle.

The UNESCO World Heritage site at Þingvellir National Park is of great historical, geological and cultural significance. It is the site of the first Icelandic parliament which was formed in 930AD and was the centre of all culture on the island.

Here, you will also find the geological wonder of the rift valley that marks the crest of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. The continental drift between the North American and Eurasian plates can be clearly seen here in the cracks of the faults which traverse the region. If you wish, we can arrange for you to snorkel between these tectonic plates for a truly memorable experience - see the '[personalise](#)' section for details.

Gullfoss is known colloquially as The Golden Falls as, on a sunny day, the water plunging down the three step staircase, and then tumbling down two steps into the 32-metre crevice can truly look golden. In the winter, the waterfall is exceptionally dramatic as ice surrounds its edges and it takes on a very dramatic character.

Geysir, is one of the most spectacular destinations in Iceland as the erupting hot springs have fired water many metres into the air for the last 10000 years. The Strokkur Geyser is the most active currently and fires water to heights of around 30 metres every 15 minutes or so.

There is little wonder that this combination of sights is one of Iceland's most popular attractions and with the flexibility of your car you can determine how long you would like to spend in each destination without any restraints.

Included Meals: BreakfastDAY
3

THE SOUTH SHORE AND HOTEL RANGA

After checking out of your hotel we recommend heading eastwards along the South Shore as you drive towards the famous Hotel Ranga. The hotel is only around 50 minutes away and there is much to do en-route.

This route from Hveragerði offers wonderful scenery from the start. As your journey takes you from the wide coastal plains, home to the famous Icelandic horses, then mountains, glaciers and volcanoes begin to appear. The scenery is dramatic.

There is also a delightful geothermal valley called Reykjadalur which has a hot bathing river (Nature's unchanged version of the Blue Lagoon) if you fancy a dip en-route.

Whilst you can check into Ranga from 3pm onwards we recommend continuing past the hotel to keep exploring before returning later to check in.

The south coast offers incredible waterfalls, lava fields, black beaches and incredible mountainous backdrops. If you wish you can also enjoy a glacier hike on the Solheimajökull glacier, which is a favourite spot on the island for such things. Please see the '[personalise](#)' section for full details.

The renowned Hotel Ranga, famed for its countryside location, hot tubs and a wonderfully tempting menu (meals payable locally) is your base for the next two nights.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY
4

GLACIER LAGOON

Today we suggest you venture further east along the south coast and explore the incredible glacier Myradalsjökull. This is Iceland's fourth largest ice cap and covers over 700 square kilometres, reaching a thickness of up to 750m in places.

If you wish you can head further east and we would suggest driving up to Vatnajökull glacier, the biggest glacier in Europe, which covers approximately 13% of the island's surface. Vatnajökull National Park offers an incredible array of scenery created by the combination of natural forces – glacial ice, rivers and geothermal and volcanic activity.

One highlight of the Vatnajökull area is the beautiful glacier lagoon 'Jökulsárlon' where you can gaze upon luminous blue icebergs as they drift past. The icebergs can spend up to five years floating in the lagoon before making their way to the sea.

From May to September, there is also an optional boat tour that you can enjoy around the lagoon (payable locally).

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY
5

REYKJAVIK

After two nights deep in the countryside, it is time for you to head to Reykjavik – the modern-day cultural centre of Iceland and a vibrant capital city.

Reykjavik is a small city in comparison to some and many highlights can be enjoyed on foot. There are

restaurants, museums and shops galore.

Iceland's reputation as a whale watching destination is well-known and so we can arrange for you to enjoy a boat trip in search of these magnificent mammals (depending on the time of year).

The day is entirely yours and so you may want to enjoy the countryside for longer before you head to town. Just make sure you get there in plenty of time to try one of the many exceptional restaurants on offer.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY
6

DEPARTURE

Today you can return to the airport in time for your flights home. Alternatively, we can, of course, arrange for you to extend your stay on the island and explore in greater depth, we have itineraries which cover many different regions and our travel experts will happily help you combine the trips. Simply contact us for a quotation.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Personalise this tour

Our pick



Reykjavik

Reykjavik is a city which offers both small town friendliness and cool urban cosmopolitanism. Visitors to the most northerly capital in the world can enjoy a wide range of distinctive architecture, a vibrant café culture and some five-star dining experiences.

Attractions such as art galleries are also worth visiting and the city's long and rich history means there is a variety of museums to enjoy, detailing its Viking past up to its integral use as a base during WWII. The city is also well known internationally for its thriving nightlife, particularly

during the long nights of the Midnight Sun. An extended stay in Reykjavik can be added to any of our Iceland trips, and our sales team would be happy to discuss your accommodation and flight option with you, simply contact us for a quote.

Image credit: Visit Iceland

Other options

ACTIVITIES



Glacier hiking

Iceland is famed for its glaciers and on day two you can meet a tour which will allow you to get up close to a glacier during a hike on the spectacular ice field. The experienced and enthusiastic guides will teach you the correct techniques to tackle the glacier and provide you with the crampons. You will also get to try your hand at ice climbing during this activity.

This is always an activity that will leave you with a great sense of accomplishment and a better understanding of the power of the glaciers.

Please ask one of our Travel Experts for a quote.

Image Credits: Arctic Adventures



Snorkelling Between Continents

Snorkelling at the Silfra Fissure in Thingvellir National Park is an unforgettable experience as you gaze down through some of the world's clearest water and find your eyes drawn down to the bottom of this crack in the Earth's crust.

This fissure has been created by the tectonic plates that underpin Eurasia and America drifting apart. It is a place where you can literally snorkel between continents.

The water's purity stems from the fact that it started life as glacial melt some 50 kilometres away and has made its way, over numerous decades, through volcanic lava to rest in the fissure.

The price includes all equipment including a dry suit, flippers and snorkel and you will be in the water for around 30 minutes.

If you would prefer not to use your hire car to visit Silfra and Thingvellir then we can arrange the transfers from Reykjavik (around 1-hour drive away); please add £45 per person.

Please ask one of our Travel Experts for a quote.

Image Credits: Arctic Adventures

LITTLE EXTRAS



Upgrade your car hire

Guests can choose to upgrade their inclusive car hire to a larger 4 x 4 (if travelling during Sept-April) or a larger vehicle or 4 x 4 (May-August).

Our Travel Experts will be happy to provide you with a quotation based on the most appropriate vehicle for your party.

Accommodation Notes

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Please note: From October until April, Hotel Oðinsve will replace Hotel Holt.

Included Accommodation

Frost and Fire (Frost og Funi) (Nights: 1-2)



Hotel Frost and Fire (Frost og Funi) is located on the banks of the River Varmá in the town of Hveragerði. This is one of the most active geothermal locations in the world and the hotel is surrounded by natural hot springs and steaming hillsides.

This quaint guesthouse definitely makes the most of what nature has provided; it offers breathtaking views across the River Varmá, the steaming springs and Mt. Reykjafjall.

Hotel facilities

- The hotel is small and has just 22 rooms in total meaning that this is a relaxing place in which to spend time in Iceland. Upon arrival, you immediately sense the feeling of exclusivity
- The rooms are situated on the riverside and afford countryside views. The rooms are situated a very short walk from the main restaurant and reception area
- The well-regarded restaurant serves an à la carte menu in the evenings, with a variety of delicious Icelandic dishes. Sourcing local produce (including organic tea, coffee, free-range eggs and vegetables) is something that the hotel takes pride in. Be sure to try the traditional delicacy of smoked trout and take the chance to boil your own breakfast eggs in an ancient hot spring!
- The hotel offers guests a 12-metre outdoor swimming pool which is a favourite during the summer months
- Guests can relax in the hotel's sauna, natural steam room and outdoor hot tub. Ideal for relaxation and pampering after a day in the countryside. Bathrobes and slippers are provided for all guests

DOUBLE OR TWIN BEDROOM

All the en suite rooms are very well designed with comfort and style in mind and feature Icelandic art. They are modern in style and come well equipped with a TV, wireless internet and tea and coffee making facilities.

Hotel Ranga (Nights: 3-4)



As a charming four star hotel, the Hotel Ranga is one of Iceland's most sought after accommodation options, predominantly due to its perfect location. Located away from light pollution, the hotel has an Aurora alert system and has earned an enviable reputation for being a remarkable spot to witness a potential Aurora.

Not counting its Northern Lights potential, the hotel is equally renowned for its wonderful food and charming hospitality. In addition to its comfortable rooms, the hotel also has a range of delightfully themed suites that are always popular with guests. New for this season the hotel had constructed a roll-off roof observatory has room for up to 30 people and is equipped with two high quality 11-inch computerized telescopes perfect for star gazing or Northern Lights viewing.

Hotel facilities

- Breakfast and evening meals are served in the main restaurant, which offers lovely views over the surrounding countryside. When it comes to food you are in splendid culinary hands. The restaurant uses a 'farmers' market' concept to really capture the flavours of the region. They try to make the most of local produce by taking advantage of traditional cooking methods and recipes.
- In the hotel there is also a lounge and bar area which is a great spot for relaxing in the evenings.
- The hotel also has three very popular outdoor hot tubs, which are not only perfect for relaxing in but also provide the ideal vantage point should the Northern Lights make an appearance.

Guest bedroom types

STANDARD DOUBLE/TWIN

The hotel has 24 standard bedrooms. All guest bedrooms are well equipped with TV, telephone, Wi-Fi, bath, shower, hairdryer and mini bar. There are bathrobes and slippers available for guests, ensuring easy visits to the hot tub. The rooms either have a view over the Hekla Volcano or the River Ranga.

DELUXE ROOMS

The hotel has 20 deluxe rooms which have the same facilities as the standard rooms but are larger in size. The majority of the deluxe rooms have a king size bed.

SUITES

Hotel Ranga has four junior suites (decorated with the themes of Asia, Australia, North America and South America) and three master suites which are slightly larger (decorated with the themes of Africa, Antarctica and the Royal Suite). These are all fully equipped with TV, telephone, en-suite bathroom, mini bar, coffee machine and bathrobe and slippers.

Image credits: Hotel Ranga

Hotel Reykjavik Centrum (Nights: 5)



Located in the historic part of Reykjavik, the Centrum Hotel is ideally situated to give you easy access to some independent exploration of the vibrant city.

After spending some time in Reykjavik, you can unwind in the hotel's private swimming pool as well as the onsite restaurant, Uppsalir, renowned for its first-class cuisine. Nearby, you will find plenty of eateries serving a range of traditional Scandinavian food and international dishes.

HOTEL FACILITIES:

- Stay in touch with loved ones with the use of the hotel's WiFi
- Relax in the leisure and TV room
- Try the local cuisine in the hotel's restaurant
- Enjoy the views from your room's terrace - some overlook the river others will look out to the city

ROOM FACILITIES:

Double/twin room: These comfortable and modern rooms are equipped with ensuite bathroom with bathtub, shower and hairdryer. All rooms also come with air conditioning, tea and coffee facilities, sitting area, terrace and safe.

The Specifics

Holiday group size (approximate)

A minimum of one person is needed for this trip to run.

The following group sizes apply to the 'personalise' activities:

Snorkelling Between Continents: the transfer vehicle may take up to 12 people with a max of 6 people per guide whilst snorkelling. Please note that there may be other groups in the water at the same time.

Glacier Hiking: max 8 people in each group/per guide.

Group Size

We always try to provide an approximation of the group size you can expect to be with for the duration of each of our holidays. It may be that you are joined by others for parts of your holiday (such as transfers and particular activities) but the above number reflects those you can normally expect to be with from beginning to end. If group size is something which is particularly important to you, please speak to our Travel Experts and they can suggest the best holidays for you.

Tailor-made holiday group sizes will vary for all activities as will the group size for any additional activities you book.

Minimum and maximum age

If a specific minimum age applies to this holiday, it can be found in the Key Facts box on the holiday

Overview page.

Unless otherwise stated in the in the Key Facts box on the holiday Overview page, the minimum age for participation in an Artisan holiday is typically 8 years old (there may be younger children in some destinations who have booked with other companies). If an adult-only environment is important to you, then please contact our Travel Experts and they will advise on the best dates and destinations for you. If you are looking for a holiday designed specifically for families then please see our sister company www.activitiesabroad.com

Itinerary amendments

The order of activities listed in this agenda is provided for guidance only, your final and detailed itinerary will be provided either with your final travel documents (which are uploaded into your online account around a week prior to departure) or upon arrival.

Terms and Conditions

Our full booking terms and conditions can be found on our website: <https://www.artisantravel.co.uk/booking-conditions>