

## Complete Iceland

9-day / 8-night self-drive holiday



*This exciting self-drive itinerary sees you follow a course around Iceland's ring road, completing a full circuit of the country in 9 days and covering several of the country's "must-see" highlights! The itinerary is suitable for travel in both winter and summer months, and can easily be extended to include additional locations.*

### Day 1: Arrive Iceland – drive to Hveragerdi

Arrive Keflavik Airport, collect your rental car and then proceed to your hotel in Hveragerdi, a small provincial town on the southern Icelandic coast. The 100km (90 mins) drive from Keflavik Airport to Hveragerdi will take you along the southern shore of the Reykjanes Peninsula, with fabulous views of the Icelandic coastline. En route, you may like to visit the Blue Lagoon.

#### The Blue Lagoon

*Depending on your flight schedule, it is possible to include a stop at the famous Blue Lagoon during the journey from Keflavik Airport to Hveragerdi – accessing the lagoon involves only a short detour.*

#### Optional Activity

*The Blue Lagoon is a giant geothermal pool located within a vast black-lava field. To the surprise of many visitors, it is not actually a natural phenomenon, but rather manmade, though its dramatic setting and the pristine quality of the waters gives it an otherworldly quality. The site has been converted into a complex of open-air baths and saunas that are open to visitors throughout the year. Pre-booking is required.*



Hveragerdi is a small and, at a glance, unassuming provincial Icelandic town, but one with a very special setting! The town is situated on top of an active volcanic zone, and as a result is surrounded by richly fertile plains and geothermal hot springs. Often referred to as the “flower village”, the town is most famous for its rows of greenhouses, which utilise the thermal springs to grow a variety of warm climate plants which are then put on display during the town’s annual flower festival held every August. Beyond its unique setting, Hveragerdi also provides a very pleasant introduction to small-town Icelandic culture. There are lots of restaurants and coffee houses in the town centre, creating a lively atmosphere.

Check-in at your hotel on arrival in Hveragerdi, with the rest of the day free to explore. Several activities can be arranged within the vicinity of Hveragerdi depending on the time of your arrival. These include walking, mountain biking and horseback riding (pre-booking is recommended). A number of walking trails are easily accessible from Hveragerdi and can be explored independently.

#### **Hveragerdi Horse Riding (Eldhestar)**

#### **Optional Activity**

*Eldhestar horsefarm is located just outside Hveragerdi and offers a number of half-day and full-day horse riding tours that serve as a wonderful means of discovering the southern Icelandic countryside! The tours will see you journey on easy riding trails through lava fields, meadows, forests and volcanic foothills, making a number of stops along the way according to the nature of the itinerary, from hot springs to sites of cultural or historical interest. The Hveragerdi riding tours are best booked in advance.*

#### **Day 2: Exploring Iceland’s “Golden Circle”**

Today, our suggested route will see you explore a section of Iceland’s “Golden Circle”, comprising several of the country’s most impressive natural wonders.

We recommend starting with Gullfoss, a dramatic, two-tiered waterfall set within the Hvita River Canyon, approx. 1 hour’s drive north-east of Hveragerdi. The waterfall is located at the end of a 2km walking trail and presents fabulous photo opportunities.

A short drive from Gullfoss is another of the Golden Circle’s attractions, the great geyser of Strokkur, in the Haukadalur Valley. Part of the Haukadalur Geothermal Area, this active geyser pumps out spectacular blasts of water to heights as great as 25 metres. Surrounding it are many



smaller geysers, fumaroles, hot springs and mudpits, which can be explored via a network of trails.

After exploring Gullfoss and Haukadalur, return south towards Hveragerdi, then continue along the southern shore of Iceland to arrive at the Dyrholaey Peninsula. Dyrholaey is a natural promontory overlooking the sea, famous for its eroded arch and its dramatic coastal views. Part of a protected nature reserve, Dyrholaey also serves as a nesting ground for a multitude of sea birds, including magnificent puffin colonies.

Your journey today ends in the seafront village of Vik, the most southerly settlement in Iceland, located a short distance from Dyrholaey. Enjoy a walk along the beautiful black-sand beach before retreating to your overnight lodgings.

### **Day 3: Vatnajokull National Park & Hofn**

Your journey continues east along the southern shore of Iceland to the Eldhraun lava fields. The product of the largest lava eruption in modern history, Eldhraun is a spectacular landscape of craters and moss-covered volcanic rock. The vast, lunar-esque landscape is also where the Apollo 11 crew came to train for their moonwalk.

From the lava fields, continue to the town of Klaustur, whose green pastoral setting contrasts with the nearby lava fields and the black sands of Skeidarsandur; and then on to Skaftafell.



A region of jagged mountain peaks and outlet glaciers, Skaftafell is situated at the foot of the Vatnajokull ice cap, part of the wider Vatnajokull National Park. There is a network of trails around Skaftafell that can be easily explored independently, or you might prefer to spend the afternoon at Jokulsarlon glacial lagoon, where you can cruise amid the floating icebergs on a scenic boat tour (at additional cost).



### **Jokulsarlon and Fjallsarlon Boat Tours**

### **Optional Activity**

*Jokulsarlon is a broad glacial lagoon formed by the Vatnajokull glacier. One of Iceland's most photographed natural wonders, Jokulsarlon presents a stunning spectacle of blue waters and luminous icebergs, set against a backdrop of black volcanic terrain. The lagoon can be explored on a guided boat tour, with departures taking place regularly during the summer season. During the tour, you'll spend approx. 40 minutes on the lagoon, cruising amid the icebergs on an amphibian boat, as an English-speaking guide explains more of the history of the region and its fascinating geology.*

*Located close to Jokulsarlon is Fjallsarlon, a smaller glacial lake that attracts fewer visitors, and which can be explored via zodiac boat. These boat tours accommodate fewer passengers and hence Fjallsarlon offers a more intimate experience to a cruise on Jokulsarlon.*

When ready, continue your journey along the southern coast to arrive at the fishing town of Hofn, where you stay tonight.



### **Day 4: Hofn to Egilsstadir**

Depart Hofn after breakfast and journey via Almannaskard Pass to Egilsstadir and the Eastern Fjords, stopping to take in the stunning coastal views en route. This is a lengthy drive of approx. 3 hours through often-spectacular landscapes. After crossing Almannaskard Pass, the route sees you follow the jagged East Icelandic coastline as the road contours around fjords and past several small coastal settlements. At points, the road diverges, allowing you to continue along the coast or to take to the mountains, both routes offering fabulous scenery. Along the way, you'll also pass through the coastal settlements of Djupivogur and, optionally, Stodvarfjordur, where you may like to stop and explore.

### **Petra's Stone Garden (Stodvarfjordur)**

### **Optional Activity**

*Petra's Stone Garden is a private museum of Icelandic stones, minerals and crystals originally established by an amateur rock collector in the 1940s, and now open to the public. The stones are located within a lovely garden in the small village of Stodvarfjordur, on the northern side of Stodvar Fjord, easily accessible on the drive from Hofn to Egilsstadir. A visit to the museum can be combined with a stroll along the village harbourfront for views of the fjord.*

For a relaxing end to the day, consider a visit to the Vok baths, before transferring to Hallormsstadur Forest, approx. 40 minutes from Egilsstadir, where you stay tonight at the fabulous Hotel Hallormsstadur.



#### **Vok Baths**

*Opened in 2019, these geothermal spa pools are located on Lake Urriðavatn, just outside Egilsstadir. Formed by natural spring waters, Vok is one of only a small number of hot spring spas in eastern Iceland. Vok's unique floating pools have been built on the surface of the lake, such that the waters of the baths appear contiguous with the waters of the lake, making for a wonderfully serene bathing experience!*

#### **Optional Activity**

#### **Day 5: Lake Myvatn**

Today's journey will take you via Modrudalsoraefi, a vast desert plateau, to the beautiful volcanic lake of Myvatn. En route, you'll pass through the Namaskard Pass, a geothermal valley containing sulfuric mudpools of many colours and hues.

There are a number of scenic stops that you might choose to make within the Lake Myvatn area, either before or after checking in at your hotel. Highlights include the striking lava formations of Dimmuborgir; the Skutustadir "pseudo-craters"; and the flowing Laxa salmon river, where it is said that there are found more species of water bird than in any other place on earth.



Overnight in the Lake Myvatn area.



### Day 6: Akureyri & Siglufjordur

This morning, before departing for Akureyri, you'll have some time to continue your exploration of Lake Myvatn, taking in any of the scenic spots missed during your explorations yesterday afternoon.

When ready, depart the Lake Myvatn area and follow the famous ring road 1 in the direction of Akureyri, a large port town on the northern Icelandic coast. En route, we recommend stopping at Godafoss, located just off the ring road.

Known as "the Waterfall of the Gods", Godafoss is one of Iceland's most spectacular waterfalls. Curved into the shape of a horseshoe, its waters cascade from a height of 14 metres over a width of 30 metres. An easy walking trail allows you to view and photograph the falls from several angles.

From Godafoss, continue to Akureyri.



Despite having a population of fewer than 20,000, Akureyri is often referred to as Iceland's second city and northern capital. The town has a great buzz and is a pleasure to explore on foot, particularly the harbour area, where you can admire the brightly-painted houses and the views of Eyja Fjord, Iceland's longest fjord.

After exploring Akureyri, follow the scenic coastal route as it contours around Eyja Fjord and Trollaskagi, or the "Troll Peninsula", to arrive at the historic fishing town of Siglufjordur, where you stay tonight.



### Day 7: Skagafjordur

This morning can be spent exploring Siglufjordur.

The northernmost town in Iceland, Siglufjordur is a fishing community that has been at the centre of Iceland's herring trade for over a century, a history which you can learn more about at the town's herring museum. The harbour area is also a pleasure to explore, with its brightly-painted timber and corrugated iron homes and cafes.

### **Siglufjordur Herring Museum**

*Siglufjordur's herring museum seeks to recapture the era of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century herring trade. The museum is spread across several original and replica buildings, including a Norwegian-built herring station dating back to the start of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, a 1930s herring factory, and a boathouse with replica dock intended to capture the atmosphere of the herring trade at its peak in the 1950s. It's a fascinating insight into, not just the herring trade, but life in an Icelandic village at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

### **Optional Activity**



Leaving Siglufjordur, the coastal road continues around the Troll Peninsula and to the Bay of Skagafjordur. This region of Iceland is famed for its horse-rearing; if of interest, this afternoon you might visit the Lytingsstadir Farm, a short detour from the main ring road, to learn more about the Icelandic tradition of horse breeding, including an introduction to the unique Icelandic horse breed that has a special fifth gait - the "tölt".

Other sites of interest within the Skagafjordur region include the historic settlement of Holar, which has served as a major centre of Christianity in Iceland over the course of a millennium, housing one of the country's two bishoprics since the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This history is visible in Holar's Hólakirkja Cathedral, with its beautiful church tower. Also of interest is the Skagafjordur Heritage Museum.

Once you have finished exploring Skagafjordur, connect with the main ring road and follow it to Blönduós, a pretty village which straddles the Blanda River and Hrútey Island. Here you might like to stop for a walk in the Hrútey Nature Reserve, before continuing over the scenic Holtavdrúduheidi plateau to reach the town of Borgarnes, where you stay tonight.

### **Day 8: Thingvellir & Reykjavik**

This morning can be spent exploring the region around Borgarfjörður, including the Hraunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls, and Deildartunguhver, Europe's most powerful hot spring.





While in the region of Deildartunguhver, you might also like to visit the Krauma Natural Hot Spring for a refreshing morning bath amidst stunning scenery!

#### **Krauma Natura Hot Spring Spa**

#### **Optional Activity**

*At the Krauma Hot Spring Spa, piping hot waters from the Deildartunguhver thermal spring are blended with glacial waters to create marvellous hot spring baths, where you can relax amidst beautiful scenery – it's a fabulous way to start the day, or to recharge after a day of adventure!*



When ready, follow the ring road to Thingvellir National Park.

The location of the original Althing, Iceland's medieval-era governing assembly, Thingvellir has been the setting for many of the most important events in Iceland's history. Set on the shores of Thingvallavatn, Iceland's largest lake, the Althing first sat in the early 10<sup>th</sup>-century and is considered to be the oldest parliament in the world.

Thingvellir is also notable for its fascinating geology. The national park encompasses a deep rift valley – the Thingvellir Valley – formed where the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates meet. Along with the East African Rift Valley, it is the only place in the world where the meeting of two tectonic plates is so clearly visible above sea level, taking the form of deep cracks and fissures in the

earth that widen into the Thingvellir Valley.

Beyond its place in Iceland's history, Thingvellir also boasts fabulous scenery that can be enjoyed as you explore the park's walking trails, which connect the assembly site, where the meetings of the Althing were once held, to various scenic spots on the northern shore of Lake Thingvallavatn.



Late afternoon, continue to Reykjavik, Iceland's capital, where you stay tonight. This evening is free for you to explore Reykjavik independently.



### Day 9: International departure

Drive to Keflavik International Airport, drop off your hire car, and check-in for your international flight home. Keflavik is approx. 1 hour's drive from central Reykjavik.

#### Price Guide:

*The cost of this itinerary is from **£1,578 per person**, based on two travellers in double/twin accommodation and travelling in low season (May). Shoulder season (June and Sept) rates start from **£2,018 per person**; high season (July-August) from **£2,340 per person**. For group and family rates, and for winter departures, please [contact us](#).*

*Please note that this is a self-guided itinerary. The itinerary cost includes accommodation and car hire, but does not include activity costs, which are either payable locally or can be booked in advance.*

#### Includes:

- Double/twin accommodation (B&B basis throughout)
- 8 days rental car hire (Toyota Auris, or similar)
- Airport service charge for car hire pickup/drop off at KEF airport

#### Excludes:

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Lunches and dinners
- Travel expenses and entrance fees
- Activity costs (e.g. Jokulsarlon and Fjallsarlon lagoon tours, Blue Lagoon spa)
- Travel insurance

Suggested Accommodations	
Location	Accommodation
Hveragerdi	Hotel Örk
Vik	Hotel Dyrhólaey
Hofn	Seljavellir Guesthouse
Egilsstadir	Hotel Hallormsstadur
Lake Myvatn	Sel-Hotel Myvatn
Siglufjordur	Sigló Hotel
Borgarfjordur	Hotel Húsafell
Reykjavik	Grand Hotel