

## Volcanoes and Glaciers

*6-day / 5-night guided tour of southern Iceland (with self-drive option)*



*Discover the volcanic and glacial “hotspots” of southern Iceland on this scheduled guided tour. Over the course of 6 days, you’ll learn how Iceland’s unique geology has shaped its landscapes and culture, as you explore the Westman Islands, the Eldhraun lava fields, the spectacular glaciers of southern Vatnajökull, and much more! This is a shared bus tour accommodating up to 16 passengers. It can also be offered on a private basis, either as a self-drive or with accompanying guide.*

### **Day 1: Arrive Reykjavik**

Arrive Keflavik International Airport and transfer independently to your accommodation in Reykjavik city centre, the Skuggi Hotel, or similar.

#### **Getting from Keflavik Airport to Reykjavik**

*Airport Direct offers a regular coach service from Keflavik Airport to Reykjavik city centre, with hourly departures. This can be booked in advance or at the airport. Taxis are also available from Keflavik Airport. Alternatively, we can arrange a private transfer for you at additional cost.*

Depending on the time of your arrival, this afternoon might be spent exploring Iceland’s capital. Reykjavik is a small and compact city that is easy to explore independently. We recommend starting with Hallgrímskirkja church, the city’s central landmark and most iconic – not to mention tallest! – building. At the top of its spire is an observation platform from where you can survey the city.



From Hallgrimskirkja, several busy high streets, with shops and cafes, lead to the waterfront area, where you'll find another of Reykjavik's major landmarks, the spectacular Harpa concert hall.

Dinner this evening is to your own account. The shopping district around Hallgrimskirkja is a popular area to dine out, with a wide selection of restaurants.

## **Day 2: The Westman Islands**

Meet with your tour guide and the other members of your group in the lobby of your hotel this morning at 08:45am (further joining instructions will be provided with your travel pack).



After a short briefing on the week ahead and time to get to know your fellow travellers, you depart Reykjavik and begin your journey south-east along Iceland's southern shoreline. This morning's drive will see you cross the Reykjanes Peninsula and enter into a region of fertile volcanic lowlands. Along the way, you can expect marvellous views of the southern Icelandic coast and of Iceland's volcanic hinterlands.

Your first stop will be in the small town of Hvolsvollur, where you visit the LAVA Centre, an interactive museum that will tell you more of Iceland's unique geology, serving as a perfect introduction to many of the locations that you'll visit over the coming days!

From Hvolsvollur, you continue to Seljalandsfoss, one of Iceland's most photographed waterfalls owing to its unique setting and formation. Seljalandsfoss falls over a large, cavernous cliff face. If you're feeling adventurous – and don't mind getting a little damp – a trail allows you to enter into the cavern behind the waterfall to view it from another angle.

Your journey then continues along the southern coast to arrive at Landeyjahofn harbour, where you take a 30-minute ferry ride to the Westman Islands, or Vestmannaeyjar. Located just off the southern coast of Iceland, this small chain of volcanic islands offers splendid views and scenery. Disembarking in Heimaey, the largest of the islands, you'll begin a driven tour of the area.



Your driven tour starts with the Storhofdi Peninsula, at the southernmost tip of the island, which is notable for its dramatic views of the Atlantic Ocean, and for its claim to be the windiest place in Europe! During the late spring and summer months, large puffin breeding colonies can be seen at Storhofdi.

From Storhofdi, you'll have the option to climb the volcanic cone of Eldfell, an active volcano that erupted as recently as 1973. The volcano cone presents a stunning spectacle, though its eruption devastated the island. After exploring Eldfell and taking in the views, you'll be able to learn more about the eruption of 1973 and its impact at the Eldheimar Museum.

After the tour, you'll be dropped off at your hotel in central Heimar, with the rest of the afternoon free for you to explore independently. Enjoy a stroll along the waterfront, visit the folk museum, or go for a dip in the thermal swimming pool. For supper, you'll have the pick of several places to dine, including the renowned restaurants of *Slippurinn*, which specialises in Icelandic cuisine, and *Tanginn*, where the focus is on local seafood dishes.

Overnight on Heimar Island at the Hotel Vestmannaeyjar.

### Day 3: South Shore

So far as the emphasis of yesterday's tour was on volcanoes, today's will be on glaciers. After breakfast at your hotel, you take the early ferry from Heimar back to the mainland, and continue your journey along the southern coast of Iceland.

This morning will see you explore the Katla Geopark, a region formed in 2011 to protect the unique volcanic and glacial features of southern Iceland. The park is centred on the active Katla Volcano and its glaciated slopes.



Your first stop will be at Skogafoss, a dramatic 62m high waterfall that features in Icelandic folklore and myth. From Skogafoss, you journey to the Myrdalsjokull and Solheimajokull icecaps for your first experience of an Icelandic glacier. At Solheimajokull, you will have a choice of two activities: a glacier hike, or a kayak ride between the icebergs:

**Glacier Hike** – On this exciting glacier hike, you'll learn basic ice climbing techniques, as you don a pair of crampons and ice axe, and follow your expert guide onto the slopes of Solheimajokull! During the two-hour adventure, you'll learn about the glacier's formation and encounter spectacular ice formations.



**Glacier View Kayaking** – This gentle kayaking excursion will see you explore a lagoon formed by the waterflows of Solheimajokull, as you paddle between icebergs and enjoy a unique perspective on the glacier.

Leaving Katla this afternoon, you continue towards Vik, stopping en route at the Dyrholaey peninsula and Reynisfjara Beach.

Reynisfjara is one of several black sand beaches on Iceland's southern coast, and is famed its magnificent scenery and views. Reynisfjara is equally famous for its immensely powerful waves, which can occur with little warning – it is important to follow the lead of your guide while exploring.



Today's journey ends in the village of Vik, where you stay this evening at the Hotel Vik. Expect to arrive in Vik late this afternoon, with the rest of the evening at leisure.

#### **Day 4: Eldhraun and Vatnajokull National Park**

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 Eldhraun, you travel to the town of Kirkjubaejarklaustur, whose green, pastoral setting contrasts with the nearby lava fields and the black sands of Skeidararsandur; 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. You'll enjoy a guided walk in the Skaftafell valley, amidst the giant glaciers and volcanic peaks, before travelling to Fjallsarlon glacial lagoon and nearby Diamond Beach to view the famous floating icebergs on land and via a Zodiac boat tour.

Return to Vik for overnight.

#### **Day 5: Golden Circle**

Today's itinerary will focus on the "Golden Circle", which encompasses several of Iceland's most impressive natural wonders, as well as early Icelandic history at Thingvellir National Park.

Start the day with a visit to the Haukadalur Geothermal Area to explore its myriad geysers, fumaroles and hot springs, including the great spectacle that is Strokkur, a geyser that explodes to heights as great as 25m.



From Haukadalur, travel to Gullfoss (the "Golden Falls"), a dramatic, two-tiered waterfall formed by the Hvita River. A series of trails lead to various viewpoints overlooking the waterfall, allowing you to view and photograph it from many different angles.

In the afternoon, travel west to Thingvellir National Park, an area of spectacular natural beauty and geological interest. The park centres on Lake Thingvallavatn and its surrounding valleys and fissures, formed by the meeting and drifting apart of the Mid-Atlantic and Eurasian tectonic plates. 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.

In addition to its geological marvels, Thingvellir is also notable for its place in Iceland's history. It was at Thingvellir, on the northern shores of Lake Thingvallavatn, that the Althingi, Iceland's Viking-era parliament, would meet. Your guide will explain more about this history as you explore the site of the former Althing and the many natural landmarks, such as Law

Rock, that formed part of the original Althing.

Late afternoon, continue to Reykjavik for overnight at the Skuggi Hotel, or similar. Evening at leisure.

**Day 6: International departure**

Your tour ends this morning in Reykjavik. An airport transfer is not included but can be arranged on request.

**Booking Information:**

*This is a scheduled group tour accommodating up to 16 passengers and departing at fixed dates throughout the year, with the cost to join starting from **£1,445 per person** (twin/double basis) or from **£1,830 per person** (single basis). Please refer to the price guide on our [Volcanoes and Glaciers overview page](#) for upcoming departure dates.*

*This itinerary can also be booked as a private departure, either as a self-drive or with guide & vehicle. For more details, including private departure costs, please [contact us](#).*

**Includes:**

- Double/twin accommodation (B&B basis throughout)
- Local English-speaking guide from days 2 to 5
- Shared coach transport
- Activities as outlined in itinerary:
  - *Westman Islands guided tour including roundtrip ferry journey*
  - *Solheimajokull Glacier Hike or Kayaking*
  - *Zodiac tour on Fjallsarlón Glacier Lagoon*
  - *Entrance fees to LAVA Centre and Eldheimar Museum*

**Excludes:**

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Lunch and dinner to own account except where stated otherwise in itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips