



STYKKISHÓLMUR

# ICELAND

## Exploring History & Culture Along the Western Route

**8 DAYS** | Choose your dates

### About this trip

Iceland's history is a tale of Viking explorers and hardy settlers; even today, it is the most sparsely populated country in Europe. Over the centuries, its geographic isolation and harsh natural conditions have given rise to a unique cultural identity. Journey through western Iceland – from the capital of Reykjavík to the famed Golden Circle and the Snæfellsnes Peninsula – while exploring themes of history, folklore, architecture, government, and agriculture. Examine how Icelanders balance tradition with modern society and the sustainable management of limited resources. Along the way, experience the breathtaking geological formations for which the country is known, including volcanoes, caves, geysers, and waterfalls.

### Your students will...

- See a geothermal power station in action and learn how Iceland has become a pioneer in sustainable energy production.
- Embark on a whale watching boat ride and discuss the history of whaling, its ties to Icelandic culture, and current conservation initiatives.
- Experience authentic rural culture at a working goat farm, where you'll meet the farmers and learn about their daily life.
- Contrast Iceland's system of government with that of the US during visits to the Parliament of Iceland and the Icelandic Women's Rights Association.

### Educational Connections



Geology



Environmental Studies



Social Sciences



Interdisciplinary Studies

### What's included?

- Bilingual local guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Carbon offsetting

# Itinerary

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

## DAY 1 - DEPARTURE

Depart from United States.

## DAY 2 - REYKJAVÍK

Upon arrival at Keflavík International Airport, you will be met by your guide. After breakfast and an orientation in the café at the Viking World museum, explore the exhibition with your guide to learn about Viking sagas and myths. Your next stop will be at the Blue Lagoon for a relaxing dip in the geothermal spa. Before submerging yourself in the mineral-rich water, discuss the history of geothermal baths in Iceland and how they are believed to have healing powers. This afternoon, visit Árbær Open Air Museum for a guided tour. The village-like museum comprises multiple exhibits, each offering a glimpse into everyday life during specific periods in Reykjavík's history. Later, arrive at your hostel in Reykjavík with time to freshen up before dinner. *Overnight at Reykjavík City Hostel. (BLD)*

## DAY 3 - REYKJAVÍK

Depart early for a visit to Helliheiði Geothermal Power Station to learn how geothermal energy is converted into clean electricity. Next, explore what is known as the Golden Circle, starting with a visit to Gullfoss. Gullfoss, whose name means Golden Waterfall, is considered one of the most impressive waterfalls in Europe, with thousands of tons of icy water thundering majestically into a deep canyon below. Continue on to Geysir, the most famous spouting hot spring in the world and the origin of the international word "geyser." Geysir's bowl stretches 59 feet across, and when it erupted regularly would spout to heights of nearly 200 feet. Today it does not erupt without human intervention, but a nearby hot spring, Strokkur, spouts about every 10 minutes. Before arriving back in Reykjavík, stop at Þingvellir, the site of the world's oldest democratic parliament and the dividing fault line between two of the earth's tectonic plates. *Overnight at Reykjavík City Hostel. (BLD)*

## DAY 4 - REYKHOLT

After breakfast, take a city tour of Reykjavík, including stops at Hallgrímskirkja for a peek inside Reykjavík's most famous landmark and at Harpa Concert Hall for a guided tour. Admire the award-winning architecture of Harpa and visit areas that are not open to the general public. Your guide will share some of Harpa's secrets, stories of odd incidents, and its struggles during the economic crisis. Learn how Icelandic nature, volcanoes, and the Arctic light inspired the unique design and amazing glass facade of the house. Then travel out of the city westward, toward Reykholt. En route, visit the Bjarnarfoss and Hraunfossar waterfalls before arriving at Víðgelmir lava tube cave. The cave was formed around 1100 years ago as a result of a volcanic eruption; when the surface lava hardened, the molten rock beneath it continued to flow, creating a hollow subterranean chamber. Journey into the lava tube to observe a variety of rock formations as your guide shares some of the folktales the cave has inspired. Continue to your hotel. *Overnight at Á Hotel. (BLD)*

## DAY 5 - SNÆFELSNESSESS

Experience authentic rural culture with a stop at Háfell goat farm early this morning. Talk to the farmers and learn about their daily life. Then start your drive toward Snæfellsness National Park. Along the way, make a short stop at Ytri Tunga, a beach known for its seal colony, and visit Arnarstapi to walk along the cliffs and do some bird watching. Arrive at Snæfellsness National Park. Located at the extreme western point of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, the park is named after the Snæfellsjökull volcano, which author Jules Verne described as the entrance to the underground world in his novel "A Journey to the Center of the Earth." Take a walk on Djúpalónssandur, one of Iceland's famous black beaches. This is a beautiful location steeped in the history of sailors and fishing; there are even remains of an old ship. On a clear day, there are magnificent views of the volcano from the beach. *Overnight at Kast Guesthouse. (BLD)*

## DAY 6 - SNÆFELSNESSESS

This morning, head to the fishing town of Grundarfjörður and board a boat for a whale-watching excursion with the non-profit IceWhale, the Icelandic Association of Whale Watchers, whose mission is to promote the conservation of whales and educate visitors about the importance of whales

through whale-watching tours. During your tour, your hosts will discuss the history of whaling, how this ties into Icelandic culture, and how that culture is shifting toward conservation of whale species. Continue your exploration of marine species with a visit to the Shark Museum in Bjarnarhöfn. This afternoon, visit the town of Stykkisholmur and walk around the harbor. For this island nation, fishing is a key industry and the source of many Icelanders' livelihoods. During your walk, your guide will explain how Iceland had avoided the effects of overfishing along their coast with the implementation of the fishing quota system. *Overnight at Kast Guesthouse. (BLD)*

## DAY 7 - REYKJAVÍK

Early this morning, depart the peninsula and return to Reykjavík. Join the non-profit organization Blái herinn for a beach clean-up to reduce the litter that makes its way into the ocean and becomes a hazard to marine life. After lunch, visit the Parliament of Iceland for a guided tour. Though Iceland is a republic, their structure is different from that of the US. Learn about the structure of their government and their political parties, and discuss the difference between their government and ours. Next, visit the Icelandic Women's Rights Association (IWRA), the first formal organization of Icelandic women to focus its efforts on the struggle for political equality between men and women, as well as demanding equal access to education, political appointments, and the workplace. The World Economic Forum consistently ranks Iceland first in the world for gender equality. Learn about the strides IWRA has made and how they are continuing to bridge the gap. *Overnight at Reykjavík City Hostel. (BLD)*

## DAY 8 - DEPART

After breakfast at the hotel restaurant, depart for Hveragerði. Get a behind-the-scenes look at one of Iceland's food staples, skyr, at Skyrgerðin Factory. Have lunch at Skyrgerðin, then transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. *(BL)*

## Program pricing

**\$3,295** (21 participants + 3 leaders)

**\$3,795** (14 participants + 2 leaders)

**\$3,995** (10 participants + 1 leader)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, full-time guide for duration of program, and carbon offset.

International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included.

Valid for travel in 2021.

## Travel protection

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more. Refer to the Plan Document for more details.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

## The fine print

Rates are based on dorm-style accommodations for participants; complimentary leader accommodations may be single or double occupancy based on availability. International airfare is included for complimentary leaders. Holiday surcharges may apply. A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due upon booking. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure. Cancellations received less than 95 days prior to departure are non-refundable.