


**ATLANTIC PUFFINS**

# ICELAND

## Birding in the Land of Fire and Ice

**10 DAYS** | Choose your dates | Best season to travel: **JUN - AUG**

*With its frigid glaciers, geothermal lagoons, and dozens of volcanoes, it's no wonder Iceland is known as the land of fire and ice. The country's avifauna is equally impressive: located at the junction of two oceans, it hosts a unique mix of vagrant and migratory birds from both Europe and North America. This 10-day adventure offers a look at Icelandic breeding and non-breeding bird populations, from the waterfowl of Lake Mývatn to the iconic Atlantic Puffins. As you seek out auks, petrels, cormorants, gannets, gulls, terns, waders, stilts, and birds of prey, you'll also enjoy hikes and boat trips designed to enrich your understanding of the island's natural history.*

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Bird the hotspots of Lake Mývatn and the River Laxá, where sightings may include more than a dozen duck species.
- Trace the fjords of northwest Iceland and see the majestic cliffs supporting populations of auks, murre, and kittiwakes.
- Navigate Breiðafjörður Bay for up-close views of Great Cormorants, European Shags, and Atlantic Puffins.
- Look for humpback, blue, and minke whales and a variety of pelagic birds on a whale-watching excursion.
- Visit Sigurgeir's Bird Museum, considered the largest known private bird collection in Iceland.

### WHAT'S INCLUDED?

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


**EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER BY HELGI GUDMUNDSSON**



SUNSET AT LAKE MÝVATN BY STIG NYGAARD

## ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

### DAY 1 - IN TRANSIT

Depart the US for your overnight flight to Iceland.

### DAY 2 - REYKJAVÍK

On the descent into Iceland, notice how the landscape is strikingly bare and almost devoid of woodland. Where there is plant life, much of it is considered tundra, though the mild climate prevents permafrost, a defining feature of the tundra biome. Iceland hovers near the Arctic Circle, and while the influence of the Gulf Stream moderates temperatures, strong winds and thin soils help keep the vegetation stunted and tundra-like. Iceland is rich in bird diversity, with over 300 species recorded; 61 Important Bird Areas cover 7 percent of the country. Upon arrival at the Keflavík International Airport, transfer via flybus to your hotel in Reykjavík. Buses are located right outside the terminal building. Check-in starts at 3 pm. Begin exploring the city and observe Redwings and Common Redpolls. Visits to nearby ponds should yield abundant Arctic Terns that breed by the side of the road. Lesser Black-backed Gulls also gather here in good numbers. Attend dinner and an orientation at the hotel this evening. *Overnight at Centerhotel Laugavegur or similar. (D)*

### DAY 3 - LAKE MÝVATN

After breakfast at the hotel, return to the airport for your flight to Akureyri. The journey to Lake Mývatn includes a stop at a plantation in hopes of finding Goldcrests and a visit to the famous Goðafoss Waterfall. Later, enjoy up-close views of the Harlequin Duck on the River Laxá

as it flows out of Lake Mývatn. Red-necked Phalarope often spin on the river and feed on emerging flies, while Whimbrel and European Golden-Plover live in the surrounding moorlands. Also scan the lake for some of its 14 Icelandic breeding duck species, such as the Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, and Greater Scaup. *Overnight at Sel Hotel Mývatn or similar. (BLD)*

### DAY 4 - LAKE MÝVATN

Continue your exploration of the Lake Mývatn area, including a visit to Sigurgeir's Bird Museum. The museum's collection— considered the largest known



ARCTIC TERN BY ANDREAS TREPTE

private bird collection in Iceland—contains specimens of almost all of Iceland's breeding species. *Overnight at Sel Hotel Mývatn or similar. (BLD)*

## DAY 5 - HÚSAVÍK

Today, visit Dettifoss Waterfall in Vatnajökull National Park. Measuring 330 feet wide with a drop of 144 feet into Jökulsárgljúfur Canyon, Dettifoss is the largest and most powerful waterfall in Iceland. Continue driving further northeast through an area that holds good numbers of breeding Purple Sandpipers, Arctic Terns, and Snow Buntings. With luck, you might come across Rock Ptarmigan or hunting Gyrfalcon. On the way to Húsavík, visit a big birch forest for the chance to encounter Eurasian Wigeons at very close range. At another site, scan the sea from a cliff top covered with Atlantic Puffins for the opportunity to see Great Skuas flying by.

*Overnight at Húsavík Cape Hotel or similar. (BLD)*

## DAY 6 - GAUKSMÝRI

Embark from Húsavík for a morning whale watching tour. Located on the edge of Skjálfandi Bay, Húsavík is globally recognized as one of the best places in the world to watch whales and porpoises. To date, 23 species have been spotted in Icelandic waters, and species commonly seen in Skjálfandi Bay include humpback, minke, white-beaked dolphin, and harbour porpoise. Blue whales, the largest animal on earth, are also possible since they regularly visit the bay to feed during the summer months. Birds are possible too. Keep an eye out for Common Eider, Great Skua, Parasitic Jaeger, and more. After lunch, drive west toward Gauksmýri, looking for Pink-footed Goose, Mew Gull, and the Icelandic subspecies of Black-tailed Godwit along the way. Stay up later for an optional outing to look for Short-eared Owl. *Overnight at Gauksmýri Country Lodge or similar. (BLD)*

## DAY 7 - LÁTRABJARG

Today is a long day in transit toward the majestic seabird cliffs at Látrabjarg. The route follows a number of fjords in northwest Iceland, so the scenery from the window should be fantastic. Today's target species en route is the White-tailed Eagle, with scattered breeding pairs found throughout the fjords. After a long drive, take an evening stroll around the hotel to look for Red-throated Loon, Common Redshank, Common Snipe, and the omnipresent Arctic Tern. *Overnight at Hotel Breiðavík or similar. (BLD)*

## DAY 8 - FLATEY

Perched on Europe's westernmost point, the Látrabjarg cliffs harbor the continent's largest seabird colony, numbering in the millions. The constant stream of birds whizzing past the end of the promontory is simply amazing. The number of seabirds nesting here every year is staggering and includes the largest population of razorbills in the world, with over 160,000 nesting pairs (roughly 40 percent of the world population). Common Murres (225,000 pairs), Thick-billed Murres (120,000 pairs), Northern Fulmars (100,000 pairs), Atlantic Puffins (50,000 pairs), and Black-legged Kittiwakes (30,000 pairs) also nest along Látrabjarg. Atlantic Puffins nest along the cliff edges and can be approached within a hand's reach—an excellent opportunity for photos. A cacophony of vocal Black-legged Kittiwakes emanates from the rock face below, while Northern Fulmars take turns riding the lift off the wall. On the moorlands above the seabird colonies, look for a bevy of boldly patterned birds—Snow Bunting, Northern Wheatear, White Wagtail, and Common Ringed Plover. In the afternoon, take the ferry across Breiðafjörður Bay and stop at Flatey Island for an overnight stay. Birding on the island is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, because the birds are surprisingly tame. Species include the abundant Black Guillemots



PURPLE SANDPIPER BY SILVER LEAPER

on the shoreline, Red-necked Phalaropes, Common Redshanks, Meadow Pipits, and Redwings. With luck, you may even encounter the rare Red Phalarope, as Iceland is on the southern edge of its breeding distribution around the Arctic. *Overnight at Hotel Flatey (shared facilities) or similar. (BLD)*

## DAY 9 - GRUNDARFJORDUR

Spend the morning birding on Flatey Island before getting on the ferry for the crossing toward Stykkishólmur. In the afternoon, take another boat trip around the islands of Breiðafjörður Bay, allowing close-up views of the Great Cormorants and European Shags that live among thousands of Atlantic Puffins nesting in the bay. Sometimes the White-tailed Eagle can also be seen here. *Overnight at Hotel Kirkjufell or similar. (BLD)*

## DAY 10 - FAREWELL!

This morning, observe Glaucous Gulls, which are numerous on the shores around your hotel. Prepare for your departure via flybus to the airport for your flight back to the US. Check-out is at 11 am. *(BL)*



PINK-FOOTED GOOSE BY ÓMAR RUNÓLFSSON



DETTIFOSS HOTEL BY ANITA RITENOUR



HARLEQUIN DUCK ON THE RIVER LAXÁ



WHALEWATCHING IN HÚSAVÍK ICELAND BY OKRAS

## LAND PRICING

**\$5,350** (12 participants + 1 leader)

**\$5,825** (10 participants + 1 leader)

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

International airfare, gratuities, alcoholic beverages, 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

*A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due to secure your reservation. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Non-refundable final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure.*



This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at [holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe](http://holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe)