

Iceland in Autumn - Glaciers, Icebergs & Waterfalls

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Fly Keflavik & transfer Thingvellir

Day 2 Thingvellir

Day 3/4 Skaftafell National Park

Day 5/6 Greater Reykjavik

Day 7 Fly London

Departs

September

Grading

Grade A. Easy walks, although sometimes on rough terrain.

Focus

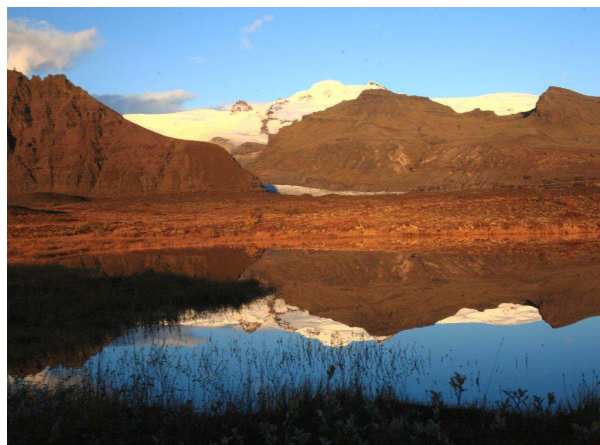
Scenery, autumnal colours and wildlife

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code ISL03) or current Naturetrek brochure

Highlights

- Gyr Falcon, Golden Plover & Whooper Swan among expected bird highlights
- Whale watching trip from Keflavik to look for Minke Whale & dolphins
- Strong possibilities of impressive Aurora displays
- Visit the ice-lagoon at Jokulsarlon on the edge of the Breidamerkurjokull Glacier
- See Snow Bunting, Great Northern Diver, Barrow's Goldeneye, Sanderling & Knot



From top: Jokulsarlon Iceberg Lagoon, Skaftafell National Park, Northern Lights



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NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Thingvellir National Park

We depart from London in the early afternoon for our three hour flight to Keflavík, Iceland's main international gateway. From Keflavík's we drive along the barren Reykjanes Peninsula, through ancient lava fields softened by centuries of weathering, before taking the coastal road towards the town of Selfoss. From here, we turn inland towards Hotel Gulfoss and our comfortable accommodation for the next two nights. We expect the journey to take around two and a half hours in total, so we will be sure to stop for a leg stretch along the way, arriving in plenty of time for an evening meal.

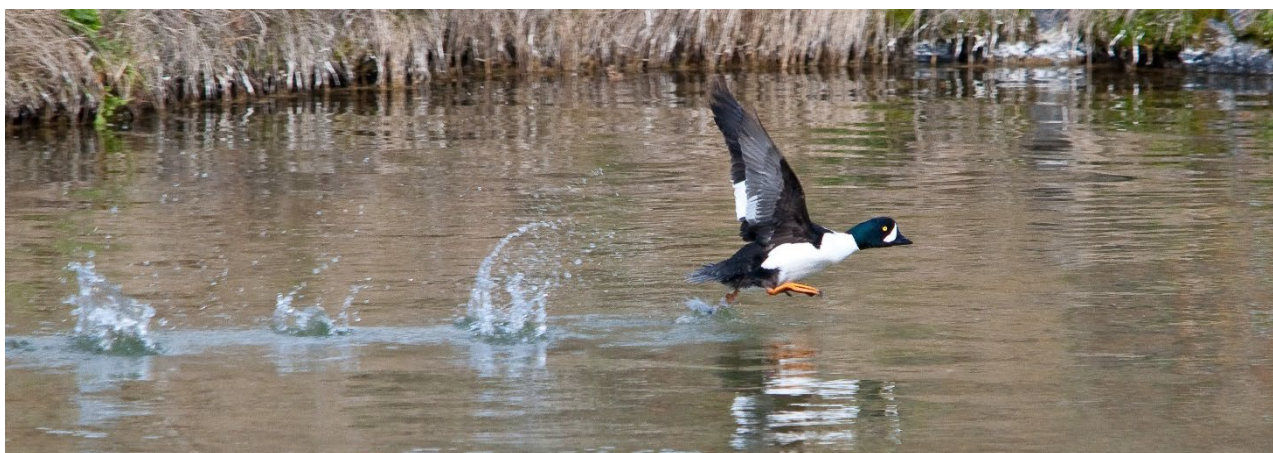
Day 2

The Golden Circle

We will spend much of today visiting some of the most celebrated landscapes in southern Iceland. From thunderous waterfalls to a geological phenomenon that gave its name to the word, Geyser, before returning to the tranquil countryside of Thingvellir. After visiting the 'Althing' - parliamentary meeting place - we will take a stroll by Thingvallavatn, where pure glacial waters from the Langjökull Glacier travel some 40 kilometres, through bedrock, before emerging here to form Iceland's largest freshwater lake. The mournful calls of Great Northern Divers are usually heard echoing across the silvery water, whilst nearby we will go in search of Barrow's Goldeneye on the River Sog. This is also a great place to see young Gyr Falcons and Merlins dispersed from their natal breeding grounds. We return to Hotel Gulfoss for a second night.



Strokkur erupting (K Porteous)



Barrow's Goldeneye (A Revis)

Day 3

Skaftafell National Park

Today we take a leisurely journey along the south coast, crossing the Skeiðararsander, scene of the Glacier eruption that overwhelmed this corner of Iceland in 1996, before arriving at the Skaftafell National Park and our accommodation for the following two-nights. On route we drive through coastal farmland, passing several impressive waterfalls and glacier tongues that link earth and sky. The productive grasslands provide feeding-grounds for Pink-footed Geese and an opportunity for Barnacle Geese to refuel before completing their southerly migration. On the water-bodies Whooper Swans begin to arrive in family groups and join other waterfowl before they too start their migration south.

The hotel is situated in one of Iceland's most beautiful and dramatic landscapes, nestled under Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull and the country's highest point Hvannadalshnukur. A short evening stroll from the hotel will lead you through a rich mosaic of tundra to the ice-front.

Day 4

Skaftafell National Park

One of the most majestic spectacles in southeast Iceland, and location of several 'James Bond' epics, is the ice-lagoon on the edge of the Breiðamerkurjökull and our destination this morning. We will take an amphibian-craft for a ride amongst these impressive 1,500 year old colourful ice-sculptures. After which, we will follow the icebergs as they drift to their eternal destiny and search for Snow Buntings and a late Arctic Tern or two. Where the Atlantic rollers pound the black lava sands, at the mouth of Jokulsarlon, we will look for Common Seals that are often found hauled out resting on the beach, and we will also search for any Arctic waders that may be lingering.



Jokulsarlon Iceberg Lagoon (K Porteous)

We return to the National Park in the afternoon to enjoy the magnificent scenery and autumn colours on a walk to Svartifoss, the waterfall that inspired the design of the impressive Hallgrímskirkja church that dominates the Reykjavik skyline.

Day 5

Reykjanes Peninsula

Sadly, we have to leave Skaftafell this morning and retrace our journey back along the south coast to Keflavik. On route we will have plenty of time to appreciate the spectacular landscapes, stop and enjoy stunningly beautiful waterfalls. We will have a brief stop at Vik, Iceland's most southerly point on the mainland, for coffee and also an opportunity to visit a woollen factory retail outlet. Alternatively admire the famous cluster of sea-stacks at Reynisdrangur, which rise from the ocean at the western-edge of the black-sand beach like rocky fingers.

The scenery at Seljalands will provide a beautiful backdrop for our lunch today before we enter the urbanisation of 'Greater Reykjavik'. Our hotel, on the outskirts of the capital and close to the countryside and far enough from the city to still have a reasonably dark sky. As darkness falls, we will hope to catch glimpse of that the heavenly cascade of northern lights will dance through the night sky.

Day 6

Reykjavik

Today we will visit the vibrant capital and do a little birdwatching on Tjörnin, the lake in the centre of the city, before taking a whale-watching cruise out of Reykjavik's old harbour, through the scenic Faxaflói Bay, where we will be looking for some of the most amazing marine mammals that inhabit Iceland's rich coastal waters. Minke Whale and White-beaked Dolphin are the most likely species to observe, but with a little good fortune we may find a playful Humpback Whale or a patrolling pod of Orcas.



White-beaked Dolphins & Fulmar (M Stott)

After an exhilarating few hours at sea we will return to the hotel for dinner and, although nothing is predictable in nature except its unpredictability, we will once more gather in the observatory and see if the polar-lights make an appearance tonight.

Day 7

Fly London

After breakfast we have a leisurely morning before the short journey to the airport for our early afternoon flight back to the London Heathrow.

Tour grading

This tour is graded A. We will travel to each site by minibus, then take leisurely walks to explore the area, generally over easy terrain, although the volcanic nature of Iceland does mean that some paths can be rough in places. The holiday is therefore suitable for anyone who enjoys gentle walks in the countryside and is of an 'average' level of fitness.

Weather

The weather in Iceland in September is changeable. Although temperatures are likely to be cool (low to mid teens centigrade), it can feel very pleasant if the sun is out and there is no wind. Equally, cool and windy conditions with showers are possible at any time. In summary, whilst we hope for mild and sunny weather be prepared for anything!

Clothing

As noted above, it may be cool. Come dressed as though for an English winter but take some lighter garments as well. Ankle boots are the best footwear though strong shoes will get you through the trip if you do not undertake any of the more ambitious walks.

Food & accommodation included in the price

Accommodation with breakfast and lunch are included throughout the trip, evening meals are not included. Allow around £30 - £40 per day for a 2 course evening meal.

Your tour leader will provide picnic lunches for the group and snacks are usually available during the afternoon. Accommodation is in comfortable hotels throughout; all rooms have private facilities.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Iceland. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Skoqafoss

In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iceland> prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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