

Untamed Iceland

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Westman Islands: Volcanic Landscapes & Puffins*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive in Reykjavik • Ferry to Westman Islands

Day 3 Explore Heimaey • Local entertainment

Day 4 Storhofdi hike • Boat tour • Explore Westman Island

Day 5 Ferry to Landeyjahofn Harbour • Overland to Selfoss • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Afternoon/Evening: You'll fly overnight from the U.S. to Reykjavik, Iceland.

Day 2 Arrive Reykjavik, Iceland • Overland to Selfoss

- Destination: Selfoss
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Selfoss or similar

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 9:30am, featuring international options.

Morning: You'll arrive in Reykjavik sometime in the early to late morning, depending on your specific flight arrangements. Upon arrival, expect to spend about 45 minutes clearing customs and completing any health guidelines your airline requires. Travelers who have reserved their airfare with O.A.T. will also have their temperature checked by your Trip Experience Leader or O.A.T. representative before boarding your transfer vehicle, per our NEW health and safety protocols; those

who do not reserve airfare with us will have their temperature checked upon arrival at the hotel. You will then be escorted to your hotel in Selfoss by private car in groups of 1-2 or by private minivan in groups of 3-4, depending on the number of travelers who arrived with you. The transfer is approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes, depending on traffic.

Upon arrival in Selfoss, we'll check in and receive our room assignments. Depending on where we stay, the hotel may feature a restaurant and bar. Typical room amenities may include wireless Internet, flat-screen TVs, minibars, private bath and tea- and coffee-making facilities. You'll have some free time to settle in and unpack. Selfoss is the largest town in South Iceland and the gateway to all that this area of rich farmland and natural wonders has to offer. Located on the banks of the Olfusa River, it is home to around 6,300 inhabitants.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions on where to dine. Located just around the corner from the hotel is Mulakaffi, a quintessentially Icelandic restaurant. Be sure to try the pan-fried haddock or leg of lamb.

Afternoon: Around 12:30pm, and again at 2pm if you have a later flight, our small group will gather together for the first time for an orientation walk around the vicinity of our hotel. Your Trip Experience Leader will help you get acclimated with the area, and point out nearby ATMs and local markets. The remainder of the afternoon is free to relax and settle in after your overnight flight.

Later, our group will gather for a Welcome Briefing at the hotel around 5pm. During this briefing, we will review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur). Our Trip Experience Leader will also discuss logistics, safety and emergency procedures, and answer any questions we may have.

Dinner: At the hotel, around 6:30pm, featuring local cuisine. Our Welcome Dinner will be a great opportunity to get to know your fellow travelers and toast to the journey ahead.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries—check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas. Perhaps you'd like to stroll along the Olfusa River or explore the neighborhoods of Selfoss for a truly local experience.

Freedom To Explore: During your two days in Selfoss, you have the freedom to explore on your own during your free time. Below are a few recommended options for independent explorations:

- Get acquainted with American chess grandmaster Bobby Fischer at the **Bobby Fischer Center**: Bobby Fischer was a chess prodigy and the eleventh World Chess Champion,

defeating Boris Spassky of the USSR in 1972. The center in Selfoss operates as a non-profit biographical museum and contains memorabilia specifically stemming from the 1972 championship—a match publicized as a Cold War confrontation and riddled with controversy. Center visitors can peruse photos, scoresheets, and even a replica of the chessboard used in the game. Fischer, who was granted Icelandic citizenship and lived out his remaining years here, is buried nearby.

- **How to get there:** A 10-minute walk.
- **Hours:** 1pm–4pm, daily.
- **Cost:** Free.
- Peruse masterfully handcrafted goods at **Handverksskurinn Selfossi**: Travelers interested in exploring the Icelandic world of crafting will enjoy visiting Handverksskurinn, a non-governmental organization founded in 2010 by twelve local artists. Currently, the center is run by eight women, all of whom produce various crafts including clay pieces, wool textiles, jewelry, and more.
 - **How to get there:** A 5-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 1pm–6pm, Tuesday–Friday; 12pm–4pm, Saturday.
 - **Cost:** Free.
- Learn about traditional architecture at the **The Icelandic Turf House Museum**: For centuries, Icelanders relied on the natural insulation of a turf roof. This thick turf was essential for them to survive the long, cold winters characteristic of the region. Visit the Icelandic Turf House museum to learn how these structures were built, their origins, and cultural significance. Plus, venture inside some of the homes to experience them for yourself.
 - **How to get there:** A 10-minute taxi ride, about \$80 USD.
 - **Hours:** By appointment only.
 - **Cost:** About \$15 USD.

**Day 3 Explore South Iceland •
Controversial Topic: Iceland’s
disappearing glaciers and the effects
of climate change with Helena Gallardo
Roldán • Seljalandsfoss Waterfall • Super
Truck tour**

- Destination: Selfoss
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Selfoss or similar

Exclusive O.A.T. Activity: Our activities today feature a conversation surrounding the **Controversial Topic** of climate change and the profound effect it’s having on Iceland’s glaciers led by local expert Helena Gallardo Roldán. This is an important opportunity to discuss an increasingly relevant and pressing issue, which impacts about 10% of Iceland’s land mass. Read more about this conversation below.

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 7am, featuring international options.

Morning: Around 9am, we’ll depart for the 1-hour ride by 30-passenger private motorcoach operating at half capacity to the iconic Seljalandsfoss Waterfall, situated along Iceland’s Ring Road. Melting glacier water pours over a rocky cliff, creating a 180-foot waterfall shrouded in great clouds of mist. Here, we’ll meet Helena Gallardo Roldán, a local expert, and engage in a **Controversial Topic** on the detrimental effects of climate change on Iceland’s glaciers. As 10% of Iceland’s land mass is covered in glaciers, the continued warming of the planet threatens to radically alter this delicate environment—perhaps permanently.

Carbon emissions, which have been directly linked to global warming, have been on the rise in Iceland since 2014 due to increased air and marine travel, the result of Iceland’s

burgeoning tourism industry. Ironically, many of these tourists come to Iceland to see the glaciers whose very existence their presence is threatening. Additionally, Iceland gets about 73% of its renewable energy from hydro-power resources, which are powered by glaciers and glacial rivers. With such a great reliance on glaciers—both for purposes of tourism and energy resources—climate change presents a problem to modern Icelandic society.

At Seljalandsfoss, Helena will guide us on a 1-hour walk around the foot of the falls. Here we’ll witness the raw, roaring power of this natural site (which truly must be seen—and heard—to understand) and learn about the dangers of an ice-less Iceland from our expert. Helena is passionate about Iceland’s unique landscape: With degrees in marine science and aquaculture, she has devoted her career to glacier preservation and to educating the public about climate concerns. As we’ll learn from her, the fate of Iceland’s glaciers looks grim: The Ok glacier (also called “Okjökull”), once comprised of more than 3,000 kilometers of ice, was the first glacier in Iceland to lose its status in 2014; since then, 56 more glaciers have vanished in northern Iceland, melting into crater lakes. Climate studies predict that all of Iceland’s glaciers will disappear within the next 200 years or so. The time to act to reverse the glaciers’ tragic fate, scientists urge, is now.

But hope is not lost: Many believe that stringent government policies to lower carbon emissions could alter the glaciers’ trajectory. At 16.9 tons of carbon emissions per capita compared to an EU average of 7.3 tons, Iceland’s emissions are the highest in Europe. Unfortunately, many Icelandic people feel that the government is not taking appropriate actions to combat this serious problem. Students of all ages have gathered for weekly demonstrations in front of government buildings as part of the School

Strike for Climate movement since February 2019 to demand government action to combat climate change.

Take this opportunity to ask Helena any questions you may have about the effects of climate change on Icelandic glaciers and how it will affect Iceland's renewable energy resources. Perhaps you'll ask her what steps Icelandic citizens are taking at home to combat climate change.

Around 11am, we'll board our private motorcoach and depart for the approximately 30-minute drive to our lunch spot for the day.

Lunch: Around 11:30am at Volcano Hotel, featuring local cuisine.

Afternoon: Around 12:30pm, we'll transfer 10 minutes by private motorcoach to Vik Village, where we'll get a true taste of the rugged Icelandic landscape with a Super Jeep Tour, an off-road driving experience led by a local guide. Depending on the weather, we may drive to the dormant glacier of Kotlujokull, or alternatively, we'll head to Hofdabrekku Heidi Mountain.

Around 3:45pm, we'll make the approximately 1-hour and 30-minute drive back to Selfoss, arriving to our hotel at about 5:15pm.

Dinner: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas. Perhaps you'd like to enjoy fresh lamb shank, a popular dish among locals.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Your Trip Experience Leader is happy to provide suggestions.

Day 4 Explore the Golden Circle • Overland to Borgarnes

- Destination: Borgarnes
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: B59 Hotel or similar

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 6:30am, featuring international options.

Morning: We'll depart the hotel around 9am for a short private motorcoach ride to a local wool studio for an interactive session on wool dyeing, spinning, and knitting. Because of our small group size, we'll be able to help craft wool products using traditional techniques and speak openly with the studio owners about the Icelandic wool industry. We'll learn how natural ingredients are utilized throughout the production process, as well as why Icelanders have become so dependent on wool products over the centuries.

Around 10am, we'll take a private motorcoach ride to discover more of Iceland's marvels as we circumnavigate the Golden Circle, a ring of natural highlights: Gullfoss waterfall, Geysir hot spring area, and Thingvellir National Park.

Our first stop will be Gullfoss waterfall, located approximately 1 hour from Selfoss, which features two tiers of rushing white water that flow into a hundred-foot-deep crevice. Each day, thousands of gallons of water plummet here, and on sunny days, it's a particularly beautiful sight to see the rainbows which form in the mist.

We'll spend about 45 minutes at the falls before departing around 11:45am for a 10-minute drive to Geysir, the geyser from which all others take their name. Geysir is silent these days, but we'll witness the columns of water that shoot into the air from nearby Strokkur geyser. In this area of intense geothermal activity, puddles of water

on the ground literally boil. We'll explore Geysir for approximately 1 hour before pausing for lunch this afternoon.

Lunch: On your own around 1pm in the vicinity of the Geysir hot spring. Your Trip Experience Leader is happy to provide you with options.

Afternoon: Around 2pm, we'll depart for a 45-minute drive by private motorcoach to Thingvellir National Park. The park sits in a major rift between two tectonic plates—the Eurasian and North American. This rift creates a valley in the land, ringed by rocky cliffs and fault lines. The mountains surrounding this plain, dotted with canyons, caves, streams and springs, form a natural amphitheater. It's not surprising that the world's oldest Parliament was formed here.

After our explorations in Thingvellir National Park, we continue by private motorcoach approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes to Borgarnes, situated right outside the scenic Snaefellsnes Peninsula. The town's location makes it an ideal jumping-off point for many of Iceland's highlights, including Snaefellsnes Peninsula National Park.

Upon arrival at our hotel around 5pm, we'll receive our room assignments and check in. Depending on where we stay, your hotel may feature a restaurant and bar. Typical rooms may offer wireless Internet, telephone, TV, and private bath with hair dryer.

To help you familiarize yourself with the town, your Trip Experience Leader will lead an approximately 30-minute orientation walk around 6pm, ending at the Settlement Center which features two exhibits on Iceland's original settlement by Vikings and the story of Egil, whose colorful legend as one of the nation's first settlers has rendered him an

Icelandic folk hero. During the walk, feel free to ask questions or request more information about any activities of interest.

Dinner: Around 6:30pm at the Settlement Center's restaurant.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries—check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas. Perhaps you'd like to spend your evening relaxing in the local Borgarnes swimming pools (both hot and cold pools available), located just a 10-minute walk from the hotel. Swimming is a popular pastime among Icelanders, providing the opportunity to observe and mingle with them.

Day 5 Conversation about the banking crisis of 2008 with local expert • Discover Snaefellsnes Peninsula • Arnarstapi lava field

- Destination: Borgarnes
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: B59 Hotel or similar

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 7am, featuring international options.

Morning: This morning, we'll depart our hotel for a 5-minute walk to a local coffee shop where we'll meet with a local expert to discuss Iceland's financial crisis from 2008 to 2011. During this turbulent period, the nation's three major commercial banks collapsed, leaving a wake of economic depression and political turmoil. Relative to the size of its economy, this systemic collapse was the largest of any country throughout history. Local currency depreciated and it became difficult for families to pay off debts that were issued in foreign currency as the exchange rates became less favorable. Over 9,000 families lost their homes, more than 70% of the local people lost their savings, and protests ensued. Take the opportunity to ask this local expert any questions you may have

about the banking crisis and resulting financial collapse, such as how the financial crisis led to the largest wave of emigration that Iceland has seen this century. Perhaps you'll ask what steps are being taken to protect local communities against future economic crises.

Following our conversation, we'll embark a private motorcoach around 9:45am to continue our explorations around the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, including the area that marks the entry point to Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. The peninsula boasts a famous glacier-peaked volcano, black-sand beaches and rock formations, making it an optimal place to discover the natural beauty of the country.

Around 11am, we'll arrive in the fishing village of Arnarstapi, known for its constantly changing weather. The village is situated along a coastline punctuated by unique geologic features like arches, basalt cliffs, and blowholes. We'll hike along the rocky coastline for approximately 1 hour, taking in the natural sights of this area.

Lunch: Around noon at Samkomuhusid, a local restaurant featuring regional cuisine.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll depart around 1pm for a leisurely 2-hour drive toward Bjarnarhofn Shark Museum. Along the way, we'll pass through a number of small fishing villages, including Hellissandur, Olafsvik, and Grundarfjordur. Upon arrival at the museum, we'll discover another side of Icelandic culture: here we'll have the opportunity to taste a national delicacy—*hakarl*, made from aged shark meat. It's not for the faint of heart, but our small group size will afford us the opportunity to learn from our host who will help us understand the Icelandic legacy of processing shark meat, as well as the country's maritime history during an intimate conversation. The shark meat takes between 4-6 months to process and is traditionally

consumed with "brennivin," at one time the only hard liquor found in Iceland and often referred to as "Black Death."

Around 4:15pm, we'll depart by private motorcoach for the 1-hour and 15-minute drive back to the hotel in Borgarnes.

Dinner: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions. Perhaps you will venture to Mastofan, which features typical Icelandic cuisine.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Your Trip Experience Leader is happy to provide ideas.

Day 6 Burial Rites monument • A Day in the Life of an Icelandic horse farm

- Destination: Hofsstadir
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hofsstadir Country Hotel or similar

Exclusive O.A.T. Activity: Our agenda today features our *NEW A Day in the Life* overnight experience at a family-run farm in Hofsstadir. This unique opportunity provides a window into rural Icelandic life, as well as time to get to know the hard-working locals who live and work here. We'll also have the chance to learn about the iconic Icelandic horse, a vital livestock that has made life in this remote land possible. Read more about this exclusive experience below.

Activity Note: Depending on your departure, some groups will spend *A Day in the Life* on a different family-run farm. Activities will be comparable to those detailed below, including the opportunity to enjoy a farm-fresh lunch with farmstead owners, meet local farm workers and Icelandic horses, explore the largest cattle farm in Iceland, and enjoy and overnight experience.

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 7am, featuring international options.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll depart Borgarnes around 9am for the approximately 1-hour and 45-minute drive by private motorcoach to the Burial Rites monument to hear the haunting story of Agnes Magnúsdóttir, the alleged murderess of her lover Natan Ketilsson and the last person to be executed in Iceland during a double beheading in 1830. We'll uncover the complexities of the chilling tale captured by author Hannah Kent in her novel, *Burial Rites*.

Then, around 11:15am, we'll depart for the approximately 1-hour and 15-minute drive by private motorcoach to a family-run farm in Hofsstadir for our **NEWA Day in the Life** overnight experience, where we'll meet the owner, Toti, and his family. During our stay, we'll get an intimate look into everyday life on the farm and hear from Toti's daughter, Heidi, about life as a young lady living and working on a farm in a very isolated area.

Lunch: Around 1:30pm upon arrival at the family farm.

Afternoon: After lunch, our discoveries will begin with a guided tour of the grounds where we'll meet members of Toti's family and learn about their small businesses. This a great opportunity to experience life in the Icelandic countryside firsthand as we learn about farming practices and hear from the farm workers. Our first stop will be a visit to the stables around 1:30pm where we'll meet Icelandic horses first brought to the country by Viking settlers.

The Icelandic Horse is a breed of horse developed in Iceland by Norse settlers in the 9th and 10th centuries. These settlers venerated the horses in North Germanic mythology, as they were crucial to the survival and advancement

of their civilization. As most horses would not thrive in Iceland's harsh climate, the Icelandic Horse developed unique characteristics that make it suitable for the often severe environment through centuries of selective breeding. Historically, they were intended to assist local farmers with sheepherding; however, today, they are also used for leisure, showing, and racing. These horses were bred from ponies, so they tend to be small in stature. Despite their size, they are known to be hardy and long-lived, and the government aims to maintain their good health by outlawing the import and export of horses, minimizing the risk of disease. During our 1-hour visit, we'll learn about the history of this iconic horse and have a chance to see how the horses are trained. You may also have the opportunity to speak with the farmer and take a ride.

Then, we'll continue to the largest cattle farm in Iceland where we'll talk with the farm workers about their responsibilities and lives. We'll spend about an hour exploring the cattle farm where we'll hear about the history of cattle in Iceland. Around 3:30pm, our explorations will take us to the potato fields where we'll hear about vegetable farming practices in Iceland. We'll also have a chance to learn about Toti's small business as a potato farmer and see where the potatoes are packaged to be sold.

Our guided tour will conclude with a unique hands-on opportunity to plant a tree in the forest to aid Icelandic efforts to repopulate the forests.

Around 5:30pm, we'll have the opportunity to settle into our accommodations. The facilities include a restaurant, bar and lounge. Typical room amenities include Wireless Internet, a private bath and countryside views.

Dinner: Around 6:30pm at the hotel, featuring local cuisine.

Evening: We'll gather with Toti or a member of his family around 7:30pm to hear Icelandic folk stories and learn more about his family and their life on the farm. Perhaps you'll take this opportunity to ask Toti what inspired him to dedicate his life to farming.

**Day 7 Travel overland to Akureyri •
Controversial Topic: The impact of wind farming on Iceland's natural landscapes with Gudmundur Sigurdsson**

- Destination: Akureyri
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Icelandair Hotel Akureyri or similar

Exclusive O.A.T. Activity: Today's activities feature a conversation surrounding the **Controversial Topic** of wind farming led by clean energy expert Gudmundur Sigursson. We'll examine why Iceland is an ideal place for harnessing this type of renewable energy, but also why some locals are afraid this practice will negatively impact tourism—an industry that constitutes roughly 10% of the country's GDP. This is a remarkable opportunity to glean insight into relevant issues facing modern Icelandic society. Read more about this conversation below.

Breakfast: Served at the guest house beginning at 7:30am, featuring international options.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll depart around 9am for a little over an hour drive by private motorcoach to Siglufjorour, a fishing village nestled in a narrow fjord along the coast of northern Iceland. Upon arrival, we'll visit two local museums, beginning with the Herring Era Museum, the largest maritime museum in Iceland. Witness eleven different types of boats, a documentary about herring fisheries, and more. Then, we'll continue to the Folk Music Centre, opened in 2006 by Reverend Bjarni Thorsteinsson, where we'll be introduced to

Icelandic folk music through the Reverend's extensive collection of CDs and videos of people singing, chanting, or playing musical instruments.

Lunch: On your own around noon—consult with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas. Perhaps you'll rub elbows with the locals at Fish and Chips, a popular quick service restaurant known for its namesake dish.

Afternoon: Around 1pm, we'll depart by private motorcoach for an approximately one hour and 15-minute drive to Akureyri, Iceland's second-largest urban area. Situated on the northern fjords near the Arctic Circle, Akureyri is improbably sunny and enjoys a mild climate in spite of its location. Upon arrival, we'll check in to our hotel and receive our room assignments. Depending on where we stay, the hotel may feature an outdoor swimming pool, golf course, and on-site restaurant. Typical room amenities include a telephone, flat-screen TV, wireless Internet access, and private bathroom with hair dryer.

After settling in, we'll embark on a 30-minute orientation walk through the town with our Trip Experience Leader around 3pm, which includes a visit to the Botanical Gardens—a peaceful garden showcasing local and international flora. The orientation walk is an ideal time to glean ideas from your Trip Experience Leader about what sort of activities you'd like to seek out.

Our orientation walk will conclude around 3:30pm at the offices of Vistorka, a company dedicated to bringing green energy solutions to Iceland, where we'll engage in a **Controversial Topic** as we learn about the contemporary problems surrounding wind farming with a local clean energy expert, Gudmundur Sigurdsson.

Due to its island location and its rocky, unforested terrain, Iceland's unique topography makes it ideally suited for harnessing the wind as a source of energy, and many local and international companies are beginning to make plans for the construction of new wind farms. However, most local Icelanders are opposed to the idea of constructing unsightly wind farms across the country, believing that spoiling the beauty of the landscape will harm not only the aesthetic appeal of these treasured vistas, but also decimate Iceland's booming tourism industry.

We'll get an intimate, firsthand perspective of this controversy during our conversation with Gudmundur Sigurdsson, the managing director of Vistorka. Gudmundur has dedicated his career to finding new sources of clean, sustainable energy, and is closely familiar with the challenge of striking a balance between producing renewable output and preserving the unique Icelandic scenery that people from all across the globe travel to see. Recognizing the issues posed by widespread wind farm construction, Gudmundur and the experts at Vistorka are dedicated to exploring new avenues of renewable, clean, sustainable energy. In particular, Gudmundur is investigating how to use Iceland's raw resources and the waste generated by households and power plants to create environmentally-friendly biodiesel fuel and affordable energy for all the people of Iceland and the country's future generations.

During our 1-hour conversation with Gudmundur we'll examine both sides of the controversy surrounding wind farms in Iceland. While only 2 farms currently exist in the country, local and foreign energy companies are beginning to realize the potential of this lucrative market and are currently planning to build up to 50 more across the island. While the idea is widely unpopular amongst Iceland's population—80% of the citizenry opposes

new construction—some locals are excited by the prospect, eager to embrace the new source of energy and to lower their high electricity costs (we'll learn more about this later on in our adventure when we visit a greenhouse in Hveragerðiand, where one of these wind farms is constructed).

On the other side of the coin, the majority of Iceland's populace is fiercely opposed to new wind farm construction. Many of the farms are planned to be erected at some of Iceland's most treasured sites of natural beauty, including Akureyri. Local Icelanders want to preserve these natural heritage sites—in fact, 28% of Icelanders say that they would be willing to spend \$100 in the name of preserving their lands in public trust to protect them from corporate development. The problem, they say, is not only aesthetic, it's also about the bottom line, as tourism accounts for roughly 42% of Iceland's economy. How many travelers will still want to come if these one-of-a-kind glaciers, volcanic fields, and black-sand beaches are spoiled with rows of unsightly windmills?

Gudmundur will share his expertise with us for 20 minutes, then we'll have the remainder of the hour to ask questions. Take advantage of his deep knowledge to learn about wind farming as an alternative energy source, what other types of renewable energy are being considered and how they compare to wind farming in Iceland.

Around 4:30pm, we'll bid farewell to Gudmundur and enjoy about 2 hours of free time this afternoon in Akureyri. You may choose to remain in town to make your own discoveries or return to the hotel on foot with your Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: Around 6:30pm at the hotel, featuring local cuisine.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries—check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas.

Freedom To Explore: During your two days in Akureyri, you have the freedom to explore on your own during your free time. Below are a few recommended options for independent explorations:

- Experience the creative spirit of Iceland at **Akureyri Art Museum:** Founded in 1993, this centrally-located museum was originally home to a dairy and later converted to display art. Notable artists that have had their work shown here include Icelanders Erró, Kjarval and Louisa Matthíasdóttir, American Spencer Tunick, Israeli video artist Guy Ben-Ner, and French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson.
 - **How to get there:** A 10-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 10am–5pm, Monday–Saturday.
 - **Cost:** About \$8 USD.
- Gain an understanding of Icelandic life at the exhibition **Into the Arctic:** Opened in 2017, this exhibition aims to give insight into life in the north, including an introduction to the lives of native peoples, samples of typical ships and airplanes, as well as old navigation-al equipment and even clothes from ancient times. You’ll also have a chance to examine a collection of maps and charts of Iceland and North Europe—the oldest of which is believed to be between 300–400 years old.
 - **How to get there:** A 20-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 11am–6pm, Monday–Friday; 11am–5pm, Saturday–Sunday.
 - **Cost:** About \$12 USD.
- Glimpse the religious side of northern Iceland at **Akureyrarkirkja:** Also referred to as “The Church of Akureyri,” Akureyrarkirkja is a prominent Lutheran church located on a hill in the center of the city. Constructed in 1940, this landmark church was designed by Icelandic architect Gudjon Samuelsson and contains a 3,200-pipe organ, as well

as a suspended ship hanging from the ceiling—representing an old Nordic tradition aiming to protect loved ones at sea. The church is perched atop a hill, which requires a fair amount of step climbing. Those who do venture up to the church are rewarded with a panoramic view of the surrounding town.

- **How to get there:** A 10-minute walk.
- **Hours:** 10am–7pm, Monday–Friday.
- **Cost:** Free.

Day 8 Visit Godafoss Waterfall & Lake Myvatn • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Akureyri
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Icelandair Hotel Akureyri or similar

Exclusive O.A.T. Activity: This evening’s activities will feature a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a local family in Akureyri, allowing us the opportunity to venture inside their home and enjoy home-cooked Icelandic cuisine. These intimate meals are a time for sharing stories, experiencing local culture up close and personal, and asking any questions we might have about our discoveries. Read more about this experience below.

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 7am, featuring international options.

Morning: This morning we’ll depart by private motorcoach around 8:30am for the approximately 1-hour drive to the Lake Myvatn area, sculpted throughout the ages by volcanic eruptions and renowned for its diverse bird population, with ducks, gyrfalcons, plovers, ptarmigans, and more. Along the way, we’ll stop around 9:45am to visit Hverabraud, where we’ll observe how locals harness geothermal energy to make homemade bread. Then, we’ll reboard our private motorcoach for a 10-minute drive to Namafjall, where we’ll witness the bubbling, hot mud pools native

to this area. After, we'll continue on toward the Lake Myvatn area, and upon arrival at Skutustadir, explore the pseudocrater field, formed by steam explosions when lava flowed over wet earth. We'll also witness some of Iceland's more recent volcanic activity during a stop at a panoramic viewpoint overlooking the Námaskard geothermic area. Around 11:45am, we'll visit the whimsical "black castle" lava formations of Dimmuborgir, where a lonely troll is said to have lived. We'll spend approximately 1 hour exploring here before departing for a short drive to lunch.

Lunch: Around 1pm at Sel Hotel, featuring regional cuisine.

Afternoon: Around 2:30pm, we'll continue on by private motorcoach for the 30-minute drive to Godafoss ("waterfall of the gods"), where the current carries rushing water along a glacial river and over the rocks, falling 40 feet into the pool below. It is said to have gained its name when one of the leaders of the country's parliament disposed of his statues of Norse gods at this waterfall upon the adoption of Christianity as the official religion in the year 1000.

Then, around 4:30pm, we'll drive 30 minutes back to our hotel in Akureyri, where we'll have a couple of hours to rest or discover the area on our own. Around 6pm, we'll break into smaller groups of about 4-5 and depart for the home of a local family either on foot or by private motorcoach (depending on where our **Home-Hosted Dinner** is for the evening), arriving approximately 10 minutes later.

Dinner: Around 6:30pm we'll be welcomed into the home of a local family, where we'll join them at their dinner table and see how they go through their daily lives—where they live, what they cook, how they eat, and how they feel about their homeland. Our hosts are from a variety of economic backgrounds, including

teachers (or former teachers), doctors, and working-class families. Some families have school-aged children, grandparents, or grandchildren at home, and some are retired couples. For our **Home-Hosted Dinner**, we'll share a homecooked meal featuring traditional Icelandic foods, such as lamb soup or fried fish and potatoes.

We're afforded this special privilege by our small group size; by dining in groups of no more than 5, we're given the chance to enter local homes and connect on a one-to-one level, and to even share a little with our hosts about who we are and what has brought us to Iceland. This meal offers us the opportunity to see the family go about their evening routine and get a closer look at life in Akureyri. There will be plenty of time to ask our hosts any questions we may have.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'd like to discuss what you learned and enjoyed today with your fellow travelers.

Day 9 Explore Dalvik • Whale-watching excursion

- Destination: Akureyri
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Icelandair Hotel Akureyri or similar

Activity note: Whale watching is weather dependent and relies upon the cooperation of migratory patterns, which can be difficult to accurately predict. The boat is not exclusive to O.A.T. travelers. If necessary, an alternate activity will be provided.

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 7am, featuring international options.

Morning: After breakfast, we will depart by private motorcoach around 8am for the approximately 45-minute drive to Dalvik, a commercial fishing port. Around 9am, we'll set

sail on a restored fishing vessel from the harbor for an approximately 3-hour whale-watching excursion. The onboard staff members are experts on local marine life, and with their help, we hope to spot minke whales, white-beaked dolphins, harbor porpoises and humpback whales in the waters of the northern Atlantic. You will also have the opportunity to catch and fillet fish and take them ashore.

Around noon, we'll head back to the harbor, where we'll sample the fish we caught during our excursion.

Lunch: Around 12:30pm at a local restaurant, featuring local cuisine.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll be entertained by local students who come to the restaurant to perform a musical act around 1:30pm. Then, around 2pm, we'll depart for our almost 45-minute drive back to Akureyri. The remainder of the day is free for you to plan as you'd like. For art enthusiasts, perhaps you'd like to explore the Akureyri Art Museum to get a sense of the creative Icelandic spirit.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader is a wealth of information, so feel free to check with them for suggestions. For a casual dining experience, check out Akureyri hot dog stand, a favorite among locals.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'd like to stroll once more through the Botanical Gardens before bidding farewell to Akureyri in the morning.

Day 10 Fly to Reykjavik • Controversial Topic: The impacts of fish farming with Jon Kaldal • Visit Ocean Cluster House

- Destination: Reykjavik
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hilton Nordica or similar

Exclusive O.A.T. Activity: This morning's activities feature a conversation surrounding the **Controversial Topic** of fish farming and its harmful effects led by local environmentalist Jon Kaldal—a contrasting perspective to our conversations with Old Harbor entrepreneurs. We'll learn about the contentious harvesting method at the root of this controversy, and gain insight into its detrimental impacts. This conversation will allow our small group to see why it's critical the entire world transition to sustainable fishing practices. Read more about this conversation below.

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 7am, featuring international options.

Morning: We rise early this morning to check out of our hotel and depart around 7:45am by private motorcoach for the 15-minute drive to Akureyri airport. Depending on flight schedules, our plane will leave between approximately 8:30am. The flight is roughly 40 minutes from takeoff to landing.

Upon arrival in Reykjavik around 9:15am, we'll drive about 10 minutes by private motorcoach to Ocean Cluster House, an organization located in the city's Old Harbor that was established by the government to provide rental space for businesses and entrepreneurs specializing in fish bi-products, such as leather products, amino oils for skincare, and more.

Our discoveries will begin with a 1-hour walk through the marketplace where we'll have the opportunity to speak with roughly a dozen entrepreneurs about their products. We'll also hear their perspective on the large-scale

expansion of salmon farming as a vital industry to Iceland's economy and necessary means of providing food to meet the demands of a growing global population.

Then, around 10:30am, we'll sit down with local environmentalist Jon Kaldal to engage in a **Controversial Topic** about the effects of fish farming—a \$3-million industry which represents nearly 40% of Iceland's annual exports—and the risk that it poses to Iceland's pristine natural landscapes, as well as the survival of the wild North Atlantic Salmon population. This risk continues to grow as corporations seek to expand the use of a harmful farming method by 50%—a method which has proven unsustainable and unethical.

Jon is a co-founder and active member of the Icelandic Wildlife Fund (IWF) and often participates in demonstrations to raise awareness about this issue. Established in 2017, the fund's main focus is the conservation of wild Icelandic salmon stock, sea char, sea trout, and other freshwater fish. IWF strives to put an end to large-scale aquaculture, as well as the aggressive advocacy and pressure applied by international stakeholders and corporations.

Throughout our conversation, we'll learn that Iceland is considered the final frontier for wild North Atlantic salmon, as other countries—most of all Norway—have seen a dramatic decline in local populations, due to high-risk aquaculture methods like open-net pens. These open cage-like systems are perhaps the most dangerous farming method because they allow free exchange between the farm and surrounding environment (of waste, chemicals, parasites, etc.), as well as the fact that there is the potential for farmed fish to escape. Furthermore, these structures attract predators which often get tangled in fish farm nets and drown.

Despite the overwhelmingly negative consequences, large farming corporations intend to exponentially expand their application of this method because it's convenient and low-cost. For instance, ocean currents deliver oxygen to the fish and disperse their wastes, eliminating the need for a costly circulation system. But convenience and profit maximization come at a steep price: In the past two decades alone, the expansion of farming in open-net pens has led to the loss of half the wild salmon population in Norway. Hundreds of thousands of fish escape every year and swim up rivers, breeding with wild stocks and thereby endangering the native population.

During our conversation with Jon, we'll learn about his efforts to combat the unregulated growth of salmon farming in Iceland and to protect the North Atlantic salmon population. He will also share his expertise about the harmful environmental effects, such as the pollution caused by the waste from fish farms—equivalent to that of a 50,000-person village.

Jon will speak to this issue for approximately 20 minutes, and then our group will have around 45 minutes to ask any questions we may have. Perhaps you'd like to know more about his conservation work and the environmental impacts of fish farming—such as what the Icelandic Wildlife Fund is doing to advocate for more regulations over the salmon farming and how the resulting pollution will impact tourism in Iceland.

Lunch: Around 11:30am, on your own in the street food hall. You'll have the opportunity to explore different types of food and products, including both local and exotic dishes. To eat like a local, try *plokkfishkur*, an Icelandic fish stew, or sample products from the sea, like cod.

Afternoon: Around 12:30pm, we'll depart to our hotel in Reykjavik. Upon arrival around 1pm, we'll check in to our hotel and receive our room assignments. Depending on where we stay, your hotel room will likely offer a desk, flat-screen TV, private bath, wireless Internet and tea- and coffee-making facilities. The hotel typically features two restaurants, a bar, beauty salon, and fitness room.

The remainder of the day is free for your own discoveries. To help you familiarize yourself with the city, your Trip Experience Leader will lead an approximately 1-hour orientation walk around 2:30pm. During the walk, feel free to ask questions or request more information about any activities of interest.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide ideas, should you want any. Of course, if you enjoy seafood, Iceland is a great place to sample a wide variety of products from the sea.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Consult with your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Freedom To Explore: During your three days in Reykjavik, you have the freedom to explore this northerly capital on your own during your free time. Below are a few recommended options for independent explorations:

- Take a dip in **Laugardalslaug:** The public thermal baths and swimming pool complex of Laugardalslaug boasts the city's largest pool and features extensive facilities, including a children's pool, paddling pool, two water slides, numerous hot tubs, steam baths, and even a mini golf course. Enjoy a popular

Icelandic pastime alongside locals, during which you'll have the opportunity to interact and mingle with them during your visit.

- **How to get there:** A 10- to 15-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 6:30am-10pm, Monday-Friday; 8am-10pm Saturday-Sunday.
 - **Cost:** About \$8 USD.
- Examine the flora of the northern temperate zone at Reykjavik's **Botanical Garden:** Established in 1961, the goal of the garden is to educate, research, and preserve the thousands of species represented in its collection. From heath roses to forest floor plants and even rock gardens, every item is labeled to ensure visitors come away having learned about the diverse vegetation of the region. In addition to the wide array of flora, the garden features an abundance of trees, ponds, and bird life. You will even find a café in the on-site gazebo.
 - **How to get there:** A 15-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 10am-3pm, daily.
 - **Cost:** Free.
 - Get in touch with Icelandic nature at the **Reykjavik Park and Zoo:** From reindeer and seals to Arctic foxes, observe a number of native animals, as well as some exotic species. After exploring, perhaps you'd like to relax at the on-site coffeehouse or rent a Segway and see the park from a different perspective. The zoo is an educational institution and regularly hosts school groups, either in the form of guided tours or hands-on learning like handling the resident insects.
 - **How to get there:** A 15-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 10am-5pm, daily.
 - **Cost:** About \$7 USD.

Day 11 Explore Reykjavik • Geothermal power plant visit • Greenhouse visit • Árbæjarsafn open-air museum

- Destination: Reykjavik
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hilton Nordica or similar

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 6:30am, featuring international options.

Morning: We'll depart the hotel around 8:30am for a 30-minute drive by private motorcoach to the Hellisheidarvirkjun Geothermal Power Plant. Led by a local guide, we'll tour the plant and learn about green energy in Iceland. We'll have an opportunity to understand how clean energy is produced here, as well as ask any questions we may have.

Around 10am, we'll drive about 15 minutes to Hveragerðiand where we'll visit a local greenhouse—a **newly added feature for 2021**, where we'll learn about the issues surrounding the price of electricity on the island, specifically how it affects greenhouse farmers versus large corporations. Individual greenhouse farmers typically pay a lot more than these large corporations, such as those in the aluminum industry, which means that Icelandic food products come at a higher cost than foreign ones. In this greenhouse in particular, the farmer cultivates tomatoes and honey.

Then, we'll board our private motorcoach around 11:15am and drive approximately 30 minutes to the Árbæjarsafn open-air historical museum in Reykjavik to gain insight into the living and working conditions of Icelanders in the past. We'll spend about 1.5 hours exploring the turf houses and grounds before walking to our lunch spot, about 5 minutes.

Lunch: Around 1:15pm at a local restaurant in Reykjavik featuring traditional Icelandic fare.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll depart around 2:15pm for the 15-minute drive to back to our hotel in Reykjavik.

The remainder of the day is yours to get acquainted with this northerly capital city. Despite its small size (a population of a little over 120,000), Reykjavik feels remarkably cosmopolitan. From hip bars to extensive art galleries and a rich culinary scene, there's much to see, do, and discover. Reykjavik is believed to be the first permanent settlement of Iceland, presumably established by Ingolfr Arnarson in AD 874—though it wasn't until the late 18th century that it was officially declared a trading town and eventually modernized in the 19th century. Today, Reykjavik is regarded as one of the cleanest, safest, and most environmentally friendly cities in the world.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions on where to dine. Located just around the corner from the hotel is Mulakaffi, a quintessentially Icelandic restaurant. Be sure to try the pan-fried haddock or leg of lamb.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Alternatively, you may wish to join your Trip Experience Leader in a vicinity walk to familiarize yourself with your new surroundings.

Day 12 Visit Blue Lagoon • Grand Circle Foundation visit: Search & Rescue Center

- Destination: Reykjavik
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hilton Nordica or similar

Exclusive O.A.T. Activity: Today's discoveries feature a visit to the Search and Rescue Center—a **NEW Grand Circle Foundation site**—to gather with members of its youth program for lunch and learn about their life-saving missions. During our visit, we'll

learn more about the organization's mission from the volunteers and have a look at some of their critical protective equipment.

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 6:30am, featuring international options.

Morning: Around 9am, we'll depart by private motorcoach for the approximately 1-hour drive to the Blue Lagoon, perhaps the most famous site in all of Iceland. The water in the lagoon—comprised of 70% sea water, 30% fresh water and maintained at a steady 100°F—is rich in blue-green algae, mineral salts and silica mud, all which exfoliate the skin and leave it feeling smooth. For those who prefer an alternative to soaking, this massive complex also features restaurants, a hotel, spa and a gift shop, hot-pots, steam rooms, a sauna, a bar, and even a waterfall that provides a hydraulic massage.

Around noon, we'll bid farewell to the Blue Lagoon and drive 10 minutes to the town of Grindavik on the rugged Reykjanes Peninsula. The landscape here is vast and has been shaped through the centuries by dynamic volcanic forces. Upon arrival, we'll stop at a local grocery store to get supplies for today's picnic lunch and have an opportunity to meet some of the local people. Then, we'll head to the Search and Rescue Center—a **NEW Grand Circle Foundation site**—to gather with members of its youth program for lunch. Since the country's first search and rescue team was established in 1918 in the Westland Islands, the organization has grown to include approximately 100 search-and-rescue teams, 70 accident prevention divisions, and 50 youth programs with around 10,000 volunteers across Iceland. These highly trained men and women operate from most towns throughout the country; however, today, we'll visit the center at the heart of these crucial services.

Lunch: Around 12:30pm, we'll sit down for a picnic lunch with teenage members of the Search and Rescue center's youth program.

Afternoon: During our 2-hour visit at the Search and Rescue Center, we'll learn about the vital public services this volunteer organization provides to local communities—since Iceland doesn't have its own army or National Guard—such as sea and mountain rescues, unblocking roads due to ice and snow, evaluating safety equipment, providing safety education for children, and more. We'll have the opportunity to see this life-saving equipment—some of which is sponsored by **Grand Circle Foundation**. During our conversation with members of the youth division, we'll come to understand the important role of these fledgling units. For instance, the youngest volunteers are often most involved in the area of recruitment. Children as young as 14 years old can join the search and rescue team, and upon their 18th birthday, they graduate to the adult unit. Prior to joining, they may have attended a youth outdoors school in Snaefellsnes, which acts as both a training center for search and rescue, as well as an opportunity to learn survival skills like first aid, sailing techniques, and more. While we converse with these young people, take this unique opportunity to ask them questions, such as what motivated them to volunteer and the types of training exercises required prior to conducting search and rescue missions. You may also ask them to recount particularly difficult rescue missions or specific challenges they've faced.

Around 2:15pm, we'll depart the Search and Rescue Center and drive about 45 minutes back to Reykjavik for the final evening of our adventure. Upon arrival around 3pm, we'll enjoy approximately 3.5 hours of free time before dinner this evening.

Dinner: Around 6:30pm, our group will gather at the hotel restaurant for our Farewell Dinner, where we'll toast to the discoveries we made throughout our shared adventure.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Reykjavik has a lively food and bar scene, so if you're feeling up to it, check with your Trip Experience Leader on where to go to continue celebrating your Icelandic journey.

Day 13 Reykjavik • Return to U.S. or begin your post-trip extension

• Included Meals: Breakfast

Activity note: Depending on your air itinerary, trips returning in September and October will include an extra night in the U.S. upon arrival. This will not apply to travelers whose final destination is New York or Boston.

Breakfast: Served at the hotel beginning at 6:30am, featuring international options.

Morning: Depending on your specific flight arrangements, you will transfer approximately 45 minutes to the airport sometime this morning for your flight home to the U.S. Travelers taking our *Greenland's Natural Splendor & Inuit Culture* post-trip extension will fly to Greenland this morning.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Greenland's Natural Splendor & Inuit Culture*

Day 1 Reykjavik • Helicopter flight • Explore Ammassalik

Day 2 Iceberg boat tour • Valley of the Flowers • Inuit drum dance

Day 3 Helicopter flight • Explore Kulusuk • Mountain Jeep tour

Day 4 Fly to Reykjavik

Day 5 Reykjavik • Return to U.S.