



## Following the Sagas! GirlFriends Explore Nature and Culture in Iceland

October 10-20, 2019

October 10 Welcome to the Land of the Sagas (Dinner Included)

We'll all plan to get in as early on October 10 as the flights allow us and we'll head to the hotel to enjoy downtime before officially meeting up for our **Welcome Dinner which includes meaningful connecting, a cocktail to toast our trip, and answers to all your questions of what's ahead!**

**\*Note: Evenings and the Magic of the Northern Lights!** The Northern Lights, also called **Aurora Borealis**, and **Norðurljós** in Icelandic, are one of the most spectacular shows on this earth. Each night we will have the opportunity to look up, so over the course of our many nights, we should have the probability of a few spectacular shows. In fact we choose to visit Iceland when we would have cold mild weather and dark nights in order to increase our opportunities to view these beautiful skies during our trip. The beautiful autumn colors of the environment are so amazing and for those who enjoy photography this is one of the best months. But note that the weather is getting colder in October and the average temperature is only around 40 F. Thus we'll want to pack layers for cold days! (And also a few bathing suits for our frequent dips in hot springs!)

(overnight in Reykjavik)

October 11 Reykjavik, History and Orientation (Breakfast & Lunch Included)

After breakfast at our hotel we will be joined by a historian for an overview on the history and culture of Iceland, "**Understanding the Sagas**". Back in the Middle Ages, Icelanders were great literary producers and the word "saga" is used to refer to the new literary genre that developed in Iceland from the late 12th century up to the end of the 15th century and sometimes later than that. "Saga" is an Icelandic word that means "something said, a narrative". Originally the term is likely to have been applied to stories that were probably formed and transmitted orally. Later, they came to be

recorded in writing, in hand-written manuscripts, many of which survive to the present day, though a good number have perished over the past 500 years or so. We will also learn about the representation of women in the Sagas as they appear in stories like *NJALS SAGA*, *LAXDÆLA SAGA*, AND *GUNNLAUGS SAGA ORMSTUNGU*.

We are then off to enjoy a **vibrant city tour** that will include visit to Þjóðminjasafnið **(the National Gallery)** and Kjarvalsstaðir Gallery after lunch. The National **Museum** is a must for those who want to learn about Icelandic history, from the first settlers in 800 to the present day (<https://visitreykjavik.is/national-museum-iceland>). The gallery will give us a sense of the artistic and contemporary trends through paintings & sculptures by well-known Icelandic artists (<http://artmuseum.is/kjarvalsstadir>).

We will return to the hotel and enjoy an evening to rest. For dinner we will have a group reservation for those who would like to dine together: This evening we will enjoy a **Taste the Saga brewery tour!**

(overnight in Reykjavik)

October 12th                      Women and Culinary Arts                      (B,L)

This morning is dedicated to an **interactive Icelandic Cooking class, Tasting Session and Gourmet Lunch**, all in one package! Immerse yourself into Icelandic cuisine, food traditions and culture in this hands-on cooking class in Reykjavik. Under the supervision of a chef, prepare and plate a three course gourmet meal from fresh, local ingredients and then enjoy your creation with a glass of wine. Sample local specialties such as homemade Icelandic rye bread, dung smoked Arctic char, dried Atlantic wolf fish, smoked free-roaming lamb and selected local beer, during the tasting session. We will have vegetarian options also and talk about the role of men and women in agriculture, fishing and food preparation. After lunch we are off to the Reykjavík City Hall to meet with a local City Council members to discuss “Women and the Politics of Equity in Iceland” today. Did you know that Iceland ranks #1 for gender equality? We have lots to learn!

We will return to the hotel and enjoy an evening to rest. For dinner we will have a group reservation for those who would like to dine together: This evening we will enjoy **Reykjavík by night!** We will visit hip local pubs and explore the pulsating nightlife on a Friday night in the bustling city of Reykjavík.

(overnight in Reykjavik)

October 13<sup>th</sup>                      Akureyri and Mývatn                      (B, L)

This morning we will check out after an early breakfast for our flight to Akureyri that is on the north side of the country. Upon arrival we will be hosted by women at the **Center for Gender Equality** to learn about equality issues in Iceland from a grassroots perspective. The Centre opened in September 2000 and it handles administration of gender equality in Iceland in accordance to act. 10/2008: An Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men. After lunch we will drive 1.5 hours to really enjoy

the beauty of this **Mývatn area with a stop at Goðafoss waterfall**. Mývatn is a shallow eutrophic lake situated in an area of active volcanism in the north of Iceland, not far from Krafla volcano. The lake and its surrounding wetlands have an exceptionally rich fauna of water birds, especially ducks. The lake was created by a large basaltic lava eruption 2300 years ago, and the surrounding landscape is dominated by volcanic landforms, including lava pillars and rootless vents (pseudocraters). The effluent river Laxá is known for its rich fishing for brown trout and Atlantic salmon. We will enjoy a 1.5 hour hike and then end our day in pure relaxation at **Mývatn nature bath and** experience a steam bath in natural geothermal steam rising through vents <https://www.myvatnnaturebaths.is> \*\*Tonight there is a really wonderful chance for Northern Lights.

(overnight in Mývatn)

---

**October 14** **Skagafjörður and Whales!** **(B, L)**

After a delightful breakfast we will check out and drive 1.5 hours to Akureyri where we will have lunch and a **2-3 hour whale watching tour**. The north has better chances to experience wildlife at this time of year so let's cross our fingers and go looking! **Akureyri is a city at the base of Eyjafjörður Fjord** in northern Iceland. In the center, the 1940 Akureyri Church has stained-glass windows portraying scenes from Icelandic Christian history. There are views of the fjord from the forecourt. It should be beautiful for us to enjoy some time on our own in the afternoon and for dinner to enjoy this quaint town. Tonight is another really wonderful chance for Northern Lights.

(overnight in Akureyri or Skagafjörður county)

---

**October 15** **Sauðárkrókur** **(B, L)**

We get a leisurely start this morning as our first stop is not till 10 am. Some of you might like to walk and wander in the morning before we are off to Glaumbær farm and Museum. Glaumbær is a typical turf house buildings that date from slightly different periods in the 18th- & 19th-centuries. This style of the turf construction was universal in rural areas of Iceland until about 1900, when it was gradually replaced mainly by reinforced concrete, which is typical in most contemporary Icelandic construction today. Extensive turf construction evolved in Iceland owing to the acute shortage of large trees. We will learn about the story of Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir - the mother of Snorri Þorfinnson . Then we are off on about a 1.5 mile hike on **Mount Tindastóll**. We will have a quick stop at the **Puffin and Friends** Museum to learn about the Artic Puffin and conservation efforts in Iceland today.

Ending our day we explore and relax at Sauðárkrókur Grettislaug, another natural hot bath situated in Reykjaströnd close to Sauðárkrókur. We can see the island Drangey from there but the legend says that Grettir the strong swam to the island and back, and took a bath there to rest. Then we are back to the hotel around 6 pm to rest and have dinner at our leisure. Hopefully tonight we will see more stunning Northern Lights!

(overnight in Akureyri or Skagafjörður county)

---

**October 16** **Dalirnir and Viking Stories** **(B, L)**

This morning we check out and enjoy a beautiful drive to **Buðardalur** through **Laxárdalsheið** about 2.5 hours. We can stop and take some pictures along the way. Our guide will tell us about **Guðrun Ósvífursdóttir, the heroine of Laxdaela Saga**, was born (973AD) and brought up at Laugar. We will explore **Laugar í Sælingsdal** today and enjoy a short hike in the surroundings and visit the historical place where Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir lived. Yes, then we will enjoy a hot bath in the natural pool and relax. We will drive 20 min for lunch in Budardalur. Our afternoon has us soaking up the drama of real Viking story tellers, telling renowned tales of the past. At the **Eiríksstaðir Historical Museum** we can try real Viking tools and get to know the craftsmanship, architecture and Viking clothing, all made by hand with original tools and methods. We will have time to enjoy free time for dinner.

Stykkisholmur is beautifully-situated on the northern side of the Snaefellsnes peninsula. With beautiful and well-preserved old houses in the town centre Stykkisholmur is also known as the gateway to the innumerable islands of Breidafjörður bay, which is renowned for its natural beauty and remarkable wildlife.

( Overnight in Stykkisholmur)

October 17 \_\_\_\_\_ Snæfellsnes \_\_\_\_\_ **( B, L )**

This morning we will check out of the hotel after breakfast. We will visit the historical church in Stykkisholmur and experience this beautiful landmark. The view from the church over Breidarfjörður is spectacular.

In just 15 minutes we will **hike to Helgafell**. Here we will hear the story about Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir and hike to Helgafell hill (73 m) . After we can relax as we drive one hour from Helgafell to **Gerðuberg basalt columns**. We will hike a half a kilometer cliff of hundreds of basalt column stacks standing like an army of pillars in a side by side row. It is a perfect place to view basalt columns and see the stunning formation of this incredible natural geological structure. Lunch is in Borgarnes (a 45 drive) After lunch we will stop at **Deildartunguhver and Kleppjarnsreykir , Europe's most powerful hot spring**. It provides 180 l/sec of 100°C hot water. Most of the water used for central heating in the towns of Borgarnes and Akranes is taken from Deildartunguhver. We will enjoy an hour for a refreshing swim in the geothermal pool in Kleppjarnsreykir We end the day at the **Settlement Center** and enjoy free time for dinner. The Center is devoted to recreating Iceland's earliest days, including one of the best-known heroes of the Icelandic Sagas, Egil Skalla-Grimsson. After dinner around 8 pm we drive to Reykjavík and check in for a good night sleep (about 9 pm)

(overnight in Reykjavik)

October 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Golden Circle and Hellsheiðarvirkjun \_\_\_\_\_ **( B, L )**

This morning we are off early to explore **Hellsheiðarvirkjun** where we will have an **“energy tour”** ( a 40 min. drive) We will visit their Geothermal Exhibition and be guided with one of their experienced staff. After a break for refreshments at Café

Energy and time to explore Icelandic gift from their exhibition shop. We are then off to Friðheimar (a 1 hour drive) where we will have a greenhouse lunch. Friðheimar cuisine is rich in tomatoes, and that's not surprising, as four different varieties of tomato are cultivated in the greenhouses where lunch is served among the plants. A rare food experience. The afternoon we will meander by transport and foot. We will have time to soak in beautiful sites and hike.

Our highlights in the South are: **Gullfoss** (Golden Waterfall) is an iconic waterfall of Iceland offering a spectacular view of the forces and beauty of untouched nature; **Geysir**, sometimes known as The Great Geysir, is a geyser in southwestern Iceland. It was the first geyser described in a printed source and the first known to modern Europeans (The English word geyser derives from Geysir) and; Þingvellir (Thingvellir) is a historic site and national park that is known for the Alþing (Althing), the site of Iceland's parliament from the 10th to 18th centuries. On the site are the Þingvellir Church and the ruins of old stone shelters. The park sits in a rift valley caused by the separation of 2 tectonic plates, with rocky cliffs and fissures like the huge Almannagjá fault. Around 6 pm we return to Reykjavik and check in to our hotels. We are free to enjoy dinner and nightlife back in town.

Tonight we will head out to visit one of the city's well known distilleries like the Eimverk **Distillery** Iceland's first and only whisky **distillery**, best known for their Floki malt whiskey, made from 100% organic Icelandic barley that's grown in volcanic soil at the Arctic Circle. This distillery is truly one-of-a-kind <https://flokiwhisky.is>

(overnight in Reykjavik)

---

**October 19** **Ending with a Wonder of the World!** **(B, D)**

This morning we are out the door to relax and restore at the iconic **Blue Lagoon with the Comfort package** . <https://www.bluelagoon.com> The Blue Lagoon is a geothermal spa in southwestern Iceland. The spa is located in a lava field near Grindavík on the Reykjanes Peninsula, in a location favorable for geothermal power. It is about a 45 min drive back and forth. It was named by National Geographic as "one of 25 wonders of the world". We will have some free time to enjoy lunch and shop their store.

When return back to Reykjavik we will have time to wander and shop local markets. A highlight is a stop at **Kirsuberjatréð-This women's art-and-design collective** in an interesting 1882 former bookshop sells weird and wonderful fish-skin handbags, music boxes made from string, and, our favorite, beautiful colored bowls made from radish slices.

We end our day with time wandering **Iceland's only flea market**. It takes place indoors close to the harbor of the capital city, Reykjavík. In Kolaportið you can buy everything from old records to licorice and fermented shark <https://kolaportid.is> Let's buy our gifts and souvenirs! We will have time to rest before we head out for our **Farewell Dinner**.

We will see if there are any special shows this evening at the Iceland Dance Company <https://www.iceland.is/arts-culture/news/the-icelandic-dance-company/7391/>

October 20 Farewell Iceland! ... with an encore Whale Watching? (B)

We will check out of the hotel and drive to the airport. Or stay the weekend on your own to wander and explore on your own.

An option for those with evening flights! Enjoy another time for ecotourism activities this morning out on the water if you would like to whale watch again. This option will be an additional \$219 approximately. You can book with Whale Safari, Reykavik's and Akureyri's original small groups whale watching tour operator.

[http://www.whalesafari.is/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIosHlpOTZ3AIVh8hkCh36Ow5-EAAYBCAAEgJURvD\\_BwE](http://www.whalesafari.is/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIosHlpOTZ3AIVh8hkCh36Ow5-EAAYBCAAEgJURvD_BwE)

This Journey is Powered by ...  *AltruVistas*