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## GEEO ITINERARY

ICELAND Group 2- Summer

### **Day 1: Reykjavík Arrive at any time. We recommend arriving a day early to better explore this world-renowned city.**

Arrive in Reykjavík at any time. Check into our hotel and enjoy the city. We HIGHLY recommend arriving a day or two early to explore this world-renowned city fully. Worthwhile visits near Reykjavík include the Blue Lagoon (40 mins from Reykjavík) and the Bargarnes Settlement Centre (1 hr from Reykjavík). Check the notice boards or ask at reception for the exact time and location of the group meeting, typically held at 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. After the meeting, you might take the opportunity to head out for a meal in a nearby local restaurant to further get to know your tour leader and traveling companions. Please make every effort to arrive on time for this welcome meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up.

### **Day 2: Reykjavík/Akureyri (B) Drive to Akureyri. Stop for lunch at a local cantina. Explore the town. Opt to go for an evening whale-watching tour.**

After breakfast, we drive to Akureyri, enjoying the beautiful landscape along the way and stopping for lunch at a local cantina. Akureyri, population 17,754, is an important port and fishing center. The area has a relatively warm climate due to geographical factors, and the town's ice-free harbor has played a significant role in its history. It still gets heated with geothermal water from Laugaland in Eyjafjörður. On the hill above the old town is Lystigarðurinn, a park and botanical garden with specimens of almost all native Icelandic plants as well as hundreds of foreign ones. In the afternoon, we will explore the town. In the evening, you have the option of heading out to sea to go whale watching off the coast (approximately 9,900 ISK per person). Among the species of whale spotted near Akureyri in Eyjafjörður are bottlenose, minke, and humpback. Approximate travel time: 4.5 hrs in private vehicle

### **Day 3: Akureyri/Borgarfjörður (B) Stop at Goðafoss Waterfall en route to Mývatn Lake. Explore lava formations of Dimmuborgir and the geothermal area of Námaskarð. Visit Dettifoss Waterfall. Arrive in Borgarfjörður for a night in a local guesthouse.**

Today, we start by taking an excursion to one of the most impressive waterfalls in Iceland, the Goðafoss Waterfall. Measuring 12 m high and 30 m wide, the waterfall is a must see and a short drive from Akureyri. While Iceland is famous for its many spectacular waterfalls, Goðafoss is a favorite for visitors because it's easily accessible by car. There are walking paths around the falls, making it easy to take fantastic photographs from different angles. Next, we will explore the beautiful scenery around Lake Mývatn. Formed during a volcanic eruption 2,300 years ago, the geothermal area is a haven for a massive number of birds. The nutrient rich water also attracts over 10 species of migrating ducks to the area. Atlantic salmon and brown trout thrive in the river, feeding on the healthy midge fly population that swarm over the waters in the summer. Next, we explore lava formations of Dimmuborgir. We will walk the marked pathways to spot arches and pillars or check out lava caves. Meaning "dark forts" in Icelandic, Dimmuborgir features black lava formations on display in dramatic fashion. Afterwards, we will stop at Námaskarð to see the bubbling mud pools and steaming fumaroles. There are some wooden pathways around the area, but most visitors prefer to get up close to look at the pools. Please note: Be careful - the mud in this area is thick and sticky, and the residue from the steam can stain clothing. Our next stop is the Dettifoss Waterfall in northeast Iceland, rumored to be the most powerful waterfall in Europe, with an average water flow of 193 m<sup>3</sup>/s. Take in the view of 45 m high, 100 m wide falls and shoot some photos to show off back home. Our day ends when we reach Borgarfjörður in the East Fjords region for a night in a local guesthouse. Approximate travel time: 5 hrs by private vehicle

### **Day 4: Borgarfjörður/Höfn (B) Travel down the coast en route to Höfn. Stop at**

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## **Vatnajökull glacier, the largest ice cap in Europe.**

This morning, we leave beautiful Borgarfjörður behind to travel down the coast, driving through the beautiful and majestic eastern fjords. We will stop at Vatnajökull Glacier, the largest ice cap in Europe, which covers over 8% of Iceland. There are multiple volcanoes underneath the glacier as well as over 30 outlet glaciers that stem from Vatnajökull. Our final destination today is the fishing town of Höfn, which is known as the lobster capital of Iceland. Be sure to include a sample of this delicacy in your plans. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle

### **Day 5: Höfn/Vík í Mýrdal (B) Visit the Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon. Opt to check out the lagoon by boat. Continue to Skaftafell National Park and opt to take a glacier hike. Continue to Vík.**

Today, we visit the Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon with views of the ice cap. The lake is the lowest point in the country and filled with icebergs drifting toward the sea, often with seals sunbathing on the bright blue ice. The blocks of ice coming off the glacier are typically 30 m high, in dramatic shades of white and bright blue. You will have the option (roughly 4,500-7,500 ISK per person) to check out the lagoon by boat to get closer to the floating icebergs with their seal passengers. With different options for boats - amphibian or Zodiac - there is no shortage of ways to view the highlights of this lagoon. Next, you will have the option (10,990 ISK per person) to hike some of the many maintained trails in Skaftafell National Park, famous throughout the country for its excellent weather and sunny summer days. This preservation area in the southeast is now incorporated into the larger Vatnajökull National Park. The diverse landscape here is often compared to certain parts of the Alps but, like most of Iceland's incredible landscape, the region was created by rivers, glaciers, and volcanoes. We will then continue on to the small town of Vík, where we will spend the night. Despite its small size (318 inhabitants as of 2016) it is the largest settlement for some 70 km (43 mi) around. Approximate travel time: 3.5 hrs by private vehicle

### **Day 6: Vík í Mýrdal/Reykjavík (B) Visit Reynisfjara Beach. Continue along the Golden Circle to Drumbo. Stop at the waterfalls of Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss. Explore the Gullfoss Waterfall, Geysir Hot Springs, and Þingvellir National Park. Visit community dedicated to helping people with disabilities. Arrive to Reykjavík in the early evening.**

After breakfast, we visit Reynisfjara Beach, just outside of Vík. In 1991, Islands, a U.S. magazine, counted this beach as one of the 10 most beautiful beaches on Earth. Its stretch of black basalt sand, one of the wettest places in Iceland, and the ominous rock formations offshore make for stunning photos. The cliffs west of the beach are home to many seabirds, most notably puffins that burrow into the shallow soils during the nesting season. Take some time to watch the foaming white waves crash over the black sand (but don't get too close as the waves here can be extremely powerful), explore the shallow cave if weather and time permits, and get a photo of the basalt sea stacks. Next, explore Dyrhólaey Cape, a small peninsula originally formed as a volcanic island. Check out the view from the top with glaciers and black lava heading into the sea. Keep an eye out for nesting puffins. Next, we visit Skógafoss, one of the largest and most recognizable waterfalls in Iceland. The 60 m (200 ft) high falls forms a constant mist that floats in the air. If viewed in the sunlight, the mist can create rainbows. The sound and view of the thundering water cutting through the green hills make the falls a must-see on any trip to Iceland. Then we visit Seljalandsfoss, a 60 m (196 ft) tall waterfall. Behind the flow of water is a path, allowing visitors to peek behind the curtain of water cascading over the rocks above. From there, we travel along Iceland's famous Golden Circle. The Golden Circle takes in three popular attractions all within 100 km of the capital: Gullfoss, Geysir, and Þingvellir. Our first stop in the circle is Gullfoss, another amazing waterfall! This massive waterfall cascades over three "steps" before spilling into a large crevice. Fed by a glacier lake, the water passing through the falls can be dark gray, depending on how much sediment gets pushed through the river. You will then see a variety of geothermal pools and the erupting hot spring Strokkur. Geysir is one of the oldest geysers recorded in the world but is most often dormant. Strokkur, however, erupts a spray of boiling hot water straight into the air about every 10 minutes. We will then stop at Þingvellir (or "Thingvellir") National Park to see the faults created by North American and Eurasian tectonic plates shifting apart. The Oxara River cuts through the largest rift in the valley,

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Almannagja, and leads to the Oxarafoss Waterfall. Iceland's Parliament was also established in the area in 930 AD, and the park was later created to protect the remains of the open-air assembly grounds. One of the most-visited sights in Iceland, the park is an excellent spot for camping, hiking, and SCUBA diving between the tectonic plates. Later, stop to visit Solheimar Ecovillage, a sustainable community of over 100 people, dedicated to helping people with disabilities. Nestled beautifully amongst the countryside, take in the panoramic views as you support this non-profit community by touring the village to learn about the various workshops, businesses, and programs and opting to enjoying a meal at the local coffee house. In the early evening, we arrive in Reykjavík for a final night in the bustling capital city. Approximate travel time: 4.5 hrs by private vehicle

### **Day 7: Reykjavík (B) Depart Reykjavík at any time.**

Our program ends in Reykjavík this morning. We recommend spending at least an extra day exploring Reykjavík before or after this trip. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO trips in the same year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs). If you don't see a program that interests you that pairs with this trip but still would like to extend your time abroad, let us know. We will work with you to find a non-teacher trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Even better, if you are an educator we can still offer you a discounted price on the trip you choose!