
GEEO ITINERARY

Iceland for USM 7/18/2024

Day 1: Reykjavík Arrive in Reykjavík at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

Arrive in Reykjavík at any time. We recommend arriving a day or two early to fully explore the city. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference, overcome any jetlag, and avoid any disruption to your trip due to flight delays or cancellations. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Reykjavík before and/or after the trip. Worthwhile visits in and around Reykjavík include the Perlan Museum, Snorkeling in Silfra, and a lagoon, such as Sky Lagoon or Blue Lagoon. Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this 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 tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

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. You have the option of heading out to sea to go whale watching off the coast (3-4 hrs). Among the species spotted near Akureyri in Eyjafjörður are bottlenose, minke, and humpback whales. Approximate travel time: 4.5 hrs in private vehicle

Day 3: Akureyri/Bakagerdi (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 Bakagerdi 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 for roughly half an hour 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, thought to be the most powerful waterfall in Europe, with an average water flow of 193 m³/s. Take in the view of 45 m high, 100 m wide falls and shoot some photos to show off back home. The hike to Dettifoss is roughly a mile round trip, plus you will have the option to do additional walking to different viewpoints after you arrive. Our day ends when we reach Bakagerdi (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) Leave Bakagerdi behind and travel down the coast driving through the eastern fjords. En route to Höfn, catch a glimpse of Vatnajökull glacier, the largest ice cap in Europe.

This morning, we leave beautiful Bakagerdi behind to travel down the coast, driving through the beautiful and majestic eastern fjords. We will stop for a view of the 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. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle

Day 5: Höfn/Vík í Mýrdal (B) Visit the Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon and nearby Diamond Beach. 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 5,700-9,800 ISK per person) to check out the lagoon by boat to get closer to the floating icebergs which sometimes have seal passengers. Stop by Diamond Beach, which gets its name from chunks of the Breiðamerkurjökull glacier that float to shore. As these blocks of glacier ice melt, they develop a crystal clear sheen, set against the black sand of the beach. A highlight of this trip for many is the optional Skaftafell National Park glacier hike (10,990 ISK per person), which you can pre-book with us. Suitable for most fitness levels, the hikers be equipped with crampons, ice axes, and helmets that will allow you to safely hike on a glacier. 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. Vík serves as the primary setting of Netflix's Icelandic original series *Katla*, which follows a group of the village's inhabitants as they struggle in the aftermath of the volcano's first eruption since 1918. 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 Seljalandsfoss waterfall. Explore the Gullfoss Waterfall, Geysir Hot Springs, and Þingvellir National Park. 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. 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. Expect about a half an hour of walking, but you can limit yourself to just ten minutes if you wish. 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. Expect 10 to 20 minutes of walking, depending on which view points you want to reach. 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 ten minutes. Expect 10 to 30 minutes of walking, depending on how far into the park you wish to walk. We will then stop at Þingvellir (or "Thingvellir") National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, 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, Almannagja, and leads to the Oxarafoss Waterfall. Iceland's Parliament was also established in the area in AD 930, 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. You should expect 20-30 minutes of walking. In the early evening, we arrive in Reykjavík for a final night in the bustling capital city. Approximate travel time: 5-6 hrs by private vehicle

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

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Reykjavík at any time. If you wish to extend your stay in Reykjavík, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEO program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book.