

## Iceland: Reykjavík, Borgarfjord & Lake Mývatn

### Flight + Tour Combo Itinerary

Talk about a total immersion experience. As you plunge into the steaming water at your hotel's private thermal baths, you can't help but be awed by your surroundings. An hour's hike has brought you to this secluded canyon, where a simple wooden boardwalk ends in two circular hot pools cradled between otherworldly volcanic ridges. Ahead of you are days of exploring Iceland's waterfalls, lava caves, and volcanic craters. You'll get to know our local friends, like the family that runs a stable of Icelandic horses. But leaving civilization behind doesn't have to be uncivilized on this Iceland hiking tour—your hotel is a modern Nordic beauty, waiting to welcome you back with fireside cocktails and a scrumptious dinner of local seafood or Icelandic lamb.



### Highlights

- Marvel at the otherworldly lava formations of Dimmuborgir, a vast landscape of dramatic, twisted pillars and arches located within walking distance of your hotel.
- Tour Iceland's largest and most spectacular lava cave, Víðgelmir, home to ice formations, stalagmites, stalactites, and fascinating archaeological remains.
- Visit a family-run stable where you'll meet the distinctive Icelandic horse, a delightful, pony-sized animal with a unique gait and a friendly disposition.
- Discover Iceland's fascinating history as told through a series of beautiful woodcuts, while visiting a warehouse-turned-museum in Borgarnes.
- Enjoy a quintessential Icelandic experience—soaking in a geothermal pool in the midst of a dramatic canyon setting.

## On all Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

## Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate with optional challenging sections. Walks average 3 to 5 miles per day, with shorter and longer options on some days. The walking terrain is widely varied on well-worn heathland paths, grassy mountain trails, exposed trails with lava, rocks, and roots. Occasionally, there may be shallow river crossings. This tour includes some ascents and descents on short hills (usually 20-minute, gradual climbs), but the terrain may be rocky, with roots and/or loose gravel, and may be slippery when wet. Many of these ascents, descents and some walks can be

shortened or skipped entirely. This tour covers a large area of Iceland and therefore involves a few long bus trips which are broken up with walks and cultural visits.

## **FLIGHT DAY**

### **Depart from the United States or Canada**

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

## **ARRIVAL DAY**

### **Arrive in Reykjavík, Iceland**

Start off your first day in Reykjavík right by having a Country Walkers representative greet you at the airport. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

## **DAY 1**

### **Join your Iceland: Reykjavík, Borgarfjord & Lake Mývatn tour**

Mt. Esja; 2-3 miles, easy to moderate. Gufuá farm walk; 1 mile, easy

Enjoy an included breakfast at your hotel before meeting your guides at 8:30 a.m. in the lobby. They'll be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for hiking.

After brief introductions, your group will travel approximately 30 minutes north of Reykjavík to begin your first hike, a trail on Mt. Esja. This easy forest path slopes upward through fields of colorful wildflowers and shrubs, offering expansive views of lush valleys and soaring mountain peaks in the distance. Continue to the Settlement Center in Borgarnes, where a lunch of freshly made soups, salads, pasta, and homemade bread awaits. After your meal, visit the Settlement Center's exhibits, learning about Iceland's most famous settlers, including the poet-warrior Egill Skallagrímsson.

Depart the Settlement Center and make your way to a nearby historic farm to embark on a walk with a local farmer. As you stroll along the Gufuá River, you notice an abundance of rock cairns called *varða*. Historically, these cairns were used to help wayward travelers find their way. The cairns are also thought to be home to elves, trolls and “hidden people” or *huldufólk*. Your host happily regales you with stories about these beings and other Icelandic legends. At the end of the walk, you may have time to meet the resident horses, sheep, and goats who call this fairytale countryside home.

Continue through a magical landscape to your hotel, located in the quaint town of Reykholt. Once settled in, you’ll enjoy a welcome cocktail before dinner in your hotel’s restaurant. On the menu of high-quality, seasonal offerings may be a shellfish soup of langoustine, scallop and blue mussel, fresh fish, or perhaps leg of lamb with local vegetables. End your meal with a touch of sweetness such as warm chocolate cake with caramel, raspberries and raspberry ice cream, or skyr with white chocolate ganache, licorice ice cream, and roasted chocolate and rhubarb.

After dinner, with daylight lingering well into the night (during the summer months), you may choose to go for a peaceful evening stroll.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 2

### Borgarfjord

3 miles, easy. Hraunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls; 1 mile, easy to moderate. Afternoon options: Víðgelmir lava cave tour, Húsafell canyon baths or Oddalindir woodland walk; 1-3 miles, easy

Linger over coffee and breakfast this morning then depart on a walk in Borgarfjord, taking in the stunning scenery of mountains, waterfalls, and farmland as you go. You continue to picturesque Hraunfossar (Lava Falls), where you admire the idyllic beauty of its many watery streams cascading over a towering shelf of hardened lava. The nearby Barnafoss (Children’s Falls), is a more dramatic series of twisting rapids, named for a local legend.

This afternoon, you have your choice of several activities. Take an easy walk with your guides through pristine woodlands, and along the Oddalindir and the river Hvítá. For the adventurous, join a tour of impressive Víðgelmir Cave, Iceland’s largest lava cave (at your own cost). With its fantastic lava formations and brilliant colors, colossal Víðgelmir truly deserves its crown as the country’s mightiest cave.

If you're eager to relax, depart for a walk to the nearby environmentally sustainable nature baths, located in a secluded private canyon. Enjoy the quintessential Icelandic experience of soaking and relaxing, while nestled in a scenic spot with stunning views of the surrounding waterfalls within the canyon (at your own cost).

This evening enjoy another sumptuous dinner in the restaurant.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 3

### Grábrók crater. Independent exploration of Akureyri

1-2 miles, easy. Skagafjörður

Indulge in a satisfying breakfast, then a 30-minute drive brings you to the trailhead for Grábrók crater. Trek through a lava field to the base of this 3,400 year-old volcanic crater and climb to the top to enjoy stunning views from the rim. Next, head to the peaceful village of Hvammstangi for lunch with a view. Your restaurant overlooks the beautiful Mjoifjord, an inlet that is frequented by numerous species of seals. If you're lucky, you may even spy one swimming or sunbathing while you dine. Time permitting, you pay a visit to the nearby Icelandic Seal Center to learn more about these curious creatures.

After a delicious lunch, continue to historic Skagafjörður, where an expert guide introduces you to the Glaumbær turf house and timber houses, all dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries. Enjoy an afternoon break with coffee and snacks before departing for Akureyri.

Arriving at tonight's accommodation, you'll step out for exploration and dinner on your own. Known as the "Capital of the North," Akureyri is a hip, cultural center and has wonderful restaurants to choose from. Or, if you prefer, you can dine at your hotel's stylish restaurant. You may also wish to take advantage of Iceland's long hours of daylight and stroll through the Akureyri Botanical Garden or visit one of the many art galleries in town.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 4

## Goðafoss

1 mile, easy. Skútustaðagígar; 1-2 miles, easy. Leirhnjúkur; 2-3 miles, easy

Enjoy a scrumptious buffet breakfast in the hotel restaurant before bidding Akureyri farewell.

Today's travels take you east to serene Lake Mývatn, in the midst of the geologically active Mývatn/Krafla region, home to volcanic craters, lava fields, and bubbling mudflats. It's also where you'll find Europe's largest migratory-bird sanctuary, with many species of waterfowl feeding on the insects and algae of the lake's warm, shallow waters.

En route to today's trailhead, you'll stop at Goðafoss, which means "waterfall of the Gods," named for the lawspeaker Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði who made Christianity the official religion of Iceland. So devoted was Þorgeir, that after his religious conversion, he threw his statues of the Norse gods into the waterfall. After a quick view of (and short walk around) the falls, you'll continue to your next walk. Trace an easy dirt trail adjacent to Lake Mývatn, with views of the impressive Skútustaðagígar pseudocraters. True craters are formed when lava from the earth's core pushes through the earth's surface; Skútustaðagígar was formed when hot lava crossed a cool body of water, and steam from below pushed debris into a crater-like shape. Also called "rootless cones," pseudocraters are found only in Iceland and on the planet Mars! Along the trail, viewpoints over Lake Mývatn may offer sightings of birds such as Barrow's goldeneye, wigeon, Slavonian grebe, scaup, and many other waterfowl.

Continue to a nearby farm resort for a (literal) farm-to-table lunch.

Your last stop of the day in the active Krafla volcanic zone is at Leirhnjúkur, an eerie expanse of still-smoldering lava resulting from the Krafla fires of 1974-1984. Translated as "mud hill," your trail (fortunately) is along a boardwalk the whole way. Be careful in wet weather, as the boardwalk can get slippery. Geologically active, Krafla's landscape is teeming with volcanic craters, recent lava fields, and bubbling mudflats. The region is part of the greater Krafla volcanic system, a three-mile-wide and 50-mile-long strip of faults and fissures, which is the center of the country's geothermal energy industry.

Continue to your hotel to refresh and relax, drink in hand, in front of the cozy firepit outside (or fireplace inside) before savoring another meal that typifies the bounty of the region.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 5

### Lake Mývatn

Grjótagjá, Hverfjall Crater to Dimmuborgir; 2.5-8 miles, easy to moderate. Höfði; 1 mile, easy OR Kálfaströnd; 2 miles, easy

After a delicious breakfast, you set off for a full day's exploration of the Lake Mývatn region. The morning's trail transitions from richly vegetated lava fields to an area blighted by wind erosion. En route, you pass the Stóragjá and Grjótagjá fault fissures, both used for bathing in earlier times. From Grjótagjá, you proceed through sandy plains and lava formations up the northern side of Hverfjall, a classic tephra cone. This near-symmetrical crater appeared 2,500 years ago in a cataclysmic eruption. Rising 1,520 feet from the ground and stretching 3,400 feet across, it is a massive and awe-inspiring landmark in Mývatn. The trail circles along the western edge of the crater, where you enjoy stunning views of the crater itself and the surrounding landscape, before continuing down the southern side into Dimmuborgir. The giant, jagged lava field at Dimmuborgir (literally the "Dark Castles") is one of the most interesting lava flows in Iceland. These strange lava pillars were created about 2,000 years ago when newly erupted lava flowed across older lava fields and was dammed into a fiery lake. The surface of the lake cooled, and when the dam broke, the remaining lava flowed onward and left behind the cooled, oddly shaped pillars.

Following a lunch of soup or curry in Dimmuborgir, you continue your exploration of the natural wonders of the Lake Mývatn area. Time permitting, a short drive brings you to Höfði and Kálfaströnd for a hike where you'll see unique (and bizarre) lava formations—craggy pillars and twisted arches surrounded by water. Keep an eye out for the area's birdlife, including common redpolls, redwings, and Winter wrens.

Mid-afternoon finds you with a few options: you can return to your hotel in Mývatn with time to relax in the hotel's outdoor hot tub or bar during happy hour. Or, make a visit to the Northern version of Reykjavík's Blue Lagoon, the Mývatn Nature Baths. Your guides can arrange a visit at your own expense. Lastly, a neighboring farm provides Icelandic horse rides, also at your expense, but with the guide's assistance. Learn the history and admire the talents of these pony-sized animals with a demonstration of their unique gait followed by an evening trail ride along Lake Mývatn.

Dinner tonight is on your own in the hotel's dining room or at a nearby restaurant.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 6

### Jökulsárgljúfur National Park

Dettifoss and Selfoss; 1.5 miles, easy. Hljóðaklettur; 2 miles, moderate with challenging sections. Ásbyrgi; 4-5 miles, easy with challenging sections

Today's focus is the Jökulsárgljúfur National Park, which translates as "Glacial River Canyon," Iceland's most well known canyon, replete with extraordinary rock formations, waterfalls, and plant life. You walk in three of its main areas, a duo of waterfalls—Dettifoss and Selfoss—in the south, Hólmatungur and Hljóðaklettur along the Jökulsárgljúfur Canyon in the middle, and finally Ásbyrgi, the wooded horseshoe canyon at the park's northern end. The day begins with a hearty breakfast followed by a 60-minute drive along the west bank of the Jökulsá River, Iceland's second longest river. Arriving at the park's southern boundary, an easy, one-mile loop leads to Dettifoss, Europe's most powerful waterfall (often compared to Niagara Falls). Marvel at the volume of water flowing across the mighty Dettifoss, then follow the cliff upstream to Selfoss, a stunning curtain of water stretching off along a rocky shelf.

A short drive north arrives at the park center and the trailhead at Hólmatungur, with its luxuriant cascades and vegetation. Hólmatungur is a soft green oasis where underground springs and cascades feed astonishingly verdant vegetation, streams and rivers. Northernmost Hljóðaklettur (Echo Rocks) is a maze of fantastic rock formations and castle-like cliffs and caves of varying sizes along the Jökulsá River. Birdlife en route are snipes, ptarmigans, and snow bunting, with gyrfalcon, merlin, and ravens nesting on cliffs and rock pillars.

A subsequent 30-minute drive brings you to the visitor center at Ásbyrgi where there is a choice of walks based on conditions and group preference. The broad, forested U-shaped canyon contains the rock "island" of Eyjan in its center, formed by a series of floods thousands of years ago. The island's rare woodlands of birch, willow, and rowan are framed by cliffs colonized by fulmar.

In the later afternoon, you return to the hotel via a 90-minute drive along the scenic Icelandic coast and continue through the quaint town of Húsavík. You arrive with time to freshen up before a celebratory farewell dinner tonight featuring local cuisine. Perhaps a Mývatn specialty—hot spring bread, which is baked in the local underground bakery using geothermal heat and traditional methods, and topped with butter and smoked arctic char. Your main course may be wild thyme-crust roasted leg of lamb or pan-

fried Lake Mývatn trout accompanied by craft beer, wine, or local aquavit!

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 7

### Your Iceland: Reykjavík, Borgarfjord & Lake Mývatn tour concludes

The final day of your tour begins with a 40-minute drive to the town of Húsavík for your flight back to Reykjavík. After your 55-minute flight, you arrive into Reykjavík's domestic airport where complimentary transportation is provided to the Canopy by Hilton Hotel in Reykjavík for your post-tour night. You have the remainder of the day to enjoy the city. (Lunch and dinner are on your own.)

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DEPARTURE DAY

### Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation is provided to the Keflavík International Airport in time for your departure flight.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## What's Included

### Flight + Tour Combo

### Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓	✓
16 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 4 dinners	✓	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓	✓
Internal flight from Húsavík to Reykjavík	✓	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓	✓
Roundtrip airfare	✓	
Two extra nights in Reykjavík, Iceland	✓	
Airport car service for arrival & departure	✓	
Pre-and post-tour breakfasts	✓	
Business-class upgrades available	✓	