

Iceland's Westfjords & North Coast

Starts and Ends in **Reykjavik, Iceland, Europe** (IWC)

Day 1 Arrive in Reykjavik

Having made your way to Reykjavik, you will be met by a representative of Aurora Expeditions and transferred to our group hotel. Upon arrival at your included hotel, please visit the Aurora Expeditions hospitality area where you can leave your luggage and enjoy refreshments if arriving prior to 4pm. Whilst here you can collect your luggage cabin tags speak with our ground operations team, who may have information to share with you about pre-embarkation or to provide you with information about where to dine, withdraw cash or purchase last minute items from a local pharmacy or supermarket. The remainder of your time is at leisure. All meals today are at your own expense. Accommodation: The Grand Hotel Reykjavik



Day 2 Embarkation

This morning, please ensure your cabin luggage is fitted with cabin tags clearly labelled with your name and cabin number. Your luggage will be collected from your hotel and transferred directly to the port for clearance and delivered to your cabin ahead of your arrival on board. Please keep any valuables or personal items with you throughout the day. Today we follow the path of one of Reykjavik's most popular seismic attractions – the Golden Circle. Stops along our route include Thingvellir National Park, accredited as the site of Iceland's first parliament. A shaky start to the new nation, it is also the point where the Eurasia and North American tectonic plates meet as an open fissure. Our next stop is Gullfoss waterfall. This impressive water feature tumbles 34 meters into the Hvítá River, offering a popular photographic opportunity. Next we explore the geothermal fields

and geysir's for which Iceland is famous. The variety of hot springs and bubbling pools are mesmerising as the sheer capacity of water and steam erupting from the ground makes you ponder just how much power is beneath your feet. Late afternoon we return to Reykjavik to board the *Sylvia Earle*. After boarding, there's time to settle into your cabin before our important safety briefings before we 'throw the lines' to begin our Iceland adventure. This evening, meet your expedition team and crew at the Welcome Dinner.

Day 3 Arnarstapi / Grundafjordur

Arnarstapi is the starting point of our adventures on the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, gateway to Snæfellsjökull National Park. Snaefellsnes Peninsula is an area of diverse landscapes that is characterised by lava fields and glistening fjords and home to a vast array of birdlife. The area is crowned by the magnificent, ice-capped Snæfellsjökull volcano, a 700,000-year-old dormant subglacial volcano, visible from Reykjavik on a clear day and immortalised in Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. You can choose from three shore excursion options that best suits your interests and level of fitness: Option 1 - Highlights of Snaefellsness (Duration: 8 hours including lunch / Level of difficulty: Easy-Moderate, dependent on fitness) Our first stop will be the dramatic black pebble beach of Djúpalónssandur, where you can marvel at the black sands and colossal rock formations, volcanic landscapes, and remains of a 1948 shipwreck. Next, you'll visit Búðir, a picturesque hamlet surrounded by the stunning landscapes of the Snaefellsnes Peninsula. Stop to admire Búðakirkja, the 19th-century church, and explore the area before enjoying lunch at Hotel Búðir. The restaurant is renowned for its fresh and local food, sourcing fresh ingredients directly from local farmers and fishermen. At the conclusion of lunch, re-join the coach to travel to Snæfellsjökull National Park, encompassing a large area of Snaefellsnes Peninsula's western tip. For the more active, explore some incredible hiking trails, or simply enjoy your drive through the park and take in the beauty that surrounds you. Concluding your day, we continue to the iconic Mount Kirkjufell, a favourite among photographers and known to many as a filming location for the TV show "Game of Thrones." Not far from this majestic mountain is a waterfall that completes the picturesque scene. Option 2 - Natural Wonders of Snaefellsnes (Duration: 8 hours including lunch / Level of difficulty: Moderate) Upon disembarkation, we will hike the coastal trail that connects the two villages of Arnarstapi and Hellnar (2 hours). Now a National Reserve, this easy level hike encompasses geology, wildlife, amazing photo opportunities, folklore and

most of all adventure. This old trail takes us along the wild shoreline with a view of the ocean and extraordinary columnar basalt and lava cliff formations on one side and stunning mountains and Snæfellsjökull Glacier on the other. The cliffs are alive with a wide range of bird species such as the Arctic Tern, the kittiwakes, gulls and fulmars. Next, you'll step into the 8,000-year-old Vatnshellir Cave, replete with stunning geology, fascinating rock formations, and colourful volcanic rock. We will meet at our base near the cave, where your friendly guide will provide you with all the equipment that you need, including a helmet and headlamp (we strongly recommend that you wear comfortable and sturdy footwear, as the volcanic rock can be quite difficult to traverse). Then your friendly guide will give you a brief safety talk before we descend the spiral staircase into this subterranean wonderland. The tour meanders through the path of the lava flow around 200 meters into a large cave that lies around 35 meters beneath the surface of the earth, where we will be greeted by some rainbow-coloured volcanic rocks and incredible petrified lava formations. The cave is a fairly easy walk, although it will involve a degree of climbing (you must be able to participate in prolonged stair climbing). Following lunch, re-join the coach and travel to the iconic Munt Kirkjufell, a favourite among photographers and known to many as a filming location for the TV show "Game of Thrones." Not far from this majestic mountain is a waterfall that completes the picturesque scene.

Option 3 - Snæfellsnes Adventure (Duration: 8 hours including lunch / Level of difficulty: Moderate-Difficult) The Land of Fire and Ice is well-known for its incredible landscapes and contrasting terrains that include several natural and geological wonders rarely found anywhere else on Earth. The unique geological history of Snæfellsnes will draw you in where you can explore sites revealing Iceland's unique geological history up close. Your first stop is at the Pufubjarg bird cliff, home of nesting puffins and fulmars. From here, hike along the rugged coastline to witness the exceptionally beautiful Londrangar basalt cliffs, a geologic wonder that looks like a huge rock castle. There are many local birds here, and they are a noisy bunch. Puffins, but especially fulmars, nest in the many cavities in the two pillars. From here you hike across a pretty lava field covered in moss to Malarrið, where you can see the lighthouse and explore the beach. Following an early lunch, re-join the coach and head for Eldborg crater, located on a short volcanic rift, just 200 metres in diameter, and 50 metres deep. It is the largest crater on this rift and was created in an eruption which occurred somewhere between 5000 and 6000 years ago. Unlike many of Iceland's volcanoes, it has a very classic shape, with smooth sloping sides and a very definite crater. A marked hiking path leads through a shrub-covered lava field to the top of the crater offering incredible views of Snæfellsnes National Park. Concluding your day, we continue to the symmetrical,

hexagonal-shaped basalt columns at Gerðuberg Cliffs. Stand in awe at these impressive cliffs, a natural marvel that spans 500 metres. To enjoy the best view, take a walk by the structures. Climbing up the cliff is possible but to really soak in the views of this geological structure, it's best to enjoy a walk alongside the cliffs.

Day 4 Patreksfjordur & Dynjandi - Westfjords

Over the next three days, we explore the Westfjords region featuring outstanding landscapes with jaw-dropping views of dramatic fjords carved by ancient glaciers, sheer table mountains that plunge into the sea and pristine North Atlantic vegetation. At Patreksfjordur, a shore excursion by coach takes us to Latrabjarg cliffs. As Europe's largest bird cliff, Latrabjarg is home to millions of seabirds, such as puffin, razorbill, fulmar and guillemot. Enjoy the impressive variety of natural wonders and unspoiled nature. Latrabjarg also happens to be the westernmost point in Europe, east coast of the North American continent on the other side of the Atlantic. Immerse yourself in the tranquillity of the afternoon as we cruise northward, taking in breathtaking landscapes and keeping a watchful eye for whales. Later, we'll embark on a Zodiac landing to witness the awe-inspiring power of Dynjandi waterfall.

Day 5 Thingeyri - Westfjords

Thingeyri, a quaint village nestled on a slender strip of land, graces the shores of one of Iceland's most picturesque fjords, Dýrafjörður. Much like many other coastal settlements in Iceland, the village's culture and industry have been intricately woven with the influence of the sea over centuries. The surrounding landscape is adorned with towering mountains, lending a distinctive charm to the scenic expanse that envelops Thingeyri. This idyllic region is often hailed as the "Alps of the Westfjords," especially the highland area nestled between the majestic fjords of Dýrafjörður and Arnarfjörður. The beauty of Thingeyri lies not only in its coastal simplicity but also in the dramatic backdrop of high mountains that paints a captivating portrait of this Icelandic village. Choose from one of two shore excursion options that best suits your interests and level of fitness: Option 1 - That Viking Thing Experience (Duration: 2 hours + free time / Level of difficulty: Easy) Today you will step back in time and learn about the Viking ways and how the hardy Norse people lived off the land. Walk through a recreated Viking area, learning about what is fact and what is fiction in the many

stories you've heard about the famous Vikings. A short hike brings you to the old ruins of the Viking meeting place called a Thing - the closest translation in English is 'parliament.' Step inside the interactive Viking Museum for a chance to dress up in authentic hand-sewn Viking clothing, take photographs, drink Icelandic Viking beer, bake your own Viking bread, and explore the museum - all part of learning more about Viking ways. Option 2 - Sandafell Mountain Hike (Duration: 3 hours / Level of difficulty: Moderate-Difficult, dependent on fitness level) For avid explorers, Iceland is littered with hidden gems, and possibly the best-kept secret of all is the Westfjords. Lying in the most north-westerly area of the island, this sprawling area of natural beauty is truly a hiker's paradise. Rocky peaks, deep crevices, and charming Icelandic towns all add to the appeal of the Westfjords, not to mention the various hiking trails snaking across the unusual countryside. Today we will hike Sandafell, offering gorgeous views over the town, surrounding mountains and the water below.

Day 6 Akureyri

Picturesque Akureyri is Iceland's second largest city outside the capital area and is blessed with a superb snow-capped mountain backdrop. Choose from one of three shore excursion options that best suits your interests and level of fitness: Option 1 - Góðafoss, Lake Myvatn & Baths (Duration: 8 hours including lunch / Level of difficulty: Easy) Our first stop will be the the Góðafoss waterfall, one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Iceland. There is a 400-metre trail, easy and mostly flat, approximately 10 minutes to get to the main viewpoint. Next, you'll visit Lake Myvatn and explore the area. At the conclusion of lunch, re-join the coach to travel to Myvatn Nature Baths. Drawing on a centuries-old tradition, the tastefully designed complex offers bathers a completely natural experience that begins with a relaxing dip amidst clouds of steam rising up from a fissure deep in the Earth's surface and ends with a luxurious swim in a pool of geothermal water drawn from depths of up to 2,500 metres / 8,200 feet. Option 2 - Góðafoss, Lake Myvatn & Dimmuborgir (Duration: 8 hours including lunch / Level of difficulty: Moderate) Our first stop will be the the Góðafoss waterfall, one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Iceland. There is a 400-metre trail, easy and mostly flat, approximately 10 minutes to get to the main viewpoint. Next, you'll visit Lake Myvatn's Skútustaðagígar pseudo craters. Wander the marked walking paths through the area. You can easily walk around the bowl-like landmasses or take a hike to reach the top for a magnificent view of the scenic surroundings. At the conclusion of lunch, re-join the coach to travel to Dimmuborgir, an area strewn with enormous lava rocks and cliffs. The formation of these extraordinary lava

cliffs and pillars are the result of molten lava flowing over a pond in the eruption of Lúdentborgir and Þrengslaborgir some 2,300 years ago. The most famous of these formations is "The Church", aptly named, as this is a cave, open at both ends and with a dome-like ceiling. Option 3 - Hverfjall Volcanic Crater Hike, Dimmuborgir & Dettifoss (Duration: 8 hours including lunch / Level of difficulty: Strenuous) Our first stop will be Dimmuborgir, an area strewn with enormous lava rocks and cliffs. The formation of these extraordinary lava cliffs and pillars are the result of molten lava flowing over a pond in the eruption of Lúdentborgir and Þrengslaborgir some 2,300 years ago. The most famous of these formations is "The Church", aptly named, as this is a cave, open at both ends and with a dome-like ceiling. From here walk up the steep slopes of Hverfjall Crater and around the crater's rim for otherworldly and awesome views of the surrounding landscape. This is a 9km loop trail and takes approximately 3 hours or 3.5 hours to include walking around the rim. At the conclusion of lunch, re-join the coach to travel to Dettifoss waterfall in northeast Iceland and is reputed to be the most powerful waterfall in Europe. The falls are 100 metres / 328 feet wide and have a drop of 44 metres / 144 feet down to the Jökulsárgljúfur canyon. Enjoy a free evening in Akureyri. Discover the charm of this northern gem as you explore its vibrant streets. Unwind in cosy pubs, savour the taste of Iceland's finest craft beers at local breweries, or immerse yourself in the city's lively atmosphere.

Day 7 Siglufjörður

Siglufjörður, the northernmost town on Iceland's mainland, is steeped in history and surrounded by breathtaking natural beauty. Once the bustling centre of Iceland's herring industry, this charming fjord-side town offers a fascinating glimpse into the past, alongside stunning landscapes and a warm local culture. The day begins with a visit to the award-winning Herring Era Museum, where an immersive experience brings the town's rich fishing heritage to life. A lively theatrical performance showcases herring girls demonstrating the traditional salting process, accompanied by accordion music, singing, and dancing. A guided tour of the museum's exhibits follows, with the chance to sample local delicacies, including freshly prepared herring, traditional rye bread, and a taste of Brennivín, Iceland's signature schnapps. After lunch on board, there is free time to explore Siglufjörður at your own pace. Stroll through its quaint streets, visit local galleries, or take in the atmosphere of this historic fishing town. Alternatively, join the expedition team for a short, scenic hike, offering panoramic views of the fjord. The day concludes at Segull 67 Brewery, a

family-run microbrewery housed in a former fish factory. Here, an exclusive brewery tour and tasting await, featuring a selection of craft beers paired with local specialities, including Arctic prawns, herring on rye bread, and traditional Icelandic snaps. A perfect way to round off a day of history, scenery, and authentic Icelandic flavours.

Day 8 Vigur Island

On Vigur Island, birdwatchers can try and tick a few species on their list, while others can enjoy walks and hikes of varying levels of difficulty, soaking in the stunning surrounds. The island's unique ecosystem is a haven for birdlife, making it a paradise for nature enthusiasts. Stroll along the coastline, keeping an eye out for puffins and other seabirds, or venture deeper into the island to discover hidden gems. With its rolling hills, picturesque landscapes, and fresh sea air, Vigur offers an unforgettable experience.

Day 9 Disembark in Reykjavik

During the early morning, we cruise into Reykjavik and disembark at approximately 8.00 am. Farewell your Expedition Team and fellow passengers as we all continue our onward journeys. Transfer options are as follows: 1. Direct to Keflavik Airport. 2. Direct to The Grand Reykjavik (this option is only available if your hotel was booked by Aurora Expeditions). 3. Bus Stop #12 Höfðatorg (outside the Fosshotel Reykjavik) where you can make your own way to city hotels. 4. For late afternoon and evening airport departures, Bus Stop #12 Höfðatorg (outside the Fosshotel Reykjavik) where we will hold your luggage on the coach until your departure to the airport at 1pm. Note: At the conclusion of the voyage, we recommend booking flights departing after 12.00 pm on the day of disembarkation in case there are delays.