

Historic Trails & Wilderness: Scotland, Faroes & Iceland

Aberdeen, United Kingdom, Europe to Reykjavik, Iceland, Europe (SFI)

Day 1 Arrive in Aberdeen

Having made your way to Aberdeen airport, 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 desk to collect your luggage cabin tags and to 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. Should you already be in Aberdeen, make your way to our pre-voyage hotel, Sandman Signature Aberdeen Hotel, St Andrew St, Aberdeen. Check-in is from 3:00pm. Today there's free time to enjoy Aberdeen at your leisure (Dinner not included). Accommodation: Sandman Signature Aberdeen Hotel



Day 2 Embarkation

After breakfast, check-out and bring your luggage to the foyer. Please place any items required today in your hand luggage as your main bag will be placed in the bays of the coach. After breakfast, check-out and bring your luggage to the foyer. Today we explore 'The Granite City' visiting some of Aberdeen's most famous landmarks including the magnificent Kings College Chapel which is a fantastic example of gothic architecture and the St Machar Cathedral a 12th century church with its beautiful stained-glass windows. Depart for Glen Garioch Distillery, a 200-year-old distillery

situated in the sheltered heart of the Valley of the Garioch, blessed as it is with the north east's mild climate, plentiful sunshine and not too much rain, the Valley has long been renowned as the finest barley growing area in the country. Once home to no fewer than six distilleries, today the Valley cradles just one - this established distillery has changed hands several times and the current owners have had the distillery in their family since 1886. You will be taken on a tour of this award-winning distillery where you will see their time-honoured skills at work and see what goes into making this unique spirit. Complete your distillery journey with a taste of two whiskies from their core range and for those who wish, there will be an opportunity to visit their onsite shop. Afterwards enjoy a scenic drive to the Huntly Falconry Centre. This centre was established in 1991 and is one of the first falconry centres in Scotland. Huntly Falconry Centre hold birds of prey falconry demonstrations throughout the season, where owls, hawks, falcons, and eagles can be seen flying every day. Marvel at the full range of bird skills during the flying demonstration before our drive returns us to Aberdeen to board the Greg Mortimer in the late afternoon. You will have time to settle into your cabin before our important briefings. We will set sail for Fair Isle in the evening and meet your expedition team and crew at the Welcome Dinner.

Day 3 Fair Isle

Midway between Orkney and Shetland, Fair Isle houses a major European ornithological research station, and is also famous for knitwear and historic shipwrecks. About five kilometres by three kilometres / three miles by two miles in area, it is surrounded by impressive cliffs. The 70 or so islanders mainly live in traditional crofts on the more fertile low-lying southern part of the island. A bird watchers' paradise, Fair Isle lies on the intersection of major flight paths from Scandinavia, Iceland and Faroe. In summer, the cliffs teem with breeding fulmars, kittiwakes, guillemots, gannets, shags and puffins. The Isle is an excellent place to view seabirds, especially puffins at close range. Fair Isle also has over 250 species of flowering plants, including wetland flowers, rare orchids, alpine species and common wildflowers. We'll be welcomed by the hospitable villagers and may take a hike or visit the museum. Grey and common seals inhabit these waters around Fair Isle, while sharp eyes may spot harbour porpoises, white-beaked dolphins, Atlantic white-sided dolphins, killer whales (orcas) and minke whales.

Days 4 Jarlshof & Isle of Noss

Jarlshof is one of Shetland's best preserved and most complex archaeological sites. It was exposed by storms in the late 19th century. The Old House of Sumburgh, built here in the 17th century, was named 'Jarlshof' by Sir Walter Scott in his novel 'The Pirate'. The record of human occupation dates from around 3,200 BCE. Jarlshof's main Bronze Age site is the house of a bronzesmith working around 800 BC. Clay moulds into which molten bronze was poured revealed that he was casting axe heads and short swords. It seems that Shetland suited early Norse settlers, for they quickly settled here and left their mark on Shetland's history for ages to come. With its mile-long seabird cliffs, the Island of Noss is a National Nature Reserve. In breeding season, the sound of around 150,000 birds and chicks fills the air. Millions of years of wind and ice have honeycombed thousands of nesting ledges in sandstone cliffs almost 200-metres / 656-foot high. Resident seals and visiting otters feed in dense kelp around the shores.

Days 5 Hermaness National Nature Reserve, Shetland Islands

Britain's most northerly islands lie almost 160 kilometres (100 miles) north of the Scottish mainland, at a similar latitude to the southern tip of Greenland, or Bergen in Norway. Kept relatively warm by the Gulf Stream, Shetland's 100 islands experience almost 24 hours of daylight in summer. They abound with nature reserves and archaeological sites and offer a taste of traditional island life. Hermaness National Nature Reserve, is close to Britain's most northerly point. The reserve is a place of bird cries and sea smells, of myth and mist. The cliffs rise 170 metres (558 feet) above the Atlantic. During summer they are alive with the cacophony, and raw guano smell of over 100,000 breeding seabirds: kittiwakes, shags, snipe, dunlin, golden plover and Arctic skua, making this one of Europe's most diverse colonies. The grasslands, moors and cliff tops are a tapestry of colourful wildflowers – gentians, heather, orchids and thrift are a few of the species here.

Days 6-8 The Faroe Islands

Nestled in the heart of the North Atlantic, the Faroe Islands are a hidden

gem waiting to be discovered. This remote archipelago, composed of 18 volcanic islands, boasts a population of just 50,000, offering an unparalleled escape from the ordinary. Steeped in Viking history and characterised by dramatic landscapes of towering cliffs, verdant mountains, and deep fjords, the Faroes are a paradise for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike. Over the next three days we hope to explore the islands of Sandoy, Streymoy and Eysturoy, beginning in Tórshavn, a captivating blend of old and new. Wander through the town's quaint, colourful houses, many adorned with traditional grass roofs, and imagine life as a Viking settler. Encounter the iconic Faroese sheep, their woolly coats a stark contrast against the rugged terrain, and perhaps catch a glimpse of the elusive Faroese ponies. No visit to the Faroe Islands is complete without a boat trip to the mesmerising Vestmanna bird cliffs. Soar above the ocean as thousands of seabirds, including puffins, razorbills, and guillemots, fill the air with their enchanting calls. For those seeking adventure, the island of Suduroy offers unparalleled hiking opportunities. Explore pristine coastal paths, surrounded by dramatic mountain backdrops, and revel in the solitude of this unspoiled natural wonderland. The Faroe Islands will cast their spell on you as you discover a world of breathtaking beauty, warm hospitality, and authentic experiences.

Days 9 Sea Crossing to Iceland

Enjoy the sea crossing to Iceland accompanied by sea birds while searching for whales. Enjoy informative talks from our team of experts, get to know your fellow expeditioners, stay active in the gym or treat yourself to a massage in the wellness centre.

Days 10 Seyðisfjörður

Explore Seyðisfjörður, a picturesque fishing village that is renowned for its charming collection of colourful wooden buildings located around the lagoon. Take a stroll around town and discover the timber houses that are remnants from when the Norwegians settled here and established the herring fishing facilities from 1870-1900. From the valley above the town, the river Fjarðará tumbles down in beautiful cascades to the lagoon. There are a number of delightful hiking trails to explore, or alternatively, you can discover a flourishing cultural scene with an arts centre, the famous blue church that stages music concerts and the only two cinemas in the east of Iceland. Back in town, browse the stores where you will discover

handicrafts by local artists and artisans – perfect as a souvenir or gift.

Days 11 Djúpvogur

In Iceland's east, we disembark in Djúpvogur, our gateway to Vatnajökull National Park, home to Europe's largest glacier. Personalise your expedition with our included 'Your Choice' experiences that best suits your interests and level of fitness. Option 1 - Waterfalls, Glacial Lagoons & Hot Tubs (Duration: 10 hours including driving to/from Djúpvogur / Level of difficulty: Easy / Maximum numbers: 60) Your first stop is at Fossárfoss, a waterfall surrounded by majestic mountains with spectacular views. The layered basalt flow formations that surround the area offer a striking contrasting vista making this a favourite location among photographers. From here we depart for Vatnajökull National Park, one of the most famous natural attractions in the world. Explore the astonishing and exotic natural beauty of Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon by four-wheeled Amphibian boat. Here we observe giant icebergs float slowly towards the ocean from the glacier. Following lunch, re-join the coach and head for Diamond beach, a black sand beach where the icebergs are washed ashore, and Fjallsárlón lagoon, renowned for the shimmering icebergs that float in its waters. Concluding our day, we continue to the geothermal hot tubs in Hoffell, perfect for a nice, relaxing soak with an otherworldly view. Option 2 - Wonders of Vatnajökull National Park & Canyon Hike (Duration: 9 hours including driving to/from Djúpvogur / Level of difficulty: Moderate / Maximum numbers: 40) Your first stop is at Fossárfoss, a waterfall surrounded by majestic mountains with spectacular views. The layered basalt flow formations that surround the area offer a striking contrasting vista making this a favourite location among photographers. From here we depart for the dramatic Múlagljúfur Canyon, a true hidden gem ideal for hiking. Here we navigate through overgrown bushes, small river streams, and different trails along the rim of the canyon. Find yourself marvelling at the panoramic views of Fjallsárlón glacier lagoon, picturesque mountains, vibrant textures, and intriguing rock formations. Following lunch, re-join the coach and head for Vatnajökull National Park, one of the most famous natural attractions in the world. Explore the astonishing and exotic natural beauty of Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon by foot. Here we observe giant icebergs float slowly towards the ocean from the glacier. Re-join the coach for Diamond beach, a black sand beach where the icebergs are washed ashore. Note: Múlagljúfur Canyon Hike is 3.8km (2.35 miles) one way and approximately 3 hours duration. Terrain – 315 metre elevation with a narrow unpaved trail with two small river crossings, very easy to cross. Option 3 - Falljökull Glacier Hike (Duration: 9 hours (4 hours on the

glacier) / Level of difficulty: Moderate-Difficult / Maximum numbers: 45) Your first and only stop today is at Falljökull, one of the most impressive outlet glaciers of the Vatnajökull ice cap and a once in a lifetime experience. We will take an inspiring walk along a winding path through the glacier's dramatically changing landscape. Arriving at the tongue of the glacier, we will have your crampons ready and waiting for you. With your knowledgeable guide leading the way, you will soon be exploring impressive terrain, walking through a wonderland of ice formations and brilliant blue colours. Following a hard-earned late lunch, re-join the coach and depart for the ship in Djúpvogur. Note: Falljökull Glacier Hike equipment provided - ice axe, crampons, harness and helmet. The minimum shoe size to attach crampons is EU 35 (boots can be hired at additional cost if necessary). Requires a higher level of fitness and agility as you will be on your feet for a long period of time (4 hours) and the terrain is challenging. Please note the transfer to and from the ship and Falljökull Glacier is 3 hours each way, so come prepared with a book or enjoy the magnificent scenery and a nice nap enroute.

Days 12 Westman Islands

Enjoy a morning and lunch onboard, searching for whales and seabirds. Our team of experts entertains us with informative talks. Located off Iceland's south coast, the Westman Islands were formed by volcanic eruptions around 10,000 years ago. Westman Islands are surrounded by 15 other uninhabited islands and around 30 rocks and skerries offering refuge for rich array of seabirds. Westman Islands are considered to have the largest Atlantic puffin colony in the world, and when sailing around the islands it is not uncommon to see puffins but also whales and seals. Personalise your expedition with our included 'Your Choice' experiences that best suits your interests and level of fitness. Option 1 - Eldheimar Volcano Museum & Puffin Viewing (Duration: 3 hours / Level of difficulty: Easy) Located off Iceland's south coast, the Westman Islands were formed by volcanic eruptions around 10,000 years ago. Heimaey is the main island in the archipelago, with a population of around 4,200. Various catastrophes have befallen the island of Heimaey and its inhabitants throughout history. Probably the most tragic incident was the volcanic eruption in 1973. Visit a unique volcano museum that tells the story of the Heimaey volcanic eruption, the emergence of Surtsey Island in 1963, and the geology of the Westman Islands. We'll continue our drive to Stórhöfði cape for some puffin watching, offering ample photo opportunities to capture shots of the charming little birds. Afterwards, enjoy some free

time to explore the island if time permits. Option 2 - Eldheimar Volcano Climb & Museum (Duration: 3 hours / Level of difficulty: Difficult) Learn more about the geology and volcanology of Iceland during a two-hour hike up a volcano. Reaching the summit, you can still feel the warmth emanating from its subterranean activity. At the end of the hike, you visit a unique volcano museum that tells the story of the Heimaey volcanic eruption, the emergence of Surtsey Island in 1963, and the geology of the Westman Islands. Afterwards, enjoy some free time to explore the island if time permits. Sail past Surtsey Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site that emerged from the sea in 1963 and is one the youngest land masses on earth.

Day 13 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 to Keflavik airport. 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.