

Multi-Day Birding Tours with Iceland's Best Guides



Here are 3 different tours that focus on Iceland's birds and wildlife. These guided tours can stand very well on their own, or we find that many travelers like to combine these tours with a time of traveling and exploring on their own to try not to miss anything. 2010

Wild West Snaefellsnes Tour

The Wildlife in the west is a tour that emphasizes the western part of Iceland. Particularly the Snaefellsnes Peninsula and Breidafjörður bay north of it. Snaefellsnes Peninsula is one of the best places in Iceland for Nature and Wildlife watching during the summer. It is an area that features extraordinary moorlands, meadows, marshlands, rivers, streams and small ponds along with beautiful rock formations and black sand beaches. In this tour you can expect to see a great variety of bird species, seals and possibly a few cetacean species. You will take a boat tour in Breidafjörður Bay and experience the wildlife intimately among some of the over 3000 islands and islets in the bay.

Monday, Day 0

Travelers from North America leave for Iceland on an overnight flight with an early morning arrival at Keflavik Airport in Iceland.

Tuesday, Day 1

Welcome to Iceland!

After an early arrival in Iceland, you'll hop on the Flybus shuttle that will take you from the airport to your hotel in Reykjavik. Then you'll have the day to rest and explore Reykjavik, the world's most northerly capital. We'll provide lots of ideas for what to see and places to eat-meals are on your own today.

Wednesday, Day 2

Keflavik – Snaefellsnes Peninsula - Grundarfjörður

You'll be picked up at your hotel.

Words cannot express the mystery, wonder and almost surreal energy of the Snaefellsnes peninsula! The major landmark is the Snaefellsjökull glacier which is renowned for its mystical powers and has captured the imagination of people all over the world, ever since Jules Verne wrote "The Journey to the Centre of the Earth" in 1871. Snaefellsnes Peninsula is without a doubt one of the best places in Iceland for Nature and Wildlife watching during the summer. On this tour you can expect to see a great variety of bird species, seals and possibly a few cetaceans. These will include birds such as Harlequin Duck, Atlantic Puffin, Brünnich's Guillemot, White-tailed Eagle, Arctic Skua, Arctic Tern, Northern Gannet and many more. In recent years there have been sightings of both Grey Seals and Harbour Seals and the cetaceans seen from land include such species as Orcas, Minke whales and White-beaked Dolphins. After traveling around the Peninsula you'll make your way to your hotel on the north shore of the

peninsula.

Thursday, Day 3

Grundarfjörður – Breidafjörður - Flatey Island

The second day starts by traveling to the town of Stykkishólmur. From here you will go on a boat trip in Breidafjörður bay. Breidafjörður is located between the Westfjords in the north and the Snaefellsnes Peninsula in the south. The bay has both landscape and seascape of a different kind. It consists of small fjords and bays and is literally dotted with around 3,000 islands, islets and skerries. The area supports millions of breeding seabirds with species such as Atlantic Puffin, Black Guillemot, Northern Fulmar and abundant European Shag. The area also holds most of Iceland's White-tailed Eagle population. Also, both Harbour Seal and Grey Seal can be found in the bay.

After making a tour among the islands you'll go on land at Flatey Island, where you stay for the night. Flatey is a small inhabited island, almost in the middle of Breidafjörður. The birds on the island are used to living close to humans, resulting in hundreds of extremely tame individuals. It is even possible for the eiderdown farmers to pick up some of the female Eider Ducks, collect part of their down and put them comfortably back on their nests. Other tame bird species such as nesting Black Guillemot, Redshank, Red-necked Phalarope and Snow Bunting can also be observed at extremely close range.

Friday, Day 4

Flatey Island – Reykjavik

The morning on day three will be dedicated to wildlife on Flatey Island. For those who are interested in photography or behavioral study, this morning may be one of the best opportunities of the whole tour since the possibilities are endless. Whether you like to watch Atlantic Puffins dive for

eels, see Black Guillemots return to their nests with Butterfish in their beak, have Fulmars glide right by you, listen to the Black-legged Kittiwakes tell their stories in the cliffs, watch Red-necked Phalaropes spinning on water, or even look for the rare Red Phalaropes, it's totally up to you.

After lunch you'll travel back to the town of Stykkisholmur and drive back to Reykjavik where you will have the late afternoon/evening for yourself.

Saturday, Day 5:

Reykjavik – Blue Lagoon – Keflavik airport

You'll be taken to the airport. Depending on when your departure is you might have some free time in the morning to look around the capital before heading to the airport. You'll leave the hotel shortly after lunch and visit the Blue Lagoon before reaching Keflavik airport at

around 2:00pm.

Price for May departure is **\$3148** per person, double occupancy. Single accommodations is **\$3457**

Price for June, July & August departures is **\$3258** per person, double occupancy. Single accommodations is **\$35570**

Travel Days: Leave US Monday, return to US Saturday. Tour starts on Wednesday and runs from May 12-August 11.

Price includes round trip airfare, including fuel surcharge and US departure taxes from Boston, New York, or Minneapolis. Add \$110 per person from Seattle. (Ask for prices from Toronto, Halifax and Europe). The **price also includes** all airport transfers, a night before the tour in a Reykjavik hotel with breakfast. During the tour: accommodations, all meals except dinners when in Reykjavik, all transportation and expert guide.



The South Coast and Laki Craters Stopover Tour

In the South Shore and Lakagigar craters tour you'll observe the moonlike landscape on the well known Reykjanes Peninsula, visit the Blue Lagoon, Thingvellir National Park and the Geysir Area and visit waterfalls such as Gullfoss Waterfall, Seljalandsfoss Waterfall and Skogafoss Waterfall. You'll travel through some of Iceland's most vegetated areas, through farmland in valleys between high mountains with glaciers on top, through small villages, huge open areas with nothing but black sand as far as your eyes can see and big fields of young lava. During the trip you'll also be able to see three major glaciers- Eyjafjallajökull Glacier, Myrdalsjökull Glacier and Vatnajökull Glacier. Nevertheless, the highlight of your trip will be a visit to the Lakagigar Craters, the scene where the earth opened in 1783 creating one of the most catastrophic natural disasters in history. It's a fantastic tour covering many of the must see places in Iceland! The tour starts on Fridays in Iceland from June 18 to August 13. You'll need to leave North America the Wednesday before.

Wednesday, Day 0

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Thursday, Day 1

Welcome to Iceland!

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Friday, Day 2

Keflavik - Reykjanes Peninsula - Blue Lagoon - Reykjavik

You'll be picked up at your hotel. The day starts by exploring the Reykjanes Peninsula. Reykjanes Peninsula is an exciting area on the margin of the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates, directly located on the Mid-Atlantic ridge. It's a mysterious and breathtaking area of volcanic rock, lava, fissures and gorges, and along the shore ocean waves crash onto the coast. You'll have a look at a few wetlands on the Reykjanes peninsula, which should yield the first Red-

necked Phalaropes of the trip. Other migrants, such as the Ringed Plover, European Golden Plover and drumming Common Snipe, will be conspicuous, while the shoreline will hold some visiting Red Knot and Sanderling. Dunlin and Purple Sandpiper will also be around and all will, of course, be in splendid summer plumage. Other species such as Harlequin Duck, Great Northern Diver, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Black-legged Kittiwake, Arctic Tern, Razorbill, Redwing, Meadow Pipit and many more should also be seen in the spectacular moonlike landscape during the day. Your day ends around the Reykjanes Peninsula by going for a swim and relaxing at the Blue Lagoon.

In the early afternoon you make your way to Reykjavik where you stay for the night.

Saturday, Day 3

Reykjavik - Thingvellir - Gullfoss Waterfall - Geysir Area - Seljalandsfoss Waterfall - Eyjafjallajökull Glacier - Vik - Myrdalsjökull Glacier - Myrdalssandur - Eldhraun

You'll start the day by traveling east towards Thingvellir National Park. A beautiful area which, (like the Reykjanes Peninsula), shows the meeting point of two tectonic plates in a dramatic way. Thingvellir National Park is not only a geological wonder but also one of the most important places in Icelandic history. A few pair of Great Northern Diver breed in the area and if you are lucky you might see a hunting Merlin fly by. Thingvellir National Park was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2004.

After visiting the National Park continue to the majestic and beautiful waterfall Gullfoss and from there towards the geothermal area around the incredible spouting hot springs in the Geysir area. As you continue on your way you'll see many of Iceland's main attractions, among them Seljalandsfoss waterfall, Eyjafjallajökull glacier, Myrdalsjökull glacier, Skogafoss waterfall, Dyrhólaey and the town of Vik. On the way you'll drive through some of Iceland's most vegetated areas, through farmland in valleys between high mountains with glaciers on top, through small villages, huge open areas with nothing but black sand as far as your eyes can see and big fields of young lava before reaching your destination at Hotel Laki where you will spend the night. On the way you'll have a look at some hot spots for Nature and Wildlife viewing which should produce among other species the Icelandic race of Black-tailed Godwit, Great Skua, Redwing, Common Redpoll and possibly the Winter Wren.

Sunday, Day 4

Hotel Laki - Lakagigar Craters - Skogafoss - Reykjavik
Most of day three will be devoted to the phenomenal Lakagigar craters. The craters were formed in 1783 when the earth literally ripped open in 10 parallel fissures 1.5 – 3 miles each (2-5km) forming a crater row. The lava that these craters formed came extremely fast flowing down the hills (as much as 6000m³ per second!) creating the largest lava field on earth (580km²). The following winter was disastrous, with poisonous ash covering the ground in most parts of the country and polluting gases in the air. It is estimated that in the following two years the cattle stock halved, the number of horses was reduced by two-thirds, and only one-fifth of the sheep flock survived. This in turn resulted in a 20% loss of human population. As one can imagine this surreal natural disaster did of course not only affect people in Iceland. The mist that followed reached Europe the same summer. The

Lake Myvatn Area Tour

It has been described as a strange meeting place of two worlds where you are able to find flora and fauna from both the temperate and arctic zones. The area is also a highly active volcanic area situated on the west edge of the meeting point of the Eurasian and North American plates. By the end of the day you'll have traveled by and visited, among other things, a range of pseudo-craters, volcanoes of different sizes, hot springs and new lava fields with lava pillars. It starts Tuesdays in Iceland from May 11 -

August 3.

Sunday, Day 0

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Monday, Day 1

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European press portrayed the sun as a blood-red disk at sunrise and sunset. The mist caused a 2°F drop in overall temperature causing climate changes that lasted for three years, causing disasters for human populations all over the world. It is only in recent years that the area has been opened for public visits. Because of better roads and walking paths the area is becoming more accessible. Some describe it as a real life Jurassic Park. After visiting Lakagigar Craters you'll head back to Reykjavik. On the way you'll be visiting (among other things) Skogafoss Waterfall, and possibly see if you can find breeding Atlantic Puffins, Great Skua or Short-eared Owls.

Monday, Day 5

Reykjavik - Keflavik airport

You'll be taken to the airport. Depending on when your departure is you might have some free time in the morning to look around the capital before heading to the airport. You'll leave the hotel shortly after lunch and if time allows you can visit some interesting areas before reaching Keflavik airport at around 2:00pm

Price for the South Coast and Laki tour is **\$3166** per person double occupancy. Single accommodation **\$3494**.

Travel dates: The South Coast and Laki Tour starts every Friday in Iceland from June 18 through August 13. You'll need to leave the US no later than Wednesday, and can return home the next Monday.

Price includes round trip airfare, including fuel surcharge and US departure taxes from Boston, New York, or Minneapolis. Add \$110 per person from Seattle. (ask for other gateways). Price includes airport transfers, a pre tour night in Reykjavik hotel with breakfast. During the tour: accommodations, all meals except dinners when in Reykjavik, all transportation and expert guide.

Not included - meals on arrival day and dinners in Reykjavik during the tour.



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Tuesday, Day 2

Keflavik - Reykjanes Peninsula - Blue Lagoon - Reykjavik

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You'll start the day by exploring the Reykjanes Peninsula. Reykjanes Peninsula is an exciting area on the margin of the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates, directly located on the Mid-Atlantic ridge. It's a mysterious and breathtaking area of volcanic rock, lava, fissures and gorges. Along the shore ocean waves crash onto the coast. You'll have a look at a few wetlands on the Reykjanes peninsula, which should yield the first Red-necked Phalaropes of the trip. Other migrants, such

as the Ringed Plover, European Golden Plover and drumming Common Snipe, will be conspicuous, while the shoreline will hold some visiting Red Knot and Sanderling. Dunlin and Purple Sandpiper will also be around and all will, of course, be in splendid summer plumage. Other species, such as Harlequin Duck, Great Northern Diver, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Black-legged Kittiwake, Arctic Tern, Razorbill, Redwing, Meadow Pipit and many more should also be seen during the day in the spectacular moonlike landscape. You'll end your tour around Reykjanes Peninsula by going for a swim and relaxing at the Blue Lagoon.

In the early afternoon you'll make your way to Reykjavik where you stay for the night.

Wednesday, Day 3

Reykjavik – Akureyri - Lake Myvatn

You'll start the second day with a domestic flight to the northern part of Iceland - the town of Akureyri. Akureyri is one of the prettiest towns in Iceland, known as the "Capital of the north". From Akureyri you'll make your way towards your destination, Lake Myvatn.

Lake Myvatn is around 23 square miles in size (37km²), making it Iceland's second largest natural lake. It has been described as a strange meeting place of two worlds where you are able to find flora and fauna from both the temperate and arctic zones. The area is also highly volcanically active, situated on the west edge of the meeting point of the Eurasian- and North American tectonic plates.

During the day you will be exploring, among other things, a range of pseudo-craters, volcanoes of different sizes, hot springs and recent lava fields with lava pillars. You'll see birds in the thousands, including species such as Great Northern Diver (Common Loon), Horned Grebe (Slavonian Grebe), Barrow's Goldeneye, Harlequin duck, Long-tailed Duck, Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Greater Scaup and Tufted Duck. Species such as Red-necked Phalarope, Redwings, Common Snipe and Redshank will also be abundant all around you.

Lake Myvatn area is the only place in Europe where the Barrow's Goldeneye breeds and Iceland is also the only country in Europe where Harlequin Duck and Great Northern Divers breed.

Thursday, Day 4

Lake Myvatn – Husavik Whale watching – Akureyri – Reykjavik City

You spend the morning observing birds at Lake Myvatn. You'll visit Dimmuborgir, which has been described as stunningly beautiful but at the same time very eerie. It's a lava landscape with lava pillars up to 65 feet high (20m).

After having lunch you'll head north to the small town of Husavik, where you embark on a whale watching trip on Skjalfandi bay. It is arguably the best area in Iceland to watch whales. An astonishing number of cetacean species have been recorded there - 12 species in total.

Cetaceans you may see include Minke Whales, which are the most common species in the bay, White-beaked Dolphin, Humpback Whale and Porpoise. Orca (Killer Whale) and the magnificent Blue Whale have also been seen regularly in the area in recent years.

From Husavik you'll make your way back to Akureyri for a return flight to Reykjavik where you'll stay overnight.

Friday, Day 5

Reykjavik – Keflavik Airport

You'll be taken to the airport. Depending on when your departure is you might have some free time in the morning to look around the capital before heading to the airport. You'll leave the hotel shortly after lunch and if time allows you can visit some interesting areas before reaching Keflavik airport at around 2:00pm.

Price for May departures is **\$3248** per person, double occupancy. Single accommodations **\$3558**

Price for June, July & August departures is **\$3358** per person, double occupancy. Single accommodations **\$3668**

Travel dates: Leave US Sunday, return to US Friday. Tour starts on Tuesday and runs from May 11th - August 3rd.

Price includes round trip airfare, including fuel surcharge and US departure taxes from Boston, New York, or Minneapolis. Add \$110 per person from Seattle. (ask for prices from Toronto, Halifax and Europe). The price also includes all airport transfers, a night before the tour in a Reykjavik hotel with breakfast. During the tour: accommodations, all meals except dinners when in Reykjavik, all transportation and expert guidee. **Not included** meals on arrival day and during the tour, there's no dinners while in Reykjavik.



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