

## Travel Tuesdays: Explore the World Virtually – Iceland Full Circle

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[Iceland Full Circle - Video Lecture](#)

presented by Em. Prof. Heather O'Donoghue

Almost twelve centuries ago, when Iceland was first settled, a man called Grim Goat-Beard made an epic and groundbreaking journey all around the island, and was paid a penny for his efforts by each of the new settlers. Today the route is marked by the great road that runs around the coast. In this lecture, Heather will follow in his footsteps and share the enthralling Icelandic sagas that unfolded along our route, a body of texts described by poet Ted Hughes as "one of the great glories of world literature".

We meet the notorious Egill Skalla-Grímsson, a tenth-century Viking warrior and poet, and pass saga sites associated with a host of thrilling and poignant medieval stories: the outlaw Grettir's lonely hideout on the remote northern island of Drangey; the tragic loves of Gudrun, the heroine of the saga of Laxdale, or the fierce revenge of the chieftain Hrafnkell, whose murderous journeys through the extreme landscapes of the far eastern fjords of Iceland can still be traced and followed.

The sagas are played out against an extraordinary backdrop of dramatic and unspoiled landscapes, rich in bird and sea life: rugged cliffs with seals and puffins; rare and unique bird species at Lake Mývatn; the Great Geysir, mighty Gullfoss ("the golden waterfall"); bubbling thermal mud pools and springs; the frozen wilderness of vast glaciers; vast lava fields from mighty volcanic eruptions, and the incomparably beautiful and serene site of Iceland's ancient outdoor parliament Thingvellir ("Parliament Plains").

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[embed]<https://youtu.be/fYGFaHLSjJI/>[/embed]

### Em. Prof. Heather O'Donoghue

Heather O'Donoghue is Professor of Old Norse at the University of Oxford and a world authority on Icelandic Sagas and their influence on later poets and authors. She is the author of *Old Norse Icelandic Literature: A Short Introduction* (2004), *From Asgard to Valhalla: The Remarkable History of the Norse Myths* (2007), and *Narrative in the Icelandic Family Saga* (2021). She has also broadcast with the BBC on the Norse Gods. Outside academia, Heather enjoys birdwatching and natural history.

Find out more about [Heather here](#).