



Iceland, Land of Ice and Fire: Myths, Legends & Landscapes 2025

14 JUN – 1 JUL 2025

Code: 22522

Tour Leaders **Em. Prof. Heather O'Donoghue**

Physical Ratings 

Travel through some of the world's most awe-inspiring landscapes – of active volcanoes, vast glaciers, great geysers, boiling springs, gushing waterfalls and dramatic North Atlantic coastline.

Overview

Join [Emeritus Professor Heather O'Donoghue](#) on this fascinating tour which travels through some of the world's most awe-inspiring landscapes. Absorb the power of Icelandic literature with its celebrated sagas, poetry and mythology, a remarkable corpus of medieval literature, as you encounter active volcanoes, vast glaciers, great geysers, boiling springs, gushing waterfalls and the dramatic North Atlantic coastline.

- View dramatic waterfalls including multi-tiered Gullfoss, Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss in the south, and Goðafoss ('waterfall of the gods') and mighty Dettifoss in the north.
- On the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, West Iceland visit Snæfellsjökull National Park – the setting for Jules Verne's novel *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*; and cruise Breiðafjörður Bay – one of the most important areas of birdlife in the North Atlantic.
- At north-eastern Iceland's Vatnsnes Peninsula visit the Icelandic Seal Centre – this spectacular wild coastline supports the country's largest seal colony. View the unique Icelandic horses, descendants of those brought to Iceland by the Vikings.
- Explore Lake Mývatn and the Krafla Caldera, visiting pseudocraters, lava fields, and bubbling mud flats; at Möðrudalur, walk through the 'lunar landscape' where Neil Armstrong and his crew practised for their moon landing.
- In south-east Iceland take a snowmobile across Vatnajökull glacier, and a duck boat across Jökulsárlón's sparkling glacial lagoon to view icebergs reflecting particles of white, black, blue and turquoise.
- Witness the dramatic interaction between glaciers and the active volcanoes beneath them at Deildartunguver, Europe's largest thermal spring, and the geothermally active Haukadalur Valley, location of the 'Great Geysir'.
- Visit volcanoes, and learn about Lakagígur (Craters of Laki), home to an eruption so powerful that its ash cloud covered most of the northern hemisphere, from Eurasia to North America.
- Explore the Dyrhólaey Peninsula, where in summer, puffins nest on its cliff faces – Iceland is the breeding home of about 60% of the world's Atlantic Puffins.
- Visit Vestmannaeyjar (The Westman Islands), an archipelago consisting of fifteen islands including UNESCO-protected Surtsey which rose from the waves in 1963. On Heimaey view Iceland's state-of-the-art volcano museum.
- Study the history of the 9th-century Viking discovery and settlement of Iceland and journey through the landscapes that inspired its rich mythology; visit a Viking longhouse reconstruction at Eiríksstaðir.
- At Þingvellir National Park witness the spot where the world's oldest Parliament met, and walk through the great chasm produced by the Mid-Atlantic Rift.
- In Reykjavík view the Settlement Exhibition, the National Museum and the sparkling new Harpa Concert Hall.
- Stay in lovely coastal hotels with unsurpassed views of the North Atlantic.

Overnight Borgarnes (1 night) • Stykkishólmur (2 nights) • Laugarbakki (1 night) • Siglufjörður (1 night)
• Akureyri (1 night) • Lake Mývatn (2 nights) • Egilsstaðir (2 nights) • Skálafell (2 nights) • Vík (2 nights)
• Reykjavík (3 nights)

Introduction

The landscape of Iceland is constantly being changed by the powerful plate tectonics of the Mid-Atlantic Rift, where the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates slowly separate. It also lies above a hotspot, the Iceland plume, a postulated upwelling of anomalously hot rock in the Earth's mantle, which is believed to have caused the formation of Iceland itself. This continues to allow vast quantities of magma to rise to

the earth's surface, creating the world's most active volcanic landscape. You will learn about Iceland's extraordinary geology in places like the Krafla Caldera, whose 18th-century eruption lasted five years, and Eyjafjallajökull, whose ash cloud brought chaos to the European air industry in April 2010. You'll also gain a close up view of some of the world's greatest glaciers and witness the effects of the interaction of a glacier and volcanic activity beneath it at places like Deildartunguver, which produces boiling hot springs. Remote, isolated, daunting Iceland remained uninhabited by humans until 9th-century Vikings reached its shores. Their experience produced one of the world's most magnificent prose literature – the Icelandic sagas – that drew inspiration from this awesome landscape. For the next millennium Icelanders, alone in this remote land, eked a subsistence living from this violent landscape, which through volcanic eruptions and glacial floods, frequently threatened human existence. Only with the development of the herring industry did this poor, isolated land begin to develop a modern economy. This tour through some of the world's most challenging landscapes combines unforgettable scenery and a unique, well-informed view of the power of plate tectonics with an imaginative 'sense of place' as we journey through the settings of the Icelandic sagas. You'll visit Europe's greatest glaciers and volcanoes; see the most extensive hot springs; witness geysers in the Haukadalur Valley, whose greatest example gave 'geysers' their name; observe an extraordinary profusion of bird life, including Atlantic Puffins at the Coastal Bird Sanctuary, Dyrhólaey; take a snowmobile ride up Vatnajökull glacier; take a duck boat across Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon to view icebergs reflecting particles of white, black, blue and turquoise; visit Snæfellsjökull National Park an area that inspired Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, and wonder at the great fissure created by the North Atlantic Rift as it crosses Iceland. If you're a keen photographer or just appreciate unique wilderness, this tour is for you!

Testimonials

Iceland had topped my bucket list for 50 years and the opportunity to hear Heather O'Donoghue speaking about the Icelandic Sagas in the location where they occurred was an irresistible temptation. Heather's passion and enthusiasm for things Icelandic, not just her beloved Sagas, but the island's birds, flowers and culture, combined with the beauty, uniqueness and fascination of the Icelandic landscapes and the charm of the people themselves, the country's natural history and remarkable folk lore make this a memorable journey of exploration. And the length of the ASA tour provides time to genuinely immerse yourself in the delights of Iceland. John, VIC 2023.

This tour is a must for your bucket list, especially for those who love exploring human interaction with the natural landscape. What a fantastic itinerary ASA has devised, travelling clockwise around Iceland, a country about half the size of Victoria. The spectacular experiences continued day by day and the tour guides enhanced the experience with their wide knowledge. The mix of glacial landscapes and volcanic landforms continued to excite us (retired Geography teachers) as did the abundance of birdlife and wildflowers. The human story of the settlement of Iceland is also intriguing – a long and complex saga continuing to the present day. We understand so much more about the sagas, the Alþingi (Parliament), the impact of and recovery from GFC, the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull (which impacted on international air travel as well as the local farmers) and the role of the church, because we were able to visit sites of importance and see and learn every day. We had fun driving a skidoo across an icecap, soaking in the thermal baths, scrambling through volcanic landscapes and behind beautiful waterfalls and spotting puffins from land and sea. The accommodation appeared to be the best available, ranging from motel suites to very classy hotels and the meals were excellent, showcasing local produce, particularly seafood and lamb. Don't leave it too long to visit – tourists are flocking in and don't be tempted by a shorter trip. There is so much to see and do. Howard and Jenny, VIC.

Leaders



Em. Prof. Heather O'Donoghue

Professor of Old Norse at the University of Oxford, a world authority on Icelandic Sagas and their influence on later poets and authors. 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 and enjoys birdwatching & natural history.

Emeritus Professor Heather O'Donoghue is a Fellow of Linacre College at the University of Oxford. Her primary field of research is Old Norse-Icelandic literature – that is, the poetry and prose of medieval Iceland and Norway. She has also worked and published on relations between Old Norse-Icelandic literature and Old English literature, and is interested in links with Old and Middle Irish. Most of her recent research has been on the reception of Old Norse literature in post-medieval European culture – primarily, but not exclusively, European and American literature – and the afterlife of Old Norse myth, especially in its political dimension.

In 2014 her book *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth* was published by Oxford University Press. It begins with possible Scandinavian elements in Old English poetry (especially *Beowulf*) and traces the continuing and developing influence of Old Norse myth, taking in such poets as Dryden and Pope, Thomas Gray and William Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Walter Scott, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, Hugh MacDiarmid and David Jones, W.H. Auden, and Seamus Heaney, as well as a large number of less mainstream poets, particularly contemporary ones. Other works include *From Asgard to Valhalla: The Remarkable History of the Norse Myths* (2007, 2nd edition forthcoming). On-going work includes editing the *Cambridge History of Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*.

In the last few years, she has published a number of papers on the reception of Old Norse myth and literature, investigating the influence of Old Norse myth on novelists such as Thomas Hardy, R.L. Stevenson, Herman Melville, Gunter Grass and Neil Gaiman. Her monograph *Narrative in the Icelandic Sagas: Meanings of Time in Old Norse Literature* was published by Bloomsbury in 2021, and she has just written a book on *Beowulf*. She has also broadcast with the BBC on the topic of the Norse Gods.

Heather has also published and lectured on contemporary crime fiction and was a judge for the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger Award, and after that, for the Ian Fleming Steel Dagger Award for contemporary thrillers.

Outside academia, Heather's main interests are birdwatching, natural history more generally, watching football and listening to Irish traditional music. Based in Oxford, she spends part of the year in rural Ireland with her husband and family. Heather has led ASA's tour 'Iceland, Land of Ice and Fire: Myths, Legends and Landscapes' since 2018.

Combine this tour with

Natural Landscapes & Gardens of Madeira & the Azores 2025

17 MAY – 4 JUN 2025

Cultural Landscapes and Gardens of the Channel Islands: Jersey, Guernsey, Herm & Sark 2025

23 MAY – 5 JUN 2025

The Scottish Highlands: Great Country Houses, Castles & Gardens 2025

26 MAY – 9 JUN 2025



Itinerary

The detailed itinerary provides an outline of the proposed daily program. Participants should note that the daily activities described in this itinerary may be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate changes in opening hours, road conditions, flight schedules etc. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents. The tour price includes daily buffet breakfast and 28 meals, indicated in the itinerary where **B**=buffet breakfast, **L**=lunch and **D**=dinner.

Picnic Lunches

During the program, weather permitting, 4 picnic lunches are planned. Knives, forks, spoons, plates and cups will be provided. These lunches are indicated in the itinerary where **P***=picnic lunch.

Borgarnes - 1 night

Day 1: Saturday 14 June, Reykjavík – Borgarnes

- Transfer from Keflavik Airport to Borgarnes at 4.30pm.
- Welcome Dinner

Meeting Point: Please meet your group leaders in the Arrival Hall of Keflavik Airport (KEF) at 4.30pm.

We commence the tour with a transfer by coach to Borgarnes, capital of the county of Borgarfjörður, located some 70 kilometres north of Iceland's capital, Reykjavík. We will be based at the [Hotel Hamar](#), on the outskirts of Borgarnes, which has fine views of the surrounding countryside. Tonight we enjoy a welcome dinner at our hotel. (Overnight Borgarnes) D

Stykkishólmur - 2 nights

Day 2: Sunday 15 June, Borgarnes – Snæfellsnes Peninsula – Stykkishólmur

- The Settlement Centre, Borgarnes
- Hraunfossar (Lava Falls)
- Barnafoss (Children's Falls)
- Deildartunguver Thermal Spring
- Gerðuberg Basalt Columns, Snaefellsnes Peninsula
- Black Church of Búðir, Snaefellsnes Peninsula
- Arnarstapi Coastal Trail, Snaefellsnes Peninsula

We begin this morning with a visit to the Settlement Centre, which offers fascinating insights into the history of Icelandic settlement and the saga age. The centre features two main exhibitions. One is devoted to the story of the first Viking settlers in Iceland. The *Egill's Saga* exhibition recounts the amazing adventures of Egill Skallagrímsson, who embodied all the contradictions of the Viking age in a single character, as he appears not only as a fighter, but also, unlike popular images of Viking marauders, also as a trader, farmer and most notably, a poet.

Departing Borgarnes, we make an excursion to the waterfalls of Hraunfossar and Barnafoss and the thermal area of Deildartunguver. Hraunfossar (Lava Falls) is an intriguing series of springs that issues from the Hallmundarhraun lava flow. The gentle cascades of bright, turquoise water emerge from under the moss-covered lava to tumble down a series of rock shelves into the river over a distance of about 900 metres. In contrast, Barnafoss (Children's Falls) is far more lively; it was here that two children fell to their deaths when crossing a narrow stone arch that once spanned the river. A modern footbridge now affords an excellent view of the water churning violently as it channels through the ravine below. Deildartunguver, Europe's largest hot spring, has a very high flow rate (180 litres/second); the temperature of the emerging water is 98°C.

We spend the afternoon exploring the fascinating Snaefellsnes Peninsula, which contains the Snaefellsjökull glacier and was the setting for Jules Verne's book *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. The peninsula is also the main setting of the *Laxdaela Saga* – one of the most important and appealing of the Icelandic sagas. This saga is unique in medieval Icelandic literature, in that the majority of the central characters are women, some scholars even suggesting that the author was female. The saga is a heroic tragedy running over several generations, where conflicting loyalties subvert the bonds of family and lead to a blood-feud.

At Gerðuberg we view the impressive 'natural' wall of hexagonal basalt columns which range from 7 to 14 metres in height. These cliffs of dolerite, a coarse-grained basalt rock, were formed when flowing lava, cooled by the sea, were solidified in very evenly running columns.

We continue west along the southern coast of the Snaefellsnes Peninsula for a walk along the white, shell sand beach at the abandoned fishing village of Búðir. Surrounded by a vast lava field, the site features a tiny pitch-black church dating from 1703, and unsurpassed views out over the Atlantic.

The sleepy coastal village of Hellnar was for centuries one of the largest fishing towns beneath the Snaefellsjökull ice-cap. Remnants of fishing sheds built by Hellnar's 11th-century settlers may still be viewed. The Snaefellsjökull glacier lies atop a 1,446m high stratovolcano that last erupted around 250 AD. The national park, inaugurated in 2001, extends down from the glacier and volcano to cover the entire western tip of Snaefellsnes Peninsula. The cliffs between Hellnar and Arnarstapi constitute a nature reserve and the trail linking the two settlements offers spectacular views including Gatklettur, a magnificent arch extending into the sea. The peculiar Badstofa ("Sitting room") caves are known for their unique light refraction and colourful interiors. Other natural highlights we shall view include bizarre rock formations in the form of stacks, as well as cliffs swarming with huge colonies of birds.

Following our walk along the Arnarstapi Coastal trail we continue to the fishing village of Stykkishólmur, beautifully situated on the northern side of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula in West Iceland. (Overnight Stykkishólmur) BP*D

Day 3: Monday 16 June, Stykkishólmur – Snæfellsnes Peninsula – Stykkishólmur

- Breiðafjörður Bay: Bird & Nature Watching Cruise
- Hellissandur Fisherman's Park & Maritime Museum
- Kirkjufell Mountain & Kirkjufellsfoss
- Bjarnarhöfn Farmstead: Shark Museum & Church

Stykkishólmur is situated on the widest fjord in Iceland, called Breiðafjörður (broad fjord). This fjord is one of the most important areas in the whole of the North Atlantic for birdlife. In addition to the Icelandic breeding birds, thousands of other migratory birds pass through Breiðafjörður on their way from Western Europe to and from their nesting grounds in Greenland and the northern part of Canada. The main reason for such rich birdlife here is an abundance of food, resulting from the interplay of the geography, great differences in tide levels and the sea's richness. Around 65% of the rocky shores of Iceland and 40% of all mudflats are located in Breiðafjörður.

We shall take a cruise amongst the many islands to see the birdlife – including puffins, eider ducks, shags, kittiwakes, fulmars and the majestic white-tailed sea eagles. During the journey we trawl the ocean bed to bring on board assorted shellfish, crabs and sea stars, and take the opportunity to sample some tasty fresh scallops.

Following lunch at a local restaurant by the harbour, we spend the afternoon exploring sites along the northern coastline of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. From Breiðafjörður Bay we journey west to Hellissandur village and Bjarnarhöfn farmstead. Hellissandur is one of the oldest fishing villages in Iceland and contains the Fisherman's Park and Maritime Museum. The park which was established in 1977 depicts the way fisherman lived and worked. Within the grounds lies the last lived-in fishermen's hut. We also view Kirkjufell Mountain and neighbouring Kirkjufellsfoss. One of the most photographed landscapes in Iceland, the mountain is known as Arrowhead Mountain in *Game of Thrones* – one of the landmarks beyond The Wall.

Bjarnarhöfn farmstead is the leading producer of *hákarl* (putrid shark meat), a traditional Icelandic dish; the small museum deals with the biology of the Greenland shark and the lives of seafarers who risked their lives hunting it. On site there is a private 19th-century wooden church owned by the farmer and his family, with no other parishioners. (Overnight Stykkishólmur) BLD

Vatnsnes Peninsula - 1 night

Day 4: Tuesday 17 June, Stykkishólmur – Haukadalur Valley – Hvammstangi – Vatnsnes Peninsula

- Reconstruction of a 10th-century Viking Longhouse at Eiríksstaðir, Haukadalur Valley
- Icelandic Seal Centre at Hvammstangi and Seal Colonies of the Vatnsnes Peninsula
- Hvítserkur Sea Stack
- Stóra-Ásgeirssá: Icelandic Horse Farm

This morning we journey along the coast of Hvammsfjörður to the Haukadalur valley to visit the remains of the farm of Eiríksstaðir, one of the most historically significant archaeological sites in Iceland. This was the starting point for all westward expansion by Icelanders, first to Greenland and later to the shores of North America. Leif Eriksen ('Leif the Lucky') is associated with this site. His father, Erik the Red, founded the

colony of Greenland and gave the country its name. Leif was blown off-course on a voyage to Greenland and was probably the first European to land on the American continent at Vínland ('Vine Land'). At Eiríksstaðir archaeologists found the remnants of a 50-square-metre hall dated to 890-980 AD, and, although no timber was unearthed, they did identify doorways clearly marked with stone paving. An evocative reconstruction of Eiríkur's original longhouse now stands in front of the ruins. Its turf walls, 12 metres long by 4 metres in depth, surround a dirt floor and support a roof made of rafters covered with twigs atop a layer of turf.

We cross the Laxárdalsheiði grassy heathland and continue to Hvammstangi, located on the Vatnsnes Peninsula in Northwest Iceland. This small fishing village is home to the Icelandic Seal Centre, which provides informative exhibits on the region's harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) and grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) – Vatnsnes Peninsula is home to one of the largest seal colonies in Iceland.

Following lunch in an old restored freezing-house by the sea, we continue exploring the Vatnsnes Peninsula whose shores blend wild coastline with fertile grazing land for horses and sheep. On clear days the west side of the peninsula has spectacular views out over the bay towards the needle-sharp peaks of the Strandir Coast. Weather permitting, we take a short walk to view seal colonies, and Hvítserkur – a striking 15-metre high basalt stack rearing up from the waves. The rock has two holes at the base which give it the appearance of a dragon who is drinking.

We end the day with a visit to Stóra-Ásgeirssá, an Icelandic Horse Farm on the Vatnsnes Peninsula. Here we witness a display of horsemanship and learn the history of the Icelandic Horse and its extra – fifth – gait called the *Tölt*. The history of the Icelandic horse can be traced back to Iceland's settlement in the late 9th century. Viking settlers brought with them their best horses, most of which were from Germanic stock. The Icelandic horse was renowned in Norse mythology. Several Norse gods owned horses that played major parts in their myths. The most famous of these was Sleipnir, the eight-footed pacer. The influence of the Norse myths can still be seen in Icelandic horsemanship, as many modern riding clubs bear names of mythical horses, as do several horses. (Overnight Hotel Laugarbakki) BLD

Siglufjörður - 1 night

Day 5: Wednesday 18 June, Vatnsnes Peninsula – Blönduós – Varmahlið – Hólar – Siglufjörður

- Textílsetur Islands (The Icelandic Textile Centre), Blönduós
- Glaumbaer Farm Museum, Varmahlið
- Hamlet of Hólar

Today we journey from Laugarbakki to the port of Siglufjörður. We first visit the Icelandic Textile Centre, located in the town of Blönduós on the estuary of the Blanda River. The Centre, which aims to promote and develop Icelandic textiles, regularly hosts students from the Iceland Academy of the Arts. Three shared studio spaces include a weaving room and dye room. The Vatnsdæla Tapestry by Jóhanna Palmadóttir, a 46-metre embroidered tapestry that illustrates the local *Vatnsdæla Saga*, is currently being woven here.

We continue our journey to Varmahlið and on to the famous Glaumbaer Farm Museum, a superbly restored large turf-roofed farmstead. Glaumbaer was founded in the (Viking) Settlement Period, but is now composed of a row of turf-walled, turf-roofed dwellings with painted wood façades; these were inhabited until 1947. Their lop-sided, hobbit-like construction, with wood-framed windows set into their thick grass-covered turf walls, gives them a charmingly rustic appeal but they are also a powerful reminder of the impoverished lives many people led in Iceland before the 20th century.

From here we drive the lovely coastal road through the county of Skagafjörður, which is famous for its horses, and along the Skagafjörður Fjord. We pause at Hólar, the Episcopal See for Northern Iceland, and a cultural and educational centre for almost 7 centuries (1106-1798). Bishop Jón Ögmundsson founded the diocese in 1106 and it soon became one of Iceland's two main centres of learning; the country's first printing press was established here in 1530. Today, with a population of around 100 people, this small community is home to the Hólar University College and the Centre for the History of the Icelandic Horse.

In the late afternoon we continue to the town of Siglufjörður. This small settlement sits on a narrow shelf on a deep bay that is surrounded by mountains; until 1946 it could only be reached by sea. Our hotel is located on its shores. (Siglufjörður) BP*D

Akureyri - 1 night

Day 6: Thursday 19 June, Siglufjörður – Akureyri

- Herring Era Museum, Siglufjörður
- The Akureyri Botanical Gardens
- Akureyrarkirkja (The Church of Akureyri)
- Time at leisure in Akureyri
- Laufás Heritage Site and Museum

When Norwegian fishermen began salting herring in the tiny village of Siglufjörður in 1903 it became the centre of the herring industry that initiated the transformation of Iceland, after a millennium of isolation and poverty, into a modern affluent nation. The industry reached its peak in 1950. Seventeen years later, the herring disappeared and the industry died. We shall visit the Herring Era Museum, a maritime and industrial museum depicting the 'glory days' of Iceland's herring fisheries and industries. The first exhibit, Róaldsbrakki, is a fully-restored 1907 Norwegian-built herring salting station. The second exhibit, Grána, houses a re-built herring oil and meal factory from the 1930s to 1950s. The Boathouse, which opened in 2004, contains a recreation of the town's thriving 1950s harbour with many old fishing boats at the dock.

From Siglufjörður we drive to the capital of the north, Akureyri, situated on the shore of Eyjafjörður (Islands Fjord) and surrounded by snow-capped mountains. Akureyri (pop. 15,000) is Iceland's largest town outside Reykjavík. It is famous for its good weather due to the influence of the Gulf Stream and has many well-established trees and gardens.

Our tour of Akureyri includes a visit to the local museum and the most northerly botanical gardens in the world. The gardens include a noteworthy collection of Icelandic flora along with many high-latitude flowers, trees and shrubs from around the world. **Note:** as an alternative to visiting these sites, weather-permitting, there will be an option (at your expense) to join a whale-watching cruise.

Guðjón Samúelsson, the architect of Reykjavík's extraordinary Hallgrímskirkja (church), also designed the Lutheran Church of Akureyri that towers above the city. Built in 1940 in a distinctive modernist style, the church contains a large 3200-pipe organ and some rather unusual reliefs of the Life of Christ. There's also a ship model suspended from the ceiling that reflects an ancient Nordic practice of donating votive offerings for the protection of loved ones at sea. Perhaps the most striking feature, however, is the beautiful central stained-glass window in the chancel.

Following our visit to the church and some time at leisure to explore the town, we visit the heritage site and museum at Laufás. Laufás is mentioned in historical records soon after the settlement of Iceland (874-930)

and since the earliest period of Christianity a church has been located there. The site, which includes an old rectory dating from 1840, was home to priests from 1047 until 1935. The farmhouse, which was rebuilt between 1853-1882, is considered to be the prototype of Icelandic architecture, although significantly larger than the ordinary Icelandic farmhouse. It was built to accommodate between 20 and 30 people who were necessary to undertake the various farming activities which included haymaking and the collection of eiderdown. The current buildings are furnished with household items, clothes and utensils from the beginning of the 20th century. One of the special features at Laufás is the Bridal room where brides prepared themselves for the big event. The existing church, built in 1865 features a pulpit dating from 1698. (Overnight Akureyri) BD

Lake Mývatn - 2 nights

Day 7: Friday 20 June, Akureyri – Lake Mývatn

- Goðafoss – ‘Waterfall of the Gods’
- Mývatn Nature Baths
- Sigurgeir Bird Museum
- Time at leisure to explore Lake Mývatn’s nature trail

This morning we journey to Lake Mývatn, set in an area of diverse volcanic activity with examples of all volcanic structures, including a huge explosive crater, Hverfjall, pseudocraters, and Dimmuborgir (‘Dark Castles’), a lava lake drained to expose huge lava stacks. It is a landscape of mountains torn apart by volcanic activity and volcanoes whose old lava flows are still hot after many years. Steam rises from the ground everywhere, including from the tops of mountains. There are hot, bubbling mud pools along with gushing, hissing steam vents; this area sits astride the Continental Rift System.

We begin with a visit to Goðafoss, ‘Waterfall of the Gods’, so named because, according to the Icelandic Saga of Christianity, Thorgeir, a former pagan chieftain, denounced his beliefs by throwing wooden carvings of pagan gods into the falls. Here, the water of the River Skjálfandafljót majestically falls 12 metres from a width of 30 metres.

From Goðafoss we continue to Mývatn for a leisurely soothing dip in the nature baths, in warm thermal waters that are extremely relaxing. We also visit a private bird museum established by Sigurgeir Stefansson. The museum displays about 180 species of birds and more than 300 specimens. Many duck species may be viewed directly in front of the museum, including the Barrow’s goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*) whose main breeding habitat in Europe is by Lake Mývatn.

The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure for you to enjoy a leisurely walk around the lake. (Overnight Lake Mývatn) BP*D

Day 8: Saturday 21 June, Lake Mývatn

- Skútustaðir Pseudocraters
- Dimmuborgir (‘Dark Castles’)
- Hverfjall tuff ring volcano
- Námaskarð Hot Bubbling Pools
- Krafla Caldera
- Hrossaborg Crater
- Stóra-Viti Crater

A pseudocrater looks like a true volcanic crater, but is not. These distinctive landforms are created when flowing hot lava crosses over a wet surface, such as a swamp, a lake, or a pond, causing an explosion of steam through the lava. The explosive gases break through the lava surface in a manner similar to a phreatic eruption, and flying debris builds up crater-like features which can appear very similar to real volcanic craters. Pseudocraters are also known as rootless cones, since they are characterised by the absence of any magma conduit which connects below the surface of the earth.

A classic locality for pseudocraters is the Lake Mývatn area of Northern Iceland that was formed 2,300 years ago by basaltic lava eruption. The lava flowed down the Laxárdalur Valley to the lowland plain of Aðaldalur, where it entered the Arctic Ocean about 50 kilometres away from Mývatn. There was a large lake in the area at the time, a precursor of the present-day Mývatn. When the glowing lava encountered the lake some of the water-logged lake sediment was trapped underneath it. The ensuing steam explosions tore the lava into small pieces which were thrown up into the air, together with some of the lake. Repeated explosions in a number of locations built up groups of pseudocraters, which now dominate the landscape on the shore of Lake Mývatn and also form some of its islands. Led by a local geologist, we visit a group of such craters at Skútustaðir on the south shore of the lake.

Nearby we visit Dimmuborgir (*dimmi* 'dark', *borgir* 'castles'), a large area of unusually shaped lava fields east of Mývatn. The area is composed of various volcanic caves and rock formations, reminiscent of an ancient collapsed citadel (hence the name). Its most distinctive features are contorted crags and pillars reaching 20 metres in height. Dimmuborgir was formed around 2,200 years ago, when molten lava formed a temporary 'lava lake' on the site. Eventually the lava found an outlet and drained into Mývatn, but hardened pillars had formed around steam vents (lava finds steam chilling) and were left behind. The surface of the lava lake had half-congealed, and left all kinds of crusty 'watermarks' on its way out. In Icelandic folklore, Dimmuborgir is said to connect earth with the infernal regions. In Nordic Christian lore, it is also said that Dimmuborgir is the place where Satan landed when he was cast from the heavens and created the apparent 'Helvetes katakomber' which is Norwegian for 'The Catacombs of Hell'.

From Dimmuborgir we travel to the Hverfjall tephra cone and take a walk up to the crater which is approximately 1 kilometre in diameter. The volcano which erupted 2500 years ago has spread tephra all over the Lake Mývatn area.

If you've ever longed to walk upon the barren red terrain of Mars, experiencing Námaskarð will get you close. Situated on the north side of Lake Mývatn, this geothermal wonder of hot sulfuric mud springs and steam springs is otherworldly. Black rivers and bubbling pools of sulfuric mud cut through a landscape that is rich with colourful minerals and is continuously steaming.

Next we view the Krafla Caldera, an active volcanic region consisting of steaming vents, brightly coloured craters and aquamarine lakes. The heart of volcanic activity is known as the Krafla central volcano, but, rather than a cone-shaped peak, Krafla is a largely level system of north-south trending fissures underlaid by a great magma chamber. Krafla itself has been quite active throughout history. It has erupted 29 times; its last eruption was in 1984. In 1724, Krafla began an eruption that lasted for five years. During this eruption, which was called 'The Mývatn Fires', lava flowed from an 11-kilometre long fissure until it reached approximately 20 kilometres in length after one year.

From the Krafla Caldera we continue to Hrossaborg, a tephra and scoria crater. This 10,000-year-old crater was formed when rising magma heated groundwater, prompting a massive explosion of steam and rock. Known as the 'Horse Castle', farmers on lake Mývatn used to graze their horses in this area and used the crater as a pen when they were rounding them up in autumn before driving them back home.

We end our day with a visit to Stóra-Víti, a steep-sided explosion crater, formed by the 1724 eruption, with a blue-green lake at the bottom. A trail circles the rim and descends on the far side to an interesting hot spring area. (Overnight Lake Mývatn) BLD

Egilsstaðir, East, Iceland - 2 nights

Day 9: Sunday 22 June, Lake Mývatn – Husavik – Egilsstaðir

- Church of Húsavík
- Ásbyrgi Canyon, Vatnajökull National Park
- Hljóðaklettar (Echoing Rocks), Jökulsárgljúfur National Park
- Dettifoss Waterfall, Jökulsá Canyon National Park
- Moon-like landscapes of Möðrudalur

We leave the Mývatn area, and journey around the Tjörnes Peninsula, stopping at Husavik to see the lovely church, before reaching Ásbyrgi Canyon, a horseshoe-shaped depression located in the Vatnajökull National Park. It measures approximately 3.5 kilometres in length and 1.1 kilometres across. For more than half of its length the canyon is divided through the middle by a distinctive rock formation 25 metres high, called Eyjan ('the Island'), which offers spectacular views. One hundred metre high cliffs rise steeply from woodlands of birch and willow on the canyon floor. Ásbyrgi Canyon was most likely formed by cataclysmic glacial flooding of the river Jökulsá á Fjöllum after the last Ice Age. Floods occurred some 10,000 years ago and recurred some 3,000 years ago. The river has since changed its course and now runs about 2 kilometres to the east. A legend explains the unusual shape and origin of the canyon differently. Nicknamed 'Sleipnir's Footprint', it is said that the canyon was formed when Odin's eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, touched one of its feet to the ground here. (**The Ásbyrgi walk: this is leisurely, through birch and wild geraniums; 30 minutes there and 30 minutes back, with stops for photos etc. The walk includes steps down to the pool area, and steps with rail up to the viewing platform – not difficult.)

Weather permitting, we shall enjoy a picnic lunch at the echo rocks at Hljóðaklettar. Here we may view spectacular patterns of crystallised basalt – spirals, circles, twists, and hefty basalt blocks. The rocks are the vestigial cones of volcanoes, most of which have been eroded down to the hard plugs of crystallised basalt that closed off their flows. The sound of the turbulent glacial Jökulsá á Fjöllum River, the second longest river in Iceland, echoes among the pinnacles. (**Hljóðaklettur: the walk to the basaltic areas takes 40 minutes. From there, those who are sure-footed can take a more difficult walk with the driver and assistant guide, while others explore this area at a more leisurely pace.)

This afternoon we view Europe's largest waterfall, the mighty Dettifoss. The Jökulsá Canyon National Park surrounds the 25km long gorge of the Jökulsá River, a powerful glacial torrent, which has its source on the northern edge of Vatnajökull. The park's vast waterfalls continue to cut back and lengthen the gorge. The largest, Dettifoss, which we will visit, is 45 metres high. Though far from being the highest in Iceland, this is undisputedly the country's most impressive fall, possibly the most powerful in Europe. The gorge below is densely wooded in places. It supports interesting flora including several orchids, serrated wintergreen, the rare Paris-herb (lover's knot) and fungi, including the edible *Boletus caber*. This is also one of the best places in Iceland to see gyrfalcons that prey on the park's ptarmigan. (**Dettifoss: the walk to the falls takes 40 minutes there and 40 minutes back, plus stopping for photos, etc. The path, which follows level ground amongst boulders, leads down to the edge of the falls, which is wet because of the spray. Overall the walk is not too difficult; remember to bring a light waterproof jacket for the spray.)

In the late afternoon we journey across moon-like landscapes, such as Möðrudalur, where Neil Armstrong and his crew spent 6 months training for the moon landing.

We continue to Fljótsdalur Valley, location of Lake Lagarfljót and the city of Egilsstaðir. Here we spend the first of two nights at Egilsstaðahúsið, a lovely farm hotel that stands on the shores of the lake. As in the case of Loch Ness, locals believe a huge serpent called Lagarfljótsormurinn lives in its depths. (Overnight Guesthouse Egilsstaðir) BP*D

Day 10: Monday 23 June, Egilsstaðir – Borgarfjörður – Seyðisfjörður – Egilsstaðir

- Puffin watching at Hafnarhólmi near Borgarfjörður eystri
- Scenic Route 93 from Egilsstaðir to Seyðisfjörður
- Ferry port town of Seyðisfjörður

Iceland is well known for its wildlife and especially the puffins. In the far east a small colony makes the island of Hafnarhólmi its summer home. The island is set behind a small fishing harbour with boardwalks and a viewing hut in the centre of the colony. Every summer about 10,000 pairs of puffins make Borgarfjörður their home. They mainly reside on a small rock called Hafnarhólmi tucked behind the scenic working harbour. The island is protected from the weather and walkways make it safe to watch the puffins without worrying about cliff edges or hidden burrows. Following our morning puffin watching we continue to Álfakaffi for a light lunch.

In the afternoon we take the scenic Route 93 from Egilsstaðir, climbing to a high pass then descending along the waterfall rich river Fjarðará to the ferry port of Seyðisfjörður. Our drive affords wonderful views of Egilsstaðir and Lake Lagarfljót.

Surrounded by snow-capped mountains, the picturesque town of Seyðisfjörður, with its many splendid multi-coloured old timber houses, is the most historically and architecturally interesting town in East Iceland. We shall view a number of the town's wooden buildings such as the warehouses by the harbour, Seyðisfjörður school, the town's oldest home, Nóatún (1871), and the pretty, pale blue church which was built in 1922 using timber rescued from a previous 19th-century church that was blown off its foundations. (Overnight Egilsstaðir) BLD

Skálafell - 2 nights

Day 11: Tuesday 24 June, Egilsstaðir – Djúpvogur – Skálafell

- Full day exploring the Eastern Fjords
- Teigarhorn Natural Monument and Nature Reserve
- Djúpvogur

From Egilsstaðir we take the coastal road that weaves around the eastern fjords to the small fishing village of Djúpvogur, located on a scenic spit of land jutting out into the Berufjörður Fjord.

Just before reaching Djúpvogur we visit the Teigarhorn Natural Monument and Nature Reserve which is a world-famous site for zeolites. Here, zeolites are found in hollows and crevices in the rock, coming to light when wave action breaks rock out of cliff faces. In geological terms, the zeolite formations at Teigarhorn are connected to dikes extending from the main volcano that was active more than 10 million years ago. Local merchants and others used to gather rocks indiscriminately here and sell samples around the world. However, in 1976 Teigarhorn was declared a natural monument and consequently the natural formations are now strictly protected. Examples of zeolite crystals may be viewed at the small farm museum. There is also a lovely short walking trail around the coast which is ideal for birdwatching.

After lunch at Framtíð Restaurant, which overlooks Djúpvogur's harbour, our journey continues down the coast during which we may catch our first glimpse of Europe's largest glacier – Vatnajökull (*jökull* means 'glacier' in Icelandic). We also pass the port of Höfn, famous for its lobsters, and arrive at our hotel, to enjoy the vast choice of food on its famous buffet. (Overnight Skálafell) BLD

Day 12: Wednesday 25 June, Skálafell – Vatnajökull – Jökulsárlón – Skálafell

- Snow Cat across Vatnajökull Glacier
- The Þórbergur Centre
- Breiðárlón Glacial Lagoon
- Jökulsárlón Beach: Crystal Icebergs and Black Lava Sands
- Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon: Duck Boat amongst the Icebergs

Vatnajökull (2110m) is the largest glacier in Iceland and the largest glacial mass in Europe. It covers an area of between 8100 and 8300 square kilometres, and is about one kilometre thick at its thickest point; average thickness is 400-500 metres. The total ice volume of Vatnajökull is around 3,300 cubic kilometres. In 2008, Vatnajökull and its magnificent surroundings were declared a national park. Two existing national parks, Skaftafell in the south and Jökulsárgljúfur in the north, as well as several nature reserves, were integrated into the newly established Vatnajökull National Park, thereby creating the largest national park in Europe; it covers 13% of Iceland. The park boasts a stunning variety of landscape features.

This morning we travel by 4 x 4 jeep to the top of Vatnajökull and take a snow cat across the glacier. The spectacular ride up to the glacier offers sweeping views down into the valleys and over the North Atlantic Ocean.

Following an early buffet lunch in a ski hut on top of the glacier, we descend and drive to the Þórbergur Centre, containing an exhibition dedicated to the great writer Þórbergur Þórðarson (1888-1974). An ironist, satirist, volatile critic, and ground-breaking achiever in experimental auto-fiction, Þórbergur is arguably one of Iceland's most beloved 20th century authors. The centre occupies a prominent purpose-built site featuring a row of two metre-high book spines that line the side of the building.

The remainder of the afternoon is devoted to visiting the Breiðárlón and Jökulsárlón glacial lagoons. From the centre we continue further along the coast, where at the south end of Vatnajökull, we first visit Breiðárlón, a land-locked glacial lagoon.

At Jökulsárlón Beach we view some of the marooned glistening blocks of ice, which have been carried down from the lagoon by tidal currents and now lie stranded on the black lava sands. While the ocean has melted some of the icebergs away, many of the ones that wash ashore have been beautifully sculptured by the wind and water, appearing like sparkling jewels in a vast desert.

We end our day with a visit to the breathtaking Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, filled with icebergs. The lagoon was formed by global warming a mere 60 years ago as the Breiðamerkurjökull (a branch of the larger Vatnajökull) began to retreat. At one time, the glacier reached the sea, but as the ice began to melt more rapidly, chunks of ice broke off (known as calving) and as they fell, a lagoon was formed.

We take an excursion by duck boat to view icebergs of white, black, blue and turquoise colours sparkling in the lagoon. Although colourless themselves, icebergs pick up the reflections of particles in the water, ice and their surroundings. The ones in Jökulsárlón have a special ash lining due to the surrounding volcanoes. It makes for a very dramatic effect!

Jökulsárlón is also one of the favourite places of the *skuas* or big seagulls. They are often seen during the summer where they build nests on the dunes around the area. There is also a celebrated nesting ground of Arctic terns. (Overnight Skálafell) BLD

Vík - 2 nights

Day 13: Thursday 26 June, Skálafell – Svínafellsjökull – Skaftafell – Kirkjubæjarklaustur – Dyrhólaey Promontory – Vík

- Svínafellsjökull Glacier
- Svartifoss (Black Falls), Skaftafell National Park
- Skaftafell National Park Visitors Centre and Video
- Kirkjubæjarklaustur: Video of the Laki Eruption
- Eldhraun Lava Field
- Reynisfjara Black Sand Beach, Reynisdrangar Basalt Sea Stacks, Reynir Basalt Columns and Cave
- Atlantic Puffins, Coastal Bird Sanctuary of Dyrhólaey

We begin this morning with a walk to the Svínafellsjökull Glacier. The electric blue ice, unique structures and formations, and enormous size of this glacial tongue make it a favourite amongst walkers and hikers. This new path, which opened in the summer of 2022, takes you through a beautiful area of flora and wild grasses. When we reach the top of the hill there are stunning views of the glacier and the surrounding mountains with dramatic landscapes. (**Svínafellsjökull: the walk to the viewpoint takes 30-40mins return).

Next, we continue to the Skaftafell National Park where we take a walk to the park's main attraction, Svartifoss (Black Falls), a 20-metre high waterfall surrounded by magnificent dark hexagonal basalt columns. (**Svartifoss: the walk to the falls and basalt columns takes approximately 40 mins there and 40 mins back, plus stopping for photos etc.) Following lunch at the park's Visitors Centre we view a video which tells the story of fire and ice, including the way in which volcanoes and glaciers have formed the surrounding topography and the effects of eruptions and glacial outburst floods on the daily lives of people.

From Skaftafell National Park we continue to the village of Kirkjubæjarklaustur ('church farm cloister'), a former site of a 12th-century convent. Here we view a short film on the Laki eruptions. Lakagígar (Laki Craters) is a series of craters that were formed in one of the world's largest mixed eruptions in recorded history. Now referred to as the 'Fires of the River Skaftá', this continuous series of eruptions emitted a vast quantity of lava and substantial amounts of volcanic ash from a fissure stretching 25 kilometres across the area west of the ice cap. The first eruption began on 8 June 1783 at the southwest end of the fissure. Lava flowed across the flat land destroying a large number of farms, stopping just outside the small town of Kirkjubæjarklaustur on 20 July. The northeast part of the fissure then erupted. From 29 July until well into October, lava flowed along the course of the River Hverfisfljót and across the countryside on both banks. Although volcanic activity then began to subside, the eruption was not finally over until February 1784. The largest crater in the row is a small tuff mountain called Laki, which stands in the middle of the fissure. The total area of the resulting lava field is 565km² and the estimated volume of volcanic material is over 12 kilometres cubed. The Laki eruptions devastated the island's agriculture, killing much of its livestock. It is estimated that perhaps a quarter of Iceland's population died through the ensuing famine. The Laki eruption created a haze of dust and sulphur particles over much of the northern hemisphere, over Norway, the Netherlands, the British Isles, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, North America and even Egypt. Ships remained moored in many ports, effectively fogbound. Crops were affected as the fall-out from the continuing eruption coincided with an abnormally hot summer. The eruption is now thought to have disrupted the Asian monsoon cycle, prompting famine in Egypt. Environmental historians have also pointed to the disruption caused to the economies of northern Europe, where starvation was a major factor in the

build-up to the French Revolution (1789).

We continue south to Vík, taking a scenic route through extensive lava fields covered in thick layers of moss. The vast Eldhraun (Fire Lava) lava field was created during the 1783 eruption of Laki. The southern coast of Iceland is among the most beautiful and dramatic parts of the island state. It is also one of the least hospitable areas, dominated by washed-out sand and lava flows, and an exposed coastline with no natural harbours for hundreds of kilometres west of Höfn. Inevitably given its location, it was the first part of Iceland that many travellers came to, including the very first Norse settler, Ingólfur Arnarson.

On arrival we explore the coastline between Vík and the rocky headland of Dyrhólaey. The beach at Vík is composed entirely of black basalt sand deposited by the nearby Katla Volcano. Here we may view the Reynisdrangar basalt sea stacks that lie just offshore. Legend has it that the stacks originated when two trolls unsuccessfully attempted to drag a ship to shore; they were caught by the sunlight at dawn and turned into needles of rock. We also view the nearby basalt columns and cave at Reynir.

Iceland forms the breeding ground of about 60% of the world's Atlantic puffins. We shall explore the small Dyrhólaey Peninsula; in summer puffins nest on its cliff faces. The best time to spot a puffin is in the morning (7am-10am) or evening (6pm-10pm) since they are out fishing during the day. Many other nesting birds make Dyrhólaey their summer home, including fulmars, guillemots, razorbills, gannets and seagulls. The views from the top of this 120-metre high peninsula are breathtaking. In front of the peninsula we may view the gigantic black arch of lava standing in the sea, which gave the peninsula its name ('hill-island with the door-hole').

We spend two nights at Hotel Dyrhólaey, located 9 kilometres from the village of Vík. (Overnight Vík) BLD

Day 14: Friday 27 June, Vík – Landeyjahöfn – Vestmannaeyjar – Seljalandsfoss – Vík

- Sailing from Landeyjarhöfn harbour to Vestmannaeyjar
- Eldheimar – Museum of Remembrance, Vestmannaeyjar
- Heimaey Circle: Boat Tour
- Seljalandsfoss

This morning we take a half-hour ferry ride from Landeyjarhöfn harbour to Vestmannaeyjar (The Westman Islands), an archipelago consisting of fifteen islands and numerous rock stacks and skerries. The islands were formed by submarine volcanoes around 11,000 years ago, except for Surtsey, the archipelago's newest addition, which rose from the waves in 1963. Surtsey was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, but its unique scientific status means that it is not possible to land there, except for scientific study.

The biggest island, called Heimaey, is home to the town Vestmannaeyjarsbær with approximately 4,000 inhabitants. The other islands are uninhabited. Vestmannaeyjar came to international attention in 1973 with the eruption of Eldfell volcano, which destroyed many buildings and forced a months-long evacuation of the entire population to mainland Iceland.

On arrival at the historic Heimaey harbour, we visit the Eldheimar Museum of Remembrance whose exhibition focuses on the 1973 volcanic eruption in Vestmannaeyjar and the Surtsey eruption of 1963.

After lunch we take a one-and-half hour boat tour to view the newly formed volcanic island of Surtsey and other islands of the archipelago. Among the special features of the islands is the spectacular lava coastline which features basalt columns, picturesque coves, grottos and deep bird cliffs. All of Iceland's seabirds can be found in Vestmannaeyjar: the guillemot, gannet, kittiwake, Iceland gull, and puffin. The puffin is the most

plentiful species (around 10 million birds come here to breed) and is the Vestmannaeyjar emblem. More than 30 species of birds nest in their millions in the cliffs and grassy ledges, and other species make irregular appearances. Seals, small types of whale (which can be seen on occasions) and other marine species are also present in large numbers around the islands.

Late-afternoon we return by ferry to Landeyjarhöfn and take a short walk to view Seljalandsfoss, one of the best-known waterfalls in Iceland. Here the glacier-fed River Seljalandsá leaps from the lip of a 60-metre-high cliff. (**Seljalandsfoss: a very short walk. It is possible to follow a path behind the waterfall, however the trail is wet and slippery; recommended only for those who are sure-footed). (Overnight Vík) BLD

Reykjavík - 3 nights

Day 15: Saturday 28 June, Vík – Skógar – Friðheimar – Skálholt – Reykjavík

- Skógafoss (Wood Falls), Skógar
- Skógar Folk Museum
- LAVA – Iceland Volcano & Earthquake Centre, Hvolsvöllur
- Lunch at Friðheimar Thermal Greenhouse
- Historic Skálholt

We begin with a visit to Skógafoss, a waterfall situated on the Skógá River rolling over the cliffs of a former coastline. After this coastline receded seaward 5 kilometres from Skógar, the former sea cliffs remained, running parallel to the coast for hundreds of kilometres creating, together with a number of mountains, a precise border between the coastal lowlands and Iceland's highlands. Skógafoss is one of the biggest waterfalls in the country with a width of 25 metres and a drop of 60 metres. A single or double rainbow usually appears on sunny days, in the waterfall's extensive spray.

Nearby, in the village of Skógar, we visit the wonderful Folk Museum which depicts traditional life in Iceland. The museum includes a huge variety of tools and implements used for fishing and farming, as well as artefacts dating back to the Viking age. There is also an open-air museum containing a number of reconstructed turf houses, and a museum of transport that tells the story of technology and transportation and its development in Iceland in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Next, we visit the new state-of-the-art Lava Centre. Opened in June 2017, the centre provides an interactive, high-tech educational exhibition depicting volcanic activity, earthquakes and the creation of Iceland over millions of years. Located in the town of Hvolsvöllur, the centre lies in the shadow of three of the country's most prominent volcanoes, Katla, Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull. The latter became a household name in 2010 when it released an ash cloud that shut down European air space. The three volcanoes are visible from Lava's 360-degree viewing platform, one of the highlights of the centre. Exhibits include an earthquake simulator (equivalent to 4 on the Richter scale), an artificial smoke cloud, and an impressive 12-metre high structure simulating the mantle plume and the magma flow underneath the country.

From Hvolsvöllur we continue north for lunch at Friðheimar, a 5,000-square-metre greenhouse that cultivates delicious tomatoes year-round in an environmentally friendly way. After a lunch of Friðheimar tomato soup we learn how this family-owned business uses heat from the nearby hot geothermal water (95°C).

Skálholt is a historical site located by the river Hvítá. From 1056 until 1785, it was one of Iceland's two episcopal sees, along with Hólar, making it a cultural and political centre. The first cathedral was constructed in the 12th century; altogether there have been ten wooden churches built here. The present

memorial Cathedral, built between 1956 and 1963, features the Bible of bishop Guðbrandur, called 'Guðbrandsbiblíá' in Icelandic. Published in 1584, this is the first edition of the Icelandic Bible and one of the few remaining copies still in its original bindings. (Overnight Reykjavík) BLD

Day 16: Sunday 29 June, Reykjavík: The Golden Circle Route

- Þingvellir (Thingvellir) National Park: Parliament Plains & Rift Valley marking the Mid-Atlantic Ridge & Rift Valley Lake
- Gullfoss (Golden Waterfalls)
- Great Geysir & Strokkur Geysir, Haukadalur Geothermal Valley

Today we drive north from Reykjavík to Þingvellir (Thingvellir) National Park. Boasting UNESCO World Heritage-listed status, Thingvellir is one of the best places to view the Mid-Atlantic Ridge as it crosses Iceland. This predominantly submarine ridge running along the floor of the Atlantic Ocean traverses the globe from north to south for more than 45,000kms. The ridge is the longest and the most extensive chain of mountains on earth, but being located underwater, more than 90% of this mountain range remains hidden from view. At Thingvellir, the continental drift between the North American and Eurasian Plates (now moving at a rate of about 2.5cm per year) can clearly be seen in the cracks or faults that traverse the region. Over the past 10,000 years the Thingvellir Rift Valley has widened by 70m and sunk by 40m. Not only did this mid-ocean ridge create Iceland, it is also constantly changing its topography. As the two tectonic plates shift, fissures periodically form in the crust that allow molten rock from underground to surface as lava, creating Iceland's many volcanoes.

Among the dikes, faults, fissures, rivers and a sprawling, trout-filled lake, Iceland's Viking settlers established, in 930 AD, the *Althing*, an open-air assembly representing the whole of the island. An Icelandic flag designates the spot where the speaker would announce parliament's new laws, including Iceland's conversion from Norse paganism to Christianity in 1000 AD; the surrounding basalt cliff amplified the voices of the speakers. Remains of the Althing include fragments of around 50 booths built from turf and stone. The site is also significant for the archaeological evidence of agricultural use over the centuries, providing an insight into the way the landscape was husbanded for 1000 years. A new visitor centre provides information about this evocative site, a prominent presence in the Icelandic Sagas.

Traversing a walkway, fringed on one side by a sheer fault wall of volcanic basalt and on the other by a grassy meadow, we view Iceland's largest natural lake, fed with pure glacial water from the Langjökull ice cap. We shall also see an idyllic wooden church, first consecrated in the 11th century (rebuilt 1859), and a neighbouring farmhouse, constructed in 1930 to mark the 1000th anniversary of the Althingi's inauguration. Thingvellir is associated with a rich corpus of eerie myths, legends and gruesome tales.

Next, we continue to Gullfoss, which forms part of the 300-kilometre 'Golden Circle' route that retraces the settings of the Viking Sagas, with some of the country's most striking waterfalls as well as magnificent geysers along the way.

Gullfoss (Golden Falls), formed by a canyon on the Hvítá River (White River), is undoubtedly the most spectacular waterfall in Iceland. Early in the 20th century locals saved Gullfoss from being turned into a hydroelectric plant. The winding river flows down a succession of three great shelves before abruptly plummeting down two shelves. The first, 11-metre drop is followed by another of 21 metres. The water flow twists abruptly through a 90° angle, the two falls being at right angles to each other. The final drop is into a magnificent crevice, 32 metres deep. The two-tiered waterfall is 2.5km long. To view the falls, we shall take the walkway up to the viewing decks. (**Gullfoss: the walk is along planked paths to a bird's eye view platform, with steps leading down, all with banisters. The unmade track leading down to the edge of the

falls can be wet, due to the spray from the waterfall, but most people can do this easily.)

We continue along the famous 'Golden Circle' to the geothermally active Haukadalur Valley, the location of the 'Great Geysir' from which all the world's spouting hot springs take their name. The English word 'geyser' derives from the Icelandic word 'geysir' meaning 'gusher'. Scholars believe this geyser was created around the end of the 13th century when a series of strong earthquakes, accompanied by a devastating eruption of Mt Hekla, hit the geothermal valley of Haukadalur. It spouted regularly every third hour or so up to the beginning of the 19th century and thereafter progressively at much longer intervals until it completely stopped in 1916. (**Great Geysir: the walk is not difficult; all on flat ground, and not far from the coach parking site.)

A hundred metres south of the Great Geysir we visit the Strokkur ('The Churn'), another geyser, which erupts every 5-10 minutes; its white column of boiling water can reach a height of up to 30 metres. The whole area sits on a vast boiling cauldron. Belching sulphurous mud pools of unusual colours, hissing steam vents, hot and cold springs, warm streams, and primitive plants, are all found here. (Overnight Reykjavík BLD

Day 17: Monday 30 June, Reykjavík

- City Orientation Tour: Hallgrímskirkja, City Hall & National Museum of Iceland
- Harpa Concert Hall & Conference Centre (exterior only)
- Time at leisure
- Farewell Dinner

This morning we take an orientation tour of Reykjavík visiting the Hallgrímskirkja, Town Hall and the National Museum of Iceland. We also view the exterior of Reykjavík's sparkling Harpa concert hall and cultural centre. Designed by Danish firm Henning Larsen Architects, Icelandic firm Batteríð Architects, and Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson, Harpa opened in 2011.

The Hallgrímskirkja, a Lutheran (Church of Iceland) parish church, is the largest church in Iceland. It is named after the Icelandic poet and clergyman Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614-1674), author of the *Passion Hymns* – Iceland's most popular hymnbook. State architect Guðjón Samúelsson designed the building (completed 1986) to resemble the lava flows of Iceland's landscape. Its interior includes an eye-catching vast 5275-pipe organ installed in 1992.

Opened in 1992, The Reykjavík City Hall is an impressive building located on the north shore of Lake Tjörnin. Boldly modern, this impressive building, with planted walls, was designed to attract birdlife to the centre of town. In the exhibition hall is a huge 3D topographical map of Iceland, providing a unique perspective of the entire island with its many volcanoes, mountains, craters, fjords and glaciers.

One of the things that makes the island state unique in Europe is that Icelanders know the year the first settler, Ingólfur Arnarson, came to Iceland from Norway. The Icelandic script, *Íslendingabók* (*Book of Icelanders*), written by Ari the Wise, tells of the first explorers who landed here. Three previous expeditions had touched the shores of Iceland, but many believe that the first men who arrived in order to settle permanently were Ingólfur and Hjörleifur (874 AD). Hjörleifur was killed by his slaves, which left only Ingólfur and his wife Hallgerdur Fródadóttir. They are believed to have settled on land now occupied by Reykjavík. The excavation in the city centre of the remains of a building of around 871AD seems to confirm this story.

The National Museum of Iceland displays state-of-the-art exhibitions on the cultural history of Iceland. The permanent exhibition, 'Making of a Nation – Heritage and History of Iceland', gives a comprehensive

picture of Iceland's cultural history from the days of Viking settlements to the 21st century. The main exhibition has over 2000 artefacts discovered in various parts of the country. In pride of place amongst the museum's many treasures is the Valþjófsstaður door, featuring elaborate medieval engravings depicting scenes from the legendary 12th century chivalric tale *Le Chevalier au Lion*.

The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure for you to explore Reykjavík's compact city centre. You may wish to visit The Settlement Exhibition, which is a fascinating archaeological ruin/museum based around the 10th-century Viking longhouse unearthed here from 2001 to 2002, and other settlement-era finds from central Reykjavík. Since Ingólfur is thought to have arrived here in 874 AD, the remains found on Aðalstræti are considered to be one of the very earliest traces of human occupation anywhere in Iceland. Among the interesting hi-tech displays are interactive multimedia tables explaining the area's excavations, a wrap-around panorama showing how things would have looked at the time of the longhouse, and a panel that allows you to steer through different layers of the longhouse construction. Artefacts range from Great Auk bones to fish oil lamps and an iron axe. The latest finds from ancient workshops near the current Alþingi include a spindle whorl inscribed with runes. The original building seems a place where Icelandic archaeology, history and myth coalesce.

Our last night in Iceland is celebrated with a dinner at modern restaurant offering a magnificent views of the Reykjavík's harbour. harbour. (Overnight Reykjavík) BLD

Day 18: Tuesday 1 July, Tour Ends in Reykjavík

- Transfer to Keflavik Airport (time to be advised)

Our tour ends in Reykjavík. A group transfer to the Keflavik Airport will be arranged in the early morning (departure time to be advised). B

Accommodation

All hotels are of 3- or 4-star standard and are comfortable and conveniently situated. All rooms have en suite bathroom. Further information on hotels will be provided in the 'Tour Hotel List' given to tour members prior to their departure.

- Borganes (1 night): 3-star Hotel Hamar – a modern hotel located in the countryside 4km north of Borganes, a 1-hour drive from Reykjavík and the Snæfellsnes National Park; offering views of the Borgarfjörður Fjord. www.hotelhamar.is
- Stykkishólmur (2 nights): 3-star Fosshotel Stykkishólmur – a recently renovated modern hotel located in the fishing village, 700m from the harbour. The restaurant features spectacular views of Breiðafjörður Bay. www.islandshotel.is
- Laugarbakki (1 night): 3-star Hotel Laugarbakki – located in Midfjörður, midway between Reykjavik and Akureyri. www.hotellaugarbakki.is
- Siglufjörður (1 night): 4-star Sigló Hotel – opened in 2015, the hotel is located at the marina of the historic fishing town of Siglufjörður; a minute's walk from the Herring Era Museum and restaurants by the harbour. The hotel offers 68 rooms with views of the surrounding mountains and fjord. www.siglohotel.is
- Akureyri (1 night): 3-star Hotel Sveinbjarnargerði – located a short drive from Akureyri, the hotel offers stunning views of the Eyjafjörður area, its mountains and the fjord. hotelsveinbjarnargerdi.is
- Lake Mývatn (2 nights): 3-star Sel Hotel – Offering access to spas and saunas, this 58-room hotel is ideally located and offers views of the Skútustaðagígar pseudo-craters from the restaurant. www.myvatn.is
- Egilsstaðir (2 nights): 3-star Gistihúsið - Lake Hotel Egilsstaðir – set in a renovated farmhouse, and located by Lake Lagarfljót on the edge of Egilsstaðir village. english.lakehotel.is
- Skálafell (2 nights): 3-star Hotel Smyrlabjörg – a family-run hotel located 1km from the Vatnajökull Glacier and 30km from the Jökulsárlón Glacier. www.smyrlabjorg.is
- Vík (2 nights): 3-star Hotel Katla by Keahotels – located in southern Iceland close to Vík í Mýrdal, with magnificent views of the surrounding landscape. www.keahotels.is/hotel-katla
- Reykjavík (3 nights): 3-star Skuggi Hotel by Keahotels – located in the city centre, within walking distance to Iceland's main shopping street Laugavegur. www.keahotels.is/en/hotels/skuggi-hotel

Note: *Hotels are subject to change. In this instance a hotel of similar standard will be provided.*

Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a twin room for single occupancy throughout the tour. The number of rooms available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$16,780.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 June 2024

AUD \$16,980.00 Land Content Only

AUD \$2980.00 Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3- and 4-star hotels.
- Daily buffet breakfast indicated in the tour itinerary, where: B=buffet breakfast
- Total of 32 meals (11 lunches, 4 picnics and 17 evening meals), indicated in the itinerary where L =lunch, P=picnic lunch & D=dinner
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Airport-hotel transfers according to the times as outlined in the tour itinerary
- Bird & Nature Watching Cruise on Breiðafjörður Bay (Day 3)
- Snow Cat trip across Vatnajökull Glacier (Day 12)
- Duck Boat excursion amongst the icebergs on Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon (Day 12)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Tour reference book
- Entrance fees to museums, monuments and national parks
- Services of a National Guide throughout the tour
- Tips for the coach driver, guides and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia – Reykjavík, Reykjavík – Australia
- Porterage at hotels. Hotels in Iceland usually do not have porters, however, our driver is great at helping everyone with their luggage, and most hotels are either on the ground floor or if not, have lifts.
- Bottled water during excursions (note: Icelandic tap water is the best in the world)
- Personal spending money
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance



Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings 

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, seven to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless, all ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion.

This 18-day Cultural Tour of Iceland involves:

- Long distance travel by air-conditioned coach.
- Many of the sites are over rough or uneven ground and require reasonable fitness levels. The itinerary provides a brief description for some of the key walks.**
- 3- to 4-star hotels with nine hotel changes.
- Bird & Nature Watching Cruise on Breiðafjörður Bay (Day 3).
- Snow Cat trip across Vatnajökull Glacier (Day 12).
- Duck Boat excursion amongst the icebergs on Jökulsárlón Glacial Lagoon (Day 12).
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage. Hotels usually do not have porters, however, our driver is great at helping everyone with their luggage, and most hotels are either on the ground floor or if not, have lifts.

It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. As the group must move at the speed of the slowest member, the amount of time spent at a site may be reduced if group members cannot maintain a moderate walking pace. ASA tours should not present any problem for active people who can manage day-to-day walking and stair-climbing. However, if you have any doubts about your ability to manage on a program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether this is a suitable tour for you.

Please note: it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the Booking Conditions on the last page of this tour itinerary.

Tour members will receive prior to departure practical notes which include information on visa requirements, health, photography, weather, clothing and what to pack, custom regulations, bank hours, currency regulations, electrical appliances and food. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade website has advice for travellers: www.smartraveller.gov.au

Booking Conditions

ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD \$1000.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.



Reservation Application

TOUR NAME _____
TOUR DATES _____

Please complete **one application, per person in block letters and sign**. Parental signature is required for participants under 18 years of age. Please mail this form with the appropriate deposit to: **P.O. Box 8285, ARMADALE, VICTORIA, 3143**. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation.

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr Mrs Ms Miss Dr Other _____
FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____
MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____
POSTAL ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____
TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____
EMAIL address _____
Date of birth ____ / ____ / _____ GENDER Male Female

Passport Number _____ Expiry date ____ / ____ / ____ Nationality _____
 Colour copy of my current valid passport enclosed I'm renewing my passport ASA has a colour copy of my current passport

Covid Certificate A copy of my current international certificate enclosed

Travel Plans

I plan to leave Australia before the tour commences. Planned departure date ____ / ____ / ____
 I will be arranging my airfare independently and taking the Land Content Only option.

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: a twin-bedded room a double-bedded room a room for sole occupancy
I am travelling: on my own with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

fish poultry red meat dairy products

eggs pork nuts

Other _____

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence Postal Mail Email Address _____

Emergency Contact Details

Note: this person **MUST** be available by telephone and be present in Australia for the duration of your tour with ASA

Name _____ Relationship to Traveller _____

Address _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

The purpose of seeking this information is to assist ASA to determine, where necessary, whether ASA is able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs and whether your health and safety (or that of your fellow travellers) is likely to be compromised given your choice of tour. It will also assist you and ASA if you fall ill or have an accident whilst travelling.

- ASA reserves the right to decline your Reservation Application if this Medical Information section is not completed properly and may reject or cancel your reservation, or terminate your participation on any tour, if ASA subsequently learns that you have failed to make full and proper disclosure.
- ASA is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. ASA's privacy policy is available for viewing at www.asatours.com.au
- If ASA has any concerns about the information you have provided, it will contact you to request clarification before considering your Application.
- ASA requires you to consider carefully your limitations in light of ASA's Physical Endurance Star Rating System in ASA's Brochure and Itinerary when choosing your tour.
- If you are not likely to satisfy ASA's Participation Criteria (see below), ASA, in its sole discretion, may reject your Reservation Application.
- It is a condition of your tour that you agree to accept the directions of ASA's Tour Leaders in relation to your suitability to participate in activities planned on tour.
- ASA reserves the right to cancel your participation on a tour if your behaviour is in ASA's opinion causing undue distress or damage to any person or their property.
- If your participation is discontinued during a tour, ASA will assist by arranging your onward travel (if required) at your own cost, but you will not be refunded for forfeited parts of the tour.
- ASA tour groups are not accompanied by a medical practitioner. ASA recommends that you see your doctor for advice about your specific needs while overseas. You may also wish to contact a travel and vaccination clinic for advice. www.traveldoctor.com.au tel: 1300 658 444; www.travelvax.com.au tel: 1300 360 164.
- Travel insurers require you to declare all existing medical conditions.
- Please carry a complete list of medications with you during the ASA tour. Include **generic names** of each medication (consult your local pharmacy for information).

Please mark **X** in the YES or NO box to every question below and provide details where necessary:

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. **You must also be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.** If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. The responsibility of the Tour Leader is to ensure that the larger group enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing individual assistance to any one guest.

- | | YES | NO |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Can you walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Can you walk unassisted on and over uneven surfaces? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Can you climb at least 3 flights of stairs and/or walk up and down steep slopes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Can you walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15 - 20 minutes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Can you organise, manage and carry your own luggage? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Can you follow and remember tour instructions and meet punctually at designated times and places? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Can you administer your own medication? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. You do NOT have impaired vision or hearing which may impact your capacity to participate on this tour? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Mobility and Fitness

As many of ASA's international sites do not provide access to wheelchairs or similar mobility aids, we regret that ASA tours are not suitable for people who require the use of a walking frame, wheeled walker, wheelchair or motorised scooter.

1. Do you suffer from any medical conditions that may compromise your mobility and/or fitness to participate on this program? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

Allergies and/or Food Intolerances

ASA will make reasonable endeavours to organise meals to suit you, provided that you give ASA adequate notice of your specific dietary requirements or allergies. You may be required to research dietary alternatives, as not all destinations may be able to offer suitable food substitutes.

1. Do you have any food allergies or intolerances? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

2. Have you ever had an anaphylactic reaction to anything? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

Do you carry an epipen? YES NO

3. Do you have any other allergies or reactions to anything, including medical drugs? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

Existing Medical Conditions

You alone are responsible for managing any existing medical conditions, your medication and any medical equipment that you may need when on your tour. Please plan for contingencies and take extra medication, dietary supplements and/or fully charged batteries for medical equipment if your health and safety depends on these. You should take into consideration that power sources at some destinations may be unavailable, inadequate, inconvenient or unreliable.

1. Have you any significant medical conditions that may impact your capacity to complete this tour? YES NO
 If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

2. Do you require some form of powered medical aid, such as a CPAP machine? YES NO

These machines may not be operable on certain international flights, modes of transport, in remote or other areas with inadequate or unreliable power sources without a fully charged independent long life battery or batteries.

Diabetics: You may be travelling and sightseeing for many hours at a time. Insulin dependent diabetics must carry extra supplies of insulin (as this medication cannot be obtained in some destinations), regulators, applicators, storage and refrigeration equipment, as well as any necessary supplements. Accommodation may not provide refrigerators in rooms.

3. Are you diabetic? YES NO

Are you insulin dependent? YES NO

4. Do you suffer from travel sickness? YES NO
 Remember to use an appropriate medication while on tour.

Declaration

I declare that: I have read and understood the ASA Tour Itinerary, Reservation Application and Booking Conditions. I am aware of ASA's terms as relating to refunds, cancellations, responsibility and liability. I understand that ASA relies upon this declaration when considering this Application. I accept the inherent dangers, risks and uncertainties in travel and those beyond ASA's control and understand they may occur before or during any tour. I have made full and complete disclosure and have not knowingly withheld any medical information about myself from ASA. I have completed this Reservation Application honestly and accurately. I warrant that I am able to participate independently in all activities described by ASA in the itinerary without assistance from any person.

I will advise ASA in writing if any aspect of my fitness and or health conditions change materially at any time before my departure date. I understand and accept that the itinerary, accommodation and lecturers scheduled for this tour may change.

I agree and consent that ASA may give my personal information in this Reservation Application to tour service providers and relevant authorities as required by law, but only for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services associated with the tour. I understand that if I do not consent to the use of my personal information for this purpose, ASA will decline my Reservation Application.

In consideration of ASA's acceptance of my Reservation Application, I irrevocably release and indemnify ASA from all claims that I, or any other party, may have against ASA its employees, invitees, agents and contractors, however arising in respect of any loss, damage, injury, death or expense incurred in the course of booking, preparing for, travelling to, on and from or cancelling any tour.

I release and indemnify ASA with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour;
2. Every special risk, in particular medical risks, to which I may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour arising from, including, but not limited to:
 - a. intermittent power cycles and/or the temporary or permanent loss of power (beware CPAP or any other medical machine users);
 - b. dietary, food or other allergies (ASA cannot guarantee that traces of items to which you are allergic are not present in food or drink you are served, medication you are administered or other substances with which you may come into contact);
 - c. any event or situation that may compromise the administration of necessary medication or my health, safety and wellbeing generally; and
 - d. any event or happening beyond ASA's control
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of any tour, part of a tour or of my continued participation on a tour for any reason (subject to ASA's refund conditions below).

Limitation of Liability

ASA is not a carrier, event or tourist attraction host, accommodation or dining service provider. All bookings made and tickets or coupons issued by ASA for transport, event, accommodation, dining and the like are issued as an agent for various service providers and are subject to the terms and conditions and limitations of liability imposed by each service provider. ASA is not responsible for their products, services, terms and conditions. If a service provider cancels or does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, and does not give a refund, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

ASA will not be liable for any claim (e.g. sickness, injury, death, damage or loss) arising from any change, delay, detention, breakdown, border closures, cancellation, failure, accident, act, omission or negligence of any tour service provider or authority however caused (contingencies). You must take out such travel insurance as is available against such contingencies.

ASA's liability in respect of any tour cancelled or changed will be limited to the partial refund of amounts you have paid, less an administration fee of \$500 and other costs and charges of third party service providers. No compensation will be payable to you by ASA where ASA cancels or changes a tour, or any part of a tour.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate and in the best interests of health, safety and wellbeing of tour participants. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A non-refundable deposit of \$1000.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 75 days before departure: your initial deposit of \$1000.00 is non-refundable.**

75-31 days prior 50% of total amount due

30-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

**\$500.00 of this amount (ie 50% of your deposit) may be credited to another ASA tour departing within 12 months of the original tour you booked. We regret, in this case early-bird discounts will not apply.

We take the day on which you cancel as being that on which we receive written confirmation of cancellation.

UNUSED PORTIONS OF THE TOUR

We regret that refunds will not be given for any unused portions or services of the tour, such as meals, entry fees, accommodation, flights or transfers.

WILL THE TOUR PRICE OR ITINERARY CHANGE?

If the number of participants on a tour is significantly less than budgeted, or if there is a significant change in exchange rates ASA reserves the right to amend the advertised price. We shall, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to itineraries. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

ASA requires all participants to obtain comprehensive travel insurance. A copy of your travel insurance certificate and the **reverse charge** emergency contact phone number must be received by ASA no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the tour.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of the tour price will be due 75 days prior to the tour commencement date.

PLEASE READ THE ABOVE CAREFULLY, PRINT AND SIGN BELOW

I accept the conditions on this booking form I have read the information about the physical requirements of the tour in the detailed itinerary and confirm that I am able to meet these requirements

Applicant's Signature

Print Full Name

Dated

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1

Name of Traveller 2

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$

 (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

The above amount is payable for:

- Intention to Travel Tour Deposit
- Balance of Payment Upgrade from Intention to Travel to a Deposit
- Travel Insurance Other (eg. Airfares, Accommodation)

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No.

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

Date Money Transferred

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my: Mastercard Visa American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number

Expiry Date

 Security Code (CVC)

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ)

Cardholders Name

Cardholders Billing Address

Postcode

State

 Country

Phone

Email

Cardholders Signature
