

WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



ICELAND'S AURORA,

WILD BLACK BEACHES & BLUE ICE TOUR

HIGHLIGHTS

- Snæfellsjökull glacier
- Iconic Kirkjufell mountain
- Fishing villages
- Vast lava fields
- Ice cave (February/March)
- Black sand beaches
- Sea arches and sea stacks
- Volcanic craters and lakes
- Abandoned turf farm
- Icelandic horses
- Skógafoss & Seljalandsfoss
- Vatnajökull Europe's largest glacier
- Luminous icebergs floating in a turquoise lagoon

- Bizarre glacial landscapes up close
- Country hotel close to the glacier lagoon
- Sunrises and sunsets in dramatic locations
- Sea washed ice on black volcanic sand
- Ephemeral Aurora Borealis (northern lights)

"The workshop was extremely well organised from accommodation to locations and the tuition from the leaders was the best we have ever had, even down to the processing of images using Lightroom. We were taken to the beautiful and varied locations at the best times of day and night (occasionally we were allowed to sleep!!). Thank you so much for a fabulous holiday." Margaret & John, March 2017

INTRODUCTION

Our Iceland's Aurora, Wild Black Beaches and Blue Ice Tour concentrates on two of the very best landscape areas of Southeast and West Iceland. This itinerary kicks off on Iceland's stunning Snæfellsnes Peninsula, West Iceland followed by a journey to the glaciated wilderness of South-East Iceland close to the iconic Jökulsárlón. This ten day workshop is ideal for those photographers that want to spend a bit longer getting to know the essence and soul of Iceland. We will enjoy sunrise and sunset opportunities in well chosen spots and of course there will be lots of opportunities to capture aurora borealis; the northern lights. The northern lights are a magical experience with or without a camera. Iceland has some



of the most accessible wild coastal and ice landscapes in the world. It is one of the world's best locations to photograph the aurora borealis. It's well worth considering that Wild Photography Holidays is run by people who live in Iceland and know their locations intimately.

GENERAL SUMMARY

Here is a brief description of the three main areas that we visit during the workshop. All are very different and offer locations and subjects of great diversity.

West Iceland

The Snæfellsnes Peninsula in West Iceland is thought by many to be one of the most beautiful places on the island. Considered one of the world's most powerful energy spots, it is home to many artists, photographers and other creative people. The area is dominated by the remarkable snow-covered volcano Snæfellsjökull where Jules Verne sent his intrepid travellers on their 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth'. The North Atlantic coast is never far away. Our hotel in Grundarfjörður is situated on the har-

bour front a stone's throw from the impressive and much photographed Kirkjufell Mountain. In Hellnar we overlook the ocean from a cliff top perspective. Sea stacks, arches and black beaches provide unusual and dramatic locations for our photographs. We stay in a coastal hotel close to some great locations.

Vík, Dyrhólaey and South Iceland

Mýrdalur is the southernmost district of Iceland, bordered by the glacial river Jökulsá to the west and the river Blautakvísl to the east. Its northern border is Iceland's fourth largest glacier Mýrdalsjökull, . Approximately 600 metres below it's ice lies the rumbling subglacial volcano Katla. This area is famous for it's spectacular black beaches, wild seas, stunning big waterfalls, fabulous mountain landscapes and dramatic black volcanic sandurs. We stay in a comfortable hotel close to Vík and all our locations.



Southeast Iceland

Here we find some of the most spectacular ice and glacial phenomena in Europe. There is dramatic mountain scenery, Skaftafell National Park, several glacial lagoons, black beaches festooned with sparkling sea washed ice, the famous Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon and magnificent views of Iceland's highest mountain Hvannadalshnjúkur. The surreal arctic environment of the glacier lagoon was the location for films such as James Bond's *Die Another Day*, 'A View to a Kill' 'Lara Croft – Tomb Raider'. Other films shot in the area include 'Game of Thrones' 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty' and Christopher Nolan's 'Interstellar' and 'Batman Begins'. Our main base is just ten minutes drive from the Jökulsárlón.

Ice Photography in Brief

The Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon and its glacial surroundings are a dream location for photographers due to the sheer diversity of subjects. Large chunks of ice are constantly breaking off the glacier filling the lagoon with an ever changing landscape of unusually shaped floating



icebergs of subtle colours. We will have plenty of time for long strolls along the shores of the lagoon allowing careful observation of the subtle changes in the icy landscape. The icebergs slowly make their way through the lagoon and out into the sea. Some of them are washed up onto the nearby black sand beach where they appear as sparkling sea-washed ice – here we can get up really close to the ice. The lagoon is well suited to abstract landscape photography, whilst the ice on the beach of-

fers great potential for both intimate and big-sky landscapes.

DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival in Reykjavík

Participants will be arriving on a variety of flights. The first night accommodation in a three star Reykjavík city hotel is included. We will meet for introductions and briefing at 19:00 before heading out into the city for dinner.

Hotel Reykjavík (D)

Day 2–3: Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Leaving the city behind we drive directly to Snæfellsnes. Our coastal hotel is beautifully situated for all our locations. Our hotel is well situated by the harbour of a working fishing village. The area offers sparkling fjords, dramatic volcanic peaks, sheer sea cliffs, sweeping golden beaches, interesting rock architecture including sea arches and vast lava flows all contribute to make the fascinating landscape of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. The area is crowned by the glistening ice cap Snæfellsjökull, immortalised in Jules Verne's Journey to the Centre of the Earth.

Hotel Snæfellsnes (B,L,D)

Snæfellsnes Locations

Below is an overview of our locations in no particular order during the days we are based in Snæfellsnes.

Snæfellsjökull glacier – the seaward slopes are particularly worthy of attention, with ropes of lava winding their way downhill. Weather permitting we travel to the snow line for some unusual close-up images.

Fishing villages – fishing is still the mainstay of the remote Icelandic communities that we will encounter, we may have an opportunity to photograph as the boats and fishermen come in with their catches.

Sea cliffs – the cliffs around the Snæfellsnes coastline are precipitous, majestic and very attractive with a huge variety of differing and interesting rock formations, that are easy to access for some great images.



Beaches – Snæfellsnes has black sand beaches of volcanic origin this generally gives some really unusual images. One fine example is the black beach of Djúpalónsandur with its strange lava formations, including Gatklettur, a rock with a hole giving unusual vistas through to a tranquil turquoise lagoon.

Sea stacks and arches – there are a variety of stacks and arches around the peninsula providing fine dramatic photographic subjects.

Green moss lava fields – these are vast and cover huge areas below the glacier, they are interesting to photograph alone or as fine foreground for other subjects. In Autumn they are particularly beautiful with dramatic colours.

Kirkjufell mountain – the chameleon shape of this mountain is well known to all Icelandic landscape photographers. It provides striking images both at sunrise and sunset; it's also amazing to see the northern lights swirling high above its rocky ridges.

Berserkjahraun – situated between Grundarfjörður and Stykkishólmur this dramatic lava field flowed some 3,000 to 4,000 years ago and is young enough to retain all kinds of convoluted shapes, with fascinating colour and textural contrasts in the rocks and thick mosses.

Day 4: Snæfellsnes to Vík

We leave after a sunrise shoot and breakfast to take advantage of all the daylight hours. As we travel along the south coast our locations en route include the classic waterfall Seljalandsfoss, Icelandic horses in a lovely mountain location and sunset at Dyrhólaey. This location lends itself to both abstract and unusual landscapes particularly monochrome. The sunsets on Vík beach are often particularly memorable
Hotel Vík (B,L,D)

Day 5: Black Beaches and Waterfalls

Today we will have time to explore this beautiful area well starting with a sunrise on one of the black beaches. Maybe we will shoot from the east to catch some early



morning light on the sea stacks of Vík beach. After breakfast we may return to a couple of waterfalls that are special in the morning light. These will include Skógafoss and a 'hidden' waterfall! The beaches around this area are rich in basalt column architecture. Sea arches, caves, cliffs and big waves make for some dramatic photography particularly at sunset. Back for dinner, then hopefully a chance to capture the aurora in one of several good locations that we know around this area.
Hotel Vík (B,L,D)

Day 6: To Skaftafell National Park and Hali

This morning we journey along the wild and awe inspiring south coast of Iceland. We pass through vast lava fields covered with moss and an abandoned farm with turf covered roofs. The location of the farm beneath the mighty mountain of Lómagnúpur is spellbinding. Traveling further our vistas are of huge glacial sandurs, mountains and glaciers. We stop whenever the light and subjects are inspiring. By mid- afternoon we should have



arrived at the Svínafellsjökull glacier where we will encounter and photograph remarkable close up perspectives of bluish green crevasses and the milky brown lagoon. This surreal icy landscape includes vistas of Iceland's highest mountain; Hvannadalshnjúkur. There are sometimes a beautiful ice formations although it is worth noting that we can never predict what these natural phenomena will be like until we arrive as they are constantly changing. Driving east in the early evening we will take our first short look at the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon; a location that we will become increasingly familiar with over the coming days. For the next three nights we are based in a comfortable hotel beautifully located by the North Atlantic Ocean.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Days 6–8: Southeast Iceland, Jökulsárlón

Our South East base is just a ten minute drive from the glacier lagoon and the black sand beach which is usually littered with sparkling sea washed ice. Both locations are excellent for sunrises, sunsets and aurora. Our daily loca-

tions are chosen in conjunction with the weather or the Aurora forecasts. We have to be very flexible to get the best images and we will often revisit worthwhile locations. It is worth bearing in mind that some of our locations are little-known and we do not publish them here. With this in mind here is an overview of some locations for days 6–8 in no particular order.

Southeast Iceland Locations

Below is an overview of our locations in no particular order during the days we are based in the southeast.

Breiðamerkursandur beach – here we find sea washed ice and stranded icebergs; a particularly good place to be at sunrise when the sun brings out the colours and striking structure of the ice; an excellent subject in its own right or as interesting foreground detail.

Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon – we will photograph here in varying light conditions giving participants the opportunity to improve their images on repeating visits.

Fjallsárlón glacier lagoon – a remote less visited location with a dramatic glacial and mountain backdrop.



Mountain landscape locations – there are many close to our accommodation including small lakes with great reflections.

Svínafellsjökull glacier – we get really close to the complex and jumbled glacier. with its blue green ice.

Day 9: Return to Reykjavík

During our drive back to Reykjavík we have the opportunity to work the locations that we missed on the way out east due to poor weather, light or simply lack of time. Back in the city we will go out together for a final celebratory meal.

Reykjavík Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 10: Transfer to International Airport

Today participants can choose to leave on any flight as the transfers are always timed to connect to the flights. Check out from the hotel is around midday but hourly extensions can be purchased. (B)

THE LEARNING PROCESS

This workshop is all about photography and lots of it! Whilst on location tutors will be working alongside participants offering technical and creative advice, practical help and encouraging a sound photographic decision-making process.

Evening tutorials including image development, image presentations and night shooting of aurora can be expected. Whether you are a beginner with your first DSLR or are considerably more advanced, this workshop will take you to the next level of proficiency and you will have a lot of fun with like-minded people.

JOINING ARRANGEMENTS AND TRANSFERS

The trip officially starts on Day 1 with a meeting at the first night hotel in Reykjavík for introductions and a trip briefing followed by dinner together. Wild Photography Holidays services finish after breakfast on the final day of the trip.

Flybus Airport Transfer

The Flybus is the most convenient way to get from Iceland's international airport to your hotel and back. The buses run all day and the bus stop is right outside arrivals. The bus takes you to the BSÍ central bus station. There you will be directed to a smaller bus that will take you to your hotel.

It's easiest to purchase your ticket at the Reykjavik Excursions desk in the arrivals hall, but you can also do it [in advance online](#). For hotel transfers you need a Flybus Plus Return ticket. All major credit/debit cards are ac-



cepted. If you need any help booking your tickets, please contact our office.

The Flybus transfer is not included in the price of the holiday.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Accommodation 9 hotel nights
- All meals
- Transport
- Photographic tutor/tuition

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Transfers from/to Iceland's international airport
- Alcoholic beverages
- Snacks and beverages other than with meals
- Travel insurance

ACCOMMODATION

We will be using a variety of accommodation. In Reykjavík we will stay in a 3 star hotel close to the city centre. In the country we will stay in scenically located



family run hotels. The price is based on single rooms. Double or twin rooms are available for friends and couples who wish to share.

FOOD

We will generally eat dinner in the hotel restaurants except for the first night in Reykjavík when we will eat at a restaurant in the city. Lunch will be in a variety of locations and breakfasts will always be at our hotels. Please let us know when you book if you have any special dietary requirements.

ALCOHOL

This is rather expensive in Iceland, it might be worth considering bringing a bottle of your favourite 'tipple'! All the restaurants that we eat in serve alcohol.

SPENDING MONEY

Icelandic Krona can be easily obtained at the airport ATM machine; these are plentiful throughout Iceland.

There will be opportunities to buy presents and souvenirs in many of our locations. Credit cards are accepted in all places for even very cheap purchases.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is recommended that you take out appropriate insurance to cover personal accident, medical costs, repatriation and loss of baggage. We will need a copy of your travel insurance at the time of booking.

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

A passport valid for at least three months beyond length of stay required by all except nationals of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden who are only required to produce national identity cards issued by the authorities in their countries of origin. Visas are not required but a return ticket will need to be shown by Australian, Canadian and USA nationals. Other nationalities please enquire before booking.

LANGUAGE

Icelanders speak Icelandic; they also tend to speak rather good English.

CLIMATE

Iceland's climate is tempered by the Gulf Stream. Summers are mild and winters rather cold, the weather is very changeable at all times of the year, in Reykjavík there may be rain, sunshine, drizzle and snow all in the same day. Expect temperatures to be down to -7°C on occasions (see clothing list). Most importantly for us, the



lack of pollution means that the clarity of the light is often exceptional with phenomenal 'big skies' and really atmospheric cloud patterns.

CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS

As we will often be standing around in one location it's important to have some warm clothes. The best solution to temperature control is to have a number of layers available from lightweight thermal underwear through mid-layer insulation to a windproof jacket. A warm down jacket is great for standing around. For the lower body choose a pair of warm trousers. There are numerous makes and types of warm trousers to choose from, just ensure that the cut is generous to allow freedom of movement. We will sometimes be walking in snow and on ice so good quality warm walking boots are recommended. A pair of wellington boots can be useful on the beach but these are not essential if space/weight is an issue.

CLOTHING

If you have any questions feel free to contact us at any-time before the trip:

- backpack to contain camera gear and few spare items
- pair warm trousers, fleece lined are great
- thermal tops e.g. 'smartwool' (base layer)
- thermal leggings e.g 'smartwool' (base layer)
- light fleece/wool jumper
- duvet jacket, down or synthetic
- waterproof jacket
- waterproof trousers
- quality warm walking socks
- leather/waterproof walking boots
- warm hat
- fleece neck-warmer
- light warm gloves
- warm windproof over-mittens
- 'hot-hands' or similar, www.hothandsdirect.com
- casual clothes for hotel wear
- sun cream, sunglasses
- head torch
- small, basic first aid to include plasters and any medications of a personal nature

ICE GRIPS

Note the following applies to January, February or March departures only. For your own safety we advise you to bring with you a pair of ice grips to put on your boots. These grips are very straightforward to use and will allow you to walk safely on icy or slippery surfaces. You will hardly know that you are wearing them unlike spiky crampons. You will be advised when to wear them by our



guides.

There is a variety of makes and designs. We have found the rubber ones with coils and a velcro strap to work best. The strap is important as it ensures that you don't lose them. For an example [see the Yaktrax Pro](#). You might want to check in a local outdoor store first. They usually have a selection of suitable models.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT/INFORMATION

- Camera bag or backpack such as the Flipside or Trekker series designed by LowePro.
- Any extra equipment that doesn't fit in your camera bag/hand luggage will need to go in a hard case that can be put in the aircraft hold.
- A camera with interchangeable lenses such as a digital SLR or a compact system camera/mirrorless camera.
- A set of lenses to cover the whole range from wide-angle to telephoto, for example...
For full-frame cameras: 16–35mm wide-angle, 24–105mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom. For crop format cameras: 10–20mm wide-angle, 17–70mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom.
- Spare camera (highly recommended)
- Sturdy tripod – not only useful for low light photography but also for accurate framing and composition of landscape and close-up images.
- Cable release/remote – mechanical or electronic to avoid shake on long exposures.
- Neutral density, graduated filters and polariser, if you use these. At least one neutral density filter in the range of 4–6 stops would be a good addition to your kit.

- Lens cloth
- Sensor cleaning device (optional)
- Lightweight 'trekking' absorbent towel for drying cameras and equipment
- Rain cover for camera and camera bag.
- Sufficient memory cards for the whole holiday as it may not be possible to buy more during the trip.
- Film users should bring enough film, as it may not be possible to buy in many places.
- A laptop with the image editing applications of your choice, essential for checking and presenting images during the trip and for one-on-one sessions with the tutor. All of the places we stay in have Wi-Fi.
- Backup storage device (optional)
- Spare batteries and chargers
- All the electrical sockets are European two-pin, so you might need a travel plug adapter.

MAPS AND BOOKS

Skaftafell map scale: 1:100,000 and 1:25,000 provides a good overview of the area surrounding Skaftafell National Park. There is also a more precise map of the area around Skaftafell and Morsárdalur on the reverse of the map.

Touring map of West and South Iceland scale 1:25,000 shows Snæfellsnes, Southwest Iceland, all of South Iceland east of Skaftafell to the area north of the glacier. The map has contour lines and shading at 50 m intervals. Visit ferdakort.is for information about these and other maps.

Flowering Plants and Ferns of Iceland, Hörður Kristínsson



ISBN 9979-3-1723-X

This is the definitive guide to almost all the plant life in Iceland; it is in English and can be ordered from amazon.co.uk. This book is popular and often out of stock here in Iceland.

Icelandic Bird Guide, Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson also in English and available from Amazon.

PARTNERS

Non photographer partners will be very welcome although this primarily a photography holiday we also visit some very beautiful and relaxing places. If any participants do not wish to join the walks/photographic sessions they will be able to relax in and around the accommodation. The cost will be the same for photographers and non photographers.

OUTDOOR TRAVEL

This is an outdoor travel holiday and the itinerary is dependent on the weather, local conditions and other variables. Wild Photography Holidays may use their discretion to change the itinerary should conditions dictate this; your health, safety and enjoyment will always be our primary concern when making such changes.

MORE INFORMATION

We hope that this information has answered some of your questions about the holiday, It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.

BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Fill in the [online booking form](#), or give us a call on +44 (0)1270 440222.

LINKS

View [images and information](#) for this tour on the website. Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#)