

WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



NORTHWEST ICELAND'S MIDSUMMER BIRDS AND LANDSCAPES

WORKSHOP WITH NIALL BENVIE

HIGHLIGHTS

- Iceland's peak time for birds
- Alpine flowers
- Flatey Island
- Snæfellsnes landscapes
- Sea arches and sea stacks
- Kirkjufell Mountain
- Flight to NW Iceland
- Black beaches and lava fields
- Snæfellsjökull
- Látrabjarg sea cliffs
- Northwest Fjords
- Puffins, Shags and Guillemots
- Dramatic sunrises and sunsets

INTRODUCTION

Our creative workshop photographing birds in the Icelandic landscape will start at the end of May just three weeks before the summer solstice when the birdlife is at its most active and prolific. Our locations will concentrate on West and Northwest of Iceland including the northwest fjords and Látrabjarg, one night on the Island of Flatey, Breiðafjörður and four nights in magical Snæfellsnes. June is the very best time for capturing the multitude of birds that congregate and breed in Iceland at this time of year. Migrants have arrived and all are very conspicuous defending their territories. It's magical to photograph when most other folks are asleep. Whilst there is an emphasis on birds, we will not neglect the

landscape, it's the perfect time for capturing both. There are twenty-four hours of daylight, alpine flowers are in bloom, carpets of purple Lupine stretch as far as the eye can see and the striking features of the Icelandic landscape are enhanced by hours of soft ambient light. This workshop is definitely suitable for both serious bird and landscape photographers, or a combination of both.

DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival and Transfers to Hotel

Participants will arrive at different times in the morning and afternoon of Day 1. We will meet at 19:00 in the lobby of our first night hotel for introductions, a trip briefing and dinner. If participants choose to arrive a day

early and require a hotel reservation in our group hotel please let us know when booking and we can arrange this.

Hotel Reykjavík

Day 2: Fly to Bíldudalur and Northwest Fjords

This morning we take the flight to Bíldudalur in the Northwest Fjords of Iceland. There are remarkable vistas if the weather is fine. From the tiny airport we will make our way to our beautifully located hotel next to its own beach and a short drive from Látrabjarg. We will photograph as appropriate en route. The area boasts massive superb wild fjord landscapes, sea cliffs serene pools and breeding birds crazy with hormones. Our approach to photography is very flexible and we will try to meet all the expectations of participants. We use two vehicles to aid the flexibility of our locations. We will concentrate on photographing birds in the landscape; our tutors will be helping you to do this in a creative way. They will also make sure that you have a full grasp of the technical skills required for modern bird photography. Here is an article from the Icelandic Birding Pages on where to find birds in Iceland. During the times when we are not out in the field our tutors will be helping you to review and process images together with showing you examples of their own work for inspiration. Our hotel is family-run and conveniently situated about thirty minutes drive from the magnificent Látrabjarg, Europe's largest bird cliffs. We will spend the evening exploring the local coast and pools just a short walk from the hotel.

Hotel Near Látrabjarg

Day 3–4: Látrabjarg and the Northwest Fjords

The West Fjords are a true Icelandic wilderness; they are an ideal place for spotting birds, arctic fox and other unique fauna in their natural habitats. Isolation has preserved the region in relatively unspoilt way. We will spend our two full days here exploring the area making excursions to Látrabjarg. These vast cliffs are home to millions of birds, including Puffin, North Atlantic Fulmar, Guillemot and Razorbill. The cliff hosts up to 40% of the world population for some bird species for example the Razorbill. For many, the highlight of the cliff are the very tame Atlantic Puffin who actually breed at the lowest part of the cliff very close to where we park our vehicles. The landscape itself is wild and rich photographically. There are scenic remote churches, abandoned boats, pools, lakes and white sand beaches, a rarity in volcanic Iceland! Of all the beaches in NW Iceland, perhaps the most striking is Rauðisandur, meaning red sand. It is ten kilometres long, there are breeding birds, great rocks, an attractive waterfall and quite often superb abstract patterns in the sand.

Hotel Near Látrabjarg

Day 5: To Flatey Island

Following lunch we take a ferryboat from Brjánslækur across Breiðafjörður to the little Island of Flatey. The southern islands of Breiðafjörður Bay are teeming with a fantastic variety of bird life including the Common Shag, Glaucous Gull, White Tailed Eagle, Common Eider, Black Guillemot, Puffin and Grey Necked phalarope. Both the Common and Grey Seal have their main haul out on these islands and skerries. Our traditional, comfortable hotel is in the only small village on the island. It only

opens May – July. The island has only one single road, which leads from the ferry dock to the so-called “old village”. This consists of some beautifully restored and painted old houses of the island's original inhabitants. The cliffs are small, birds are everywhere and remarkably tame. There is an old harbour and a church built in 1926. The church's interior is painted with scenes of the island life, made by a Catalan painter, Baltasar Samper in the 1960s in return for free accommodation when he was visiting the island. Whilst here we will have the opportunity to work together on our images and also see some inspiring presentations from the course tutors. Our meals will be very traditional with local produce cooked by our hosts. The Island is a truly magical place to relax and make some wonderful images.

Hotel Flatey

Day 6: Afternoon Ferry to Stykkishólmur

Following a full days photography on Flatey, we take the evening ferry to Stykkishólmur. We will have dinner on board. There is the chance of encountering some interesting birdlife en route. We will be passing very close to where the Sea Eagle nests and will hopefully catch sight of these magnificent birds. Once in Stykkishólmur we drive along the northern coast of Snæfellsnes to our accommodation in Grundarfjörður. Maybe we will be lucky enough to catch some lovely evening light around this beautiful location. Whilst on Snæfellsnes we will stay in a comfortable house where we will enjoy meals together that have been prepared and cooked by the lovely Charlotte. It has to be said that meals a la Charlotte are a real treat and her chocolates are to die for! Our base here is where we eat and hang out together. There will be

time here to review, work on our images and enjoy some presentations both from our tutors and participants.
Guest House Grundarfjörður

Day 7–9 Birds & Landscapes Snæfellsnes

There are many superb landscape photographic locations all around the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. During our three days based here, we will make decisions according to the prevailing conditions. Needless to say we have some remarkable spots up our sleeve, including some great sunrise and sunset places. These locations will include, fishing villages, sea stacks and arches, black beaches, green moss lava fields, volcanic craters and lakes, Snæfellsjökull (glacier) and Kirkjufell Mountain. Birds are everywhere on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula at this time of year, here are a few of our probable locations:

Svörtuloft is a scenic spectacular bird-cliff teeming with birds on the far western tip of Snæfellsnes. It is very easy to photograph the birds from the cliff edge. Among species that live there are Kittiwake, Fulmar, Shags and Razorbill.

Hraunsfjörður is a very atmospheric mini fjord in the rugged Berserkjahraun, there are many species living here in the summer, the location also boasts fabulous landscape that is quintessentially Icelandic.

Kolgrafafjörður is a rich place for birds, up to forty species have been seen here in the summertime and also a common spot to see Sea Eagles fishing.

Púfubjarg is a lovely sandstone cliff on the south of the peninsula with very easy access. It is home to a large noisy Kittiwake colony, North Atlantic Fulmars Razorbills and Guillemots are quite common here too. When the

sea is peaceful it is also possible to access this cliff from the bottom.

The area between Hellissandur and Rif is a bird-lover's paradise. The area has an area of shallow ponds that support many species and one of the largest arctic tern nesting areas in Iceland can be found here.

Hellnar is where we find lovely green boulders and a Kittiwake colony that is very accessible. Just along the track at the top of the cliffs going west are small pools where we will possibly find phalaropes.

Guest House Grundarfjörður

Day 10: Snæfellsness & Reykjavík

Today we will spend the morning on Snæfellsnes before leaving in the afternoon for the two and half hour drive to Reykjavík. In the evening we will go out for a celebratory dinner in the city.

Hotel Reykjavík

Day 11: Homeward Flights

Transfer to Reykjavík International airport and homeward flights. WPH services finish after breakfast.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 10 hotel nights
- All meals
- Transfers to and from domestic airport
- Transport and ferries
- Internal flight to the Northwest
- Photographic tuition

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International Flights
- Transfers from/to Iceland's international airport

- Drinks and snacks between included meals
- Alcoholic beverages
- Insurance

JOINING ARRANGEMENTS AND TRANSFERS

We will meet for the first time as a group on Day 1 at the hotel in Reykjavík 19:00 for introductions, a trip briefing and dinner together.

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

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

ACCOMMODATION

We will be using a variety of accommodation. In Reykjavík we will stay in a 3-star hotel in the city centre. Out of Reykjavík we will stay for 8 nights in scenically situated accommodations chosen for their proximity to great birdlife and landscapes. On Flatey we stay in a comfortable, traditional hotel, (the only one on the island) and here we have twin or single rooms with shared bathroom

facilities. The remainder of our accommodation throughout the trip all have private bathrooms. The price is based on two people sharing a room. If you would like a single room throughout then there will be an extra single supplement. The price is on our web site. If you choose to share, we will team you up with another guest of the same gender.

FOOD

In Reykjavík, Látrabjarg and Flatey we will eat dinner in local or hotel restaurants. Lunch will usually be a picnic. Breakfasts are always at our accommodation. In Grundarfjörður our guides will cook our food. Please ensure that you let us know on your booking form of any special dietary needs.

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

Please ensure that you have adequate Travel Insurance that includes repatriation in case of accident. Please make sure your equipment is insured too. Iceland is not in the EU, so please check with your insurance company that their cover extends to non-EU countries.

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

A passport valid for at least three months beyond length of stay required by all except nationals of Austria, Belgi-

um, 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 those with 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, there may be rain, sunshine, drizzle and snow all in the same day. As far as we can make a guess, expect weather that is probably similar to April/May in the UK. 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

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. For the lower body choose a pair of trousers that you can move in easily rather than jeans as the latter take a very long time to dry should we be caught in a shower and provide little protection against wind-chill

when wet. If you have any questions feel free to contact us at anytime before the trip.

SUGGESTED CLOTHING/EQUIPMENT

- Warm trousers (not jeans)
- Long sleeved thermal tops and leggings
- Long sleeved shirt/tee-shirt
- Light fleece/wool jumper
- Warm fleece type jacket
- Waterproof Jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Warm socks
- Lightweight walking boots/shoes
- Wellington boots
- Light warm hat
- Gloves
- Casual clothes for hotel wear
- Sun cream, sunglasses & sun hat
- Small basic first aid to include plasters, blister repair e.g. Compede, needle/cotton & any personal medicines
- Small penknife

PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT AND 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 mirrorless system 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, 17–50mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom.

- As long a telephoto lens as you own and are comfortable to carry in the field. Tele zooms of 80–400mm or 150–600mm are a good choice.
- 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 – mechanical or electronic remote to avoid shake on long exposures.
- Although not essential camera filters such as neutral density, graduated filters and polarisers can be useful. 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

Iceland maps can be bought at ferdakort.is

Maps are also for sale in the local shops/garages. Small maps for around 400 ISK are available locally in the different areas we visit.

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. This book is popular and often out of stock here in Iceland.

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

The [Icelandic Birding Pages](#)

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.

MORE QUESTIONS?

While we hope that this information has answered most of your questions about the holiday, we know it will not give you all the information you need. If you have any more questions, please get in touch. Talking to us on the phone (we will always call you back) can often be a quick way of sorting out individual questions. It also helps us to get to know each other before the holiday.

BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Fill in the [online booking form](#), or give us a call on +44 (0)1630 647828.

LINKS

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

IMAGE CREDITS

All images by Wild Photography Holidays and Pål Hermansen.