

# WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



## NORTH ICELAND

### WINTER WONDERLAND VOLCANOS, WATERFALLS & AURORA

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- Cozy lakeside accommodation
- Northern lights
- Superb home cooking
- Bathe in Mývatn Spa (optional)
- Ice encrusted waterfalls
- Goðafoss, Dettifoss & Selfoss
- Bizarre lava formations
- Volcanic craters
- Bubbling mud pools
- Frozen lakes and snowy landscapes
- Steaming lava fissures
- Two spectacular flights across Iceland
- Icelandic horses in winter

#### INTRODUCTION

Introducing an exciting new winter trip based far from the madding crowd in Iceland's frozen North. Flying from Reykjavík on day two, we make a spectacular flight North with Air Iceland Connect to a truly Icelandic winter wonderland. From desolate craters to bubbling mud pools and geothermal caves, the area around Lake Mývatn is a microcosm of all the natural wonders that Iceland has to offer. Participants will be blown away by the diversity and uniqueness of the photographic locations. Weird, wonderful snowy landscapes, geothermal phenomena, frozen lakes, wacky lava formations, ice-encrusted waterfalls with some fine locations for the northern lights. It is hardly surprising that many locations around this area

were used for filming scenes from 'Game of Thrones'. We will visit the steamy geothermal cave where Jon Snow and Ygritte have their first intimate romantic encounter. It is forbidden to bathe here although close by we can take a dip in Jarðböðin one of Iceland's premier outdoor spa pools set right in the midst of this remarkable winter wonderland. North Iceland will generally experience the aurora before the south purely due to its more northerly position. Where better to see the aurora than from the shore of Lake Mývatn where we stay for five nights in warm, cozy cottages facing the northern skies. Expect to return home with some magical and unique Iceland winter images together with a bunch of good memories and new friends!



## DAILY ITINERARY

### Day 1: Arrival and Reykjavík

Transfer from Keflavík, Reykjavík's International airport to our city Hotel. We meet at 19:00 for introductions and a trip briefing before a traditional Icelandic dinner in town.

Hotel Reykjavík

### Day 2–6: Fly to Akureyri, North Iceland

This morning we transfer to Reykjavík's domestic airport for a morning flight to Iceland's northern capital, Akureyri. The town is Iceland's second largest and is home to around 18,500 people. From the airport it is only a one-hour drive to our well-situated cottages by Lake Mývatn. Our base is central and close to all locations affording the flexibility of making on the spot decisions about where and when to photograph, we will be guided by variables such as the weather, snow cover, ice formations, sunrise and sunset, aurora forecasts and participants energy levels. We spend five nights at this cozy accommodation by the lake. We have many excellent photographic locations up our sleeves. Our daily photo-

graphic itinerary will be wholly dependent on the prevailing conditions relating to weather, aurora possibilities weighed up with the energy levels of participants. The following is a brief summary of our main photographic locations:

#### Goðafoss

One of Iceland's most impressive and beautiful waterfalls. We may well photograph this incredible waterfall en route from the airport. We see the spray well before the waterfall itself. Goðafoss is located in river Skjálfandafljót that runs through Bárðardalur in Northeast Iceland. Skjálfandafljót runs across a lava field, which is approximately 7000 years old. Through the ages the force of the river has cut a ravine of three kilometres through the lava field. This stunning rocky canyon is just below the falls and is about one hundred metres wide. Rocky promontories in the horseshoe shaped edge of the falls divide Goðafoss into two main falls with a few smaller ones, depending on the flow. There are several different vantage points for us to photograph from. The falls



look especially attractive in winter when they often become ice-encrusted.

#### Dettifoss & Selfoss

Dettifoss is Iceland's greatest and most majestic waterfall. It is also rated as Europe's most powerful waterfall, based on its magnitude. If the road is open we make the journey into the Jökulsárgljúfur Canyon to capture this natural phenomenon. Fewer people make it here in the wintertime. Dettifoss is forty-five metres in height and one hundred metres wide. Its force is such that the bed-rock trembles when hit by the weight of an immense column of white-foaming water. The fierce torrent of water flows from Europe's largest ice cap, Vatnajökull. In winter the waterfall and ravine become ice encrusted making for some very special images. Two Kilometres upstream we encounter the beautiful and highly photogenic waterfalls of Selfoss. the vantage points for this lovely amphitheatre of waterfalls are second to none, you won't be disappointed! Here by these outstanding waterfalls we find ourselves on the very edge of Iceland's interior where no human habitation is possible.







### **Grjótagjá**

Grjótagjá is a subterranean steaming geothermal cave with mysterious light. This is the cave in Game of Thrones that becomes Jon Snow and Ygritte's love nest.

### **Dimmuborgir**

The Mývatn area is right on the boundaries between the American and the Eurasian tectonic plates, which are drifting apart, causing the high volcanic activity in the area. Dimmuborgir ('dark castles') were created about 2300 years ago during extensive volcanic eruption. A tremendous volume of lava flowed from a 12 km long fissure south of Hverfjall and ran through Laxárdalur and Aðaldalur valleys all the way down to the sea in Skjálfandi bay.

Geologists believe that during this eruption something blocked the flow of lava causing the formation of a lake of lava. As the lava in the lake had started to solidify the blockage gave way and the molten lava flowed out leaving behind the parts that had solidified. These unique conditions created geological formations, which have not been found above water anywhere else in the world. These weird lava formations, 'dark castles', make for some really unusual landscape images, especially when combined with snow. Dimmuborgir is home to one of Iceland's most iconic birds, the Gyr Falcon. This is another Game of Thrones location.

### **Hverarönd**

A decidedly lunar looking location, with scorched yellow earth and sulphuric acid melting the ground into bub-

bling mud. This surreal, colourful geothermal landscape is bursting with mud pots, steam vents, sulphur deposits, boiling springs and fumaroles. During the winter this is a fine location for sunrise with the sun gently lighting the steam giving an unearthly glow to the surroundings. This is a great location for both abstract and more general photographic landscape work. This is an area that provided lots of the special effects during the filming of Game of Thrones.

### **Pseudo Craters**

These crater groups on the shore were formed by steam explosions as glowing lava poured into Mývatn. During the wintertime they are snow covered and provide ideal subjects for some very graphic and unusual landscape images.



### Lake Mývatn

Lake Mývatn is a shallow eutrophic lake situated not far from Krafla volcano and was created by a large basaltic lava eruption over 2300 years ago. Its name, which derives from large swarms of midge found near the lake during summer, literally translates to Midge Lake. During the winter most of the lake freezes over and we can sometimes wander out onto the ice. Often the ice piles up on the shore making some interesting foreground for landscapes. There are parts of the lake that are heated geothermically and they do not freeze. This works well for reflections of both landscape and the aurora. The area around Reykjahlíð is especially fine for photographing the Northern Lights.

### Hverfjall Crater

The immense, charred black crater of Hverfjall looms across the east side of the lake. In winter this black snow-covered crater dominates the village skyline; it is possible to walk to the rim for some really wild and different aerial shots of the surrounding landscape. The crater looks really striking when snow sits in the gullies

to giving a black and white 'Zebra Effect' often popular with our photographers.

### Icelandic horses

The ever-popular Icelandic horses are prolific in the area, guaranteeing some interesting images. The horses are especially interesting if we are lucky enough to photograph them in a snow blizzard! They are a very special breed of horse dating back purely to the Viking times, their fur is double layered and exceedingly warm. When shelter is provided the animals often do not even bother to go there. Generally speaking the horses tend to be much more friendly in the wintertime as they don't have a great deal to do other than interact with the tourists.

### Other Location Possibilities

Mývatn area was first and foremost a farming and fishing area, more recently tourism has become important. Many of the old practices are still adhered to. For example trout and salmon is smoked in the specially adapted stone smoke houses with turf roofs. The fuel for this smoking procedure is either birch wood or sheep 'poo'! Traditional local black bread is still cooked in family



ovens under ground using steam from the hot earth. Magna is very close to the surface of the earth here.

### Mývatn Nature Baths

A short distance uphill from the lake is Jarðböðin, the north's version of the Blue Lagoon. This spa is easily one of Iceland's finest. Here we find a great place to soothe aching limbs after a hard day photographing! Mývatn Nature Baths has magnificent views down from the mountain and across the lake. The entrance is not included in the price of the holiday.

### Day 7: Photography and flight to Reykjavík

We will spend the day photographing en route. We will have an early celebratory last night dinner in Akureyri before catching the evening flight to Reykjavík.

### Day 8: Transfers to the International airport

This morning participants transfer to Reykjavík's International airport for homeward flights.



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

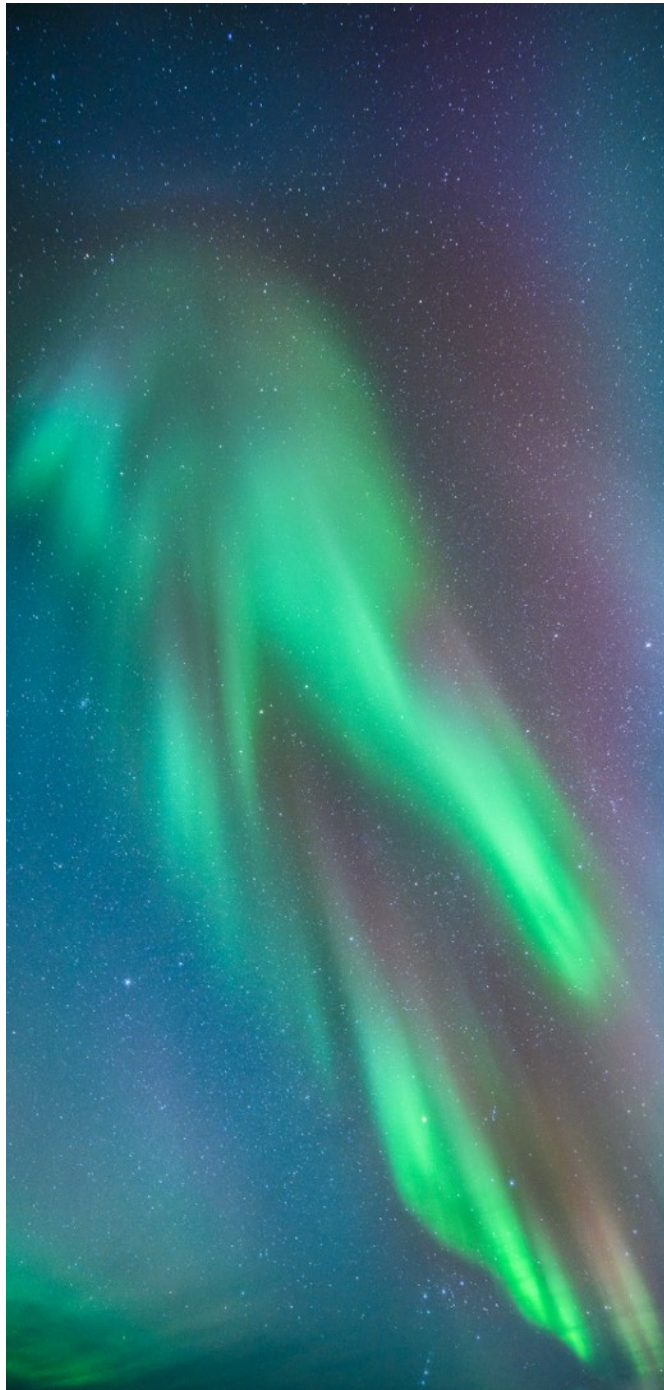
The Flybus transfer is not included in the price of the holiday.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 7 nights accommodation
- All meals
- Transfers to and from domestic airport
- Photography tuition
- Two in-country flights Reykjavík–Akureyri–Reykjavík
- Single rooms without extra charge

### • WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights



- Transfers to and from 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 stay in a scenically located lakeside hotel. The price is based on single rooms; there are no extra single supplements. Double or twin rooms are available for friends and couples who wish to share.

### Food

For the first and last night in Reykjavík we eat dinner at a city restaurant. Charlotte will cater for meals in the country except for breakfast, which will be provided by the hotel. 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' as you will be able to drink your own alcohol with meals!

## SPENDING MONEY

At the moment it is difficult to get ISK before arriving, this can be done easily at the airport ATM machine on arrival. Credit cards are accepted in all places.



### 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 competent 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.

### 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 & EQUIPMENT

- Down or artificial fibre duvet jacket
- Warm trousers that allow flexibility of movement
- Long sleeved thermal tops and leggings
- Light fleece/wool jumpers



- Thicker warm fleece type jacket
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Warm socks, a few pairs
- Warm waterproof boots good for walking in
- Warm hat
- Neck warmer such as [the Buff](#)
- 1–2 pairs warm gloves that enable using camera controls whilst wearing
- Casual clothes, jeans etc for hotel wear
- Indoor shoes/slippers
- Sun cream and sunglasses
- Ski poles useful for walking in snow.
- Head torch
- Small basic first aid & any personal medicines
- Small towel
- [Hot Hands](#) or similar hand warmers
- Wash kit
- Ice grips, see below





## ICE GRIPS

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 are 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.
- Spare camera
- 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
- Camera 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 WiFi.
- Backup storage device (optional)
- Spare batteries and chargers

All electrical sockets are European two-pin plugs, so you might need a travel plug adapter.

## **PARTNERS**

Although this is primarily a photography holiday, non-photographer partners will be very welcome as there are many options and interesting possibilities in addition to taking photographs.

## **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)1270 440222.

## **LINKS**

View [images and information for this tour](#) on the website.

Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#)