

# WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



## ICELAND'S BIRDS MÝVATN LÁTRABJARG & MAGICAL FLATEY ISLAND

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Peak time for birds in Iceland
- Lake Mývatn & breeding ducks
- Colourful geothermal areas
- Volcanic phenomena
- North West Fjords
- Alpine flowers
- Unusual landscapes
- Flatey Island
- Snæfellsnes Peninsula
- Látrabjarg Europe's most westerly point
- Puffins & diverse seabirds
- Sunrises and sunsets in dramatic locations

### INTRODUCTION

Our creative adventure photographing birds in the Icelandic landscape starts at the end of May when the birdlife is at its most active and prolific. Our locations will concentrate on the North and Northwest of Iceland. They will include Lake Mývatn and its surroundings, the Northwest Fjords including Látrabjarg, one very special night on the magical Island of Flatey in Breiðafjörður finishing off with a night on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. May and early 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 puffins lit by the midnight sun when

most other folks are asleep. Whilst there is an emphasis on birds, we cannot 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.

### DAILY ITINERARY

#### Day 1: Arrival Akureyri

Wild Photography Holidays' services commence with a single transfer from Akureyri airport to our first night hotel where we have a group meeting, introductions and a trip briefing. The transfer will meet the Air Iceland



flight arriving from Reykjavík at 20:55. Our first night hotel is close to the airport. We suggest that you have dinner in Reykjavik before taking this flight. Your flight can be booked on one Icelandair ticket to Akureyri from several international hubs such as London, Manchester, Paris etc. For more information regarding flights please contact the WPH office. Should you wish to fly up to Akureyri a day earlier we would be able to book you into the hotel for an extra night although this is not included in the price of this holiday.

Hotel Akureyri

### **Day 2: To Mývatn**

This morning we transfer to our comfortable cottages situated right next to Mývatn, Iceland's fourth largest lake. Mývatn is located at the edge of the volcanic zone cutting through the north of Iceland. It is fed by water welling up from a number of springs on the lakeshore. Craters and volcanoes dominate the landscape. The shoreline is deeply incised by numerous small inlets and speckled with about 50 islands and small islets. Mývatn is famed for its birdlife both on and around the lake. In

May all migrants have arrived and the birds are very conspicuous, defending their territories. In summer more species of duck have made their homes in the Mývatn region than in any other location on earth, it is a paradise for birdwatchers. We have often photographed the great northern diver too. The River Laxá flowing from the lake is the prime habitat for harlequin and barrow's goldeneye in Iceland; these two ducks do not breed anywhere else in Europe. Our first evening will be spent investigating some of the locations where we will photograph over the next two full days.

Cottages Lake Mývatn (B,L,D)

### **Day 3-5: Birds and Landscapes of the Mývatn Area**

Over the next two days we will make the most of the long hours of daylight by exploring the best of what this area has to offer both in terms of birdlife and the unique landscape. The area is starkly beautiful, an otherworldly landscape of spluttering mud pots, weird lava formations, steaming fumaroles, volcanic craters, serene pools and breeding birds crazy with hormones. We always do our best to meet our guests expectations. We will con-

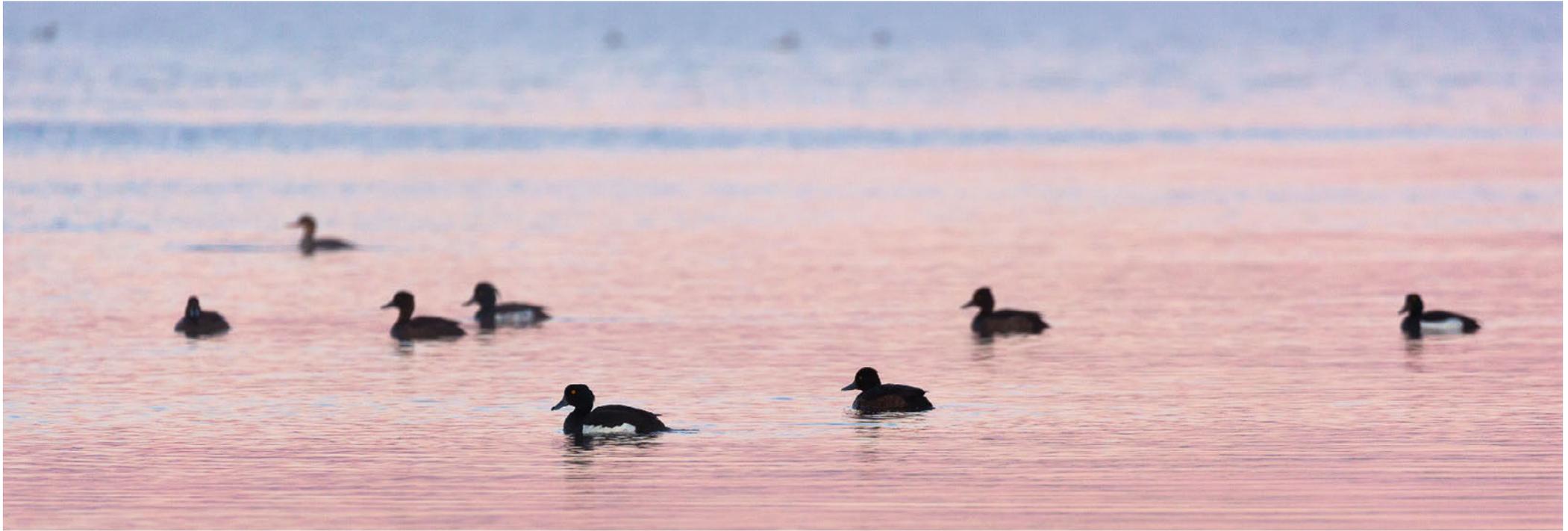


centrate on photographing birds in the landscape; our tutors will be helping you to do this in a creative way. They will also to make sure that you have a full grasp of the technical skills required for modern bird photography. Keep a look out for the gyrfalcons who nest in the area and find rich pickings during the breeding season. 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. During our four days in Mývatn Charlotte Benvie will be cooking for us. She is both a superb chef and professional chocolatier, her renowned hospitality is always a highlight of our trips.

Cottages Lake Mývatn (B,L,D)

### **Day 6: To the Northwest**

Today we make a journey through the fertile landscape of Northern Iceland towards north west Iceland. We will make some photographic stops en route. We stay for the night close to one of Iceland's very interesting bird loca-



tions near Reykhólar where a wide variety of birds can be photographed. The wetlands are of particular interest here.

Hotel North West (B,L,D)

#### **Day 7–8: 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 a relatively unspoiled way. Our hotel is beautifully located about thirty minutes drive from the magnificent Látrabjarg, Europe's largest bird cliffs and the most westerly point of Europe. We will spend our two days here exploring the area making excursions to the Látrabjarg Cliffs. These vast cliffs are home to millions of birds, including puffins, northern gannets, north Atlantic

fulmars, guillemots 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 puffins who actually breed at the lowest part of the cliff very close to where we park our vehicles. The landscape itself is wild and photographically rich. 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 many wading birds and some superb sand patterns.

Hotel Látrabjarg (B,L,D)

#### **Day 9: To Flatey Island**

Following breakfast we drive to Brjánslækur where we board the ferry 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, puffins and grey 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 June to July. The island has a single track, 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 in the endless daylight. Hotel Flatey (B,L,D)

#### **Day 10: Evening Ferry to Grundarfjörður**

After spending the day on Flatey, we take the evening ferry crossing to Stykkishólmur. There is the chance of encountering some interesting birdlife en route. We will be passing very close to where sea eagles nest and will hopefully catch sight of these magnificent birds. Once in Stykkishólmur we drive along the northern coast of Snæfellsnes to our waterfront hotel in Grundarfjörður. Hopefully we will catch some lovely evening light around this beautiful location. A main feature is Mount Kirkjufell

and the waterfalls of Kirkjufellsfoss.

Hotel Grundarfjörður (B,L,D)

#### **Day 11: Snæfellsnes & Reykjavík**

An early hours sunrise shoot for the enthusiastic is followed by breakfast. Today we will explore some of the best locations that Snæfellsnes has to offer before leaving late afternoon for the two and half hour drive to Reykjavík. This evening we will go out for a celebratory dinner in the city.

Hotel Reykjavík (B,L,D)

#### **Day 12: Homeward Flights**

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

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#### **JOINING ARRANGEMENTS AND TRANSFERS**

On Day 1 there will be an included group transfer from Akureyri Airport to our first night hotel.



#### **WHAT'S INCLUDED**

- 11 nights accommodation
- All meals
- Transport and ferries
- Photographic tuition
- Transfer from Akureyri Airport

#### **• WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED**

- Flights
- Transfer from/to international airport
- Drinks and snacks between included meals
- Alcoholic beverages
- Insurance

#### **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 9 nights in scenically located country accommodations chosen for their locations and proximity to great birdlife and landscapes. On Flatey we stay in a comfortable, traditional hotel, (the only one

on the island) where we have twin or single rooms with shared bathroom facilities. In Mývatn we stay in attractive 2 bedroomed or single bedroomed cottages by the lake. The single cottages are limited so enquire at the time of booking. The two bedroomed cottages are spacious with a shared bathroom.

#### **FOOD**

We will eat dinner in local or hotel restaurants. Lunch will either be a picnic or taken in local cafes/restaurants. Breakfasts are always at our accommodation. The most common Icelandic dishes are fish and lamb. In Mývatn Charlotte Benvie will be cooking for us. She is a superb chef and professional chocolatier. Her renowned hospitality is always a highlight of our trips.

#### **ALCOHOL**

This is rather expensive in Iceland. It is 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 some 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, 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, 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.

## 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)1630 647828.

## LINKS

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