

# WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



## ICELAND'S SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

**LANDMANNALAUGAR  
ÞÓRSMÖRK & FJALLABAK**

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Landmannalaugar's rhyolite mountains
- Stakkholtsgjá ravine and waterfall
- Fjallabak Nature Reserve
- Canyons of Þórsmörk
- Mælifell emerald green volcano
- Hrauneyjafoss waterfalls
- Black sands & glacial rivulets
- Landmannahellir
- Rauðibotn crater
- Frostastaðavatn lake & Strútur crater
- Háifoss, Granni & Hjalparfoss waterfalls
- Ljótípollur, Hnausapollur & Gjáin Valley
- Rauðufossakvísl

### INTRODUCTION

Iceland offers some of the best photography locations worldwide, none more so than within the vast interior of Iceland where we encounter the wild uninhabited region known as the Southern Highlands the Fjallabak Nature Reserve. Travelling into these wild areas is only really possible for maybe three months in summer when the road is clear of snow. The combination of a specialist vehicle/driver and photographic guides with excellent local knowledge allows the enthusiastic and adventurous landscape photographer an unrivalled opportunity to visit a number of unique and seldom frequented locations. We will include some of the remotest and most beautiful mountain landscapes in the world.

Your photographic guides will be WPH owners Martin Sammtleben and Geraldine Westrupp who will be joined James Rushforth, acclaimed author of Photographing Iceland. This is a vastly experienced team well qualified to enable you to make the very best photographically of your highlands exploration. We will be travelling together in a specially modified 4x4 vehicle expertly driven by our Icelandic driver-guide. The walking trails and locations between Landmannalaugar, Þórsmörk and Mælifell have been nominated several times by National Geographic as a world-class locations for remarkable and unique photography. There will be many options to explore locations close to our bases and our well modified vehicle will also enable guests of all abilities to travel to some fabulously



rewarding, remote and truly out there Icelandic Highland locations.

This is an exciting photographic adventure in one of Iceland's most sought after areas. We have recently added four nights in a highland hotel with single or double ensuite bathrooms replacing the previous mountain hut/sleeping bag accommodation. We have also ensured that we are able to visit an array of superb photographic locations by utilising a high-end, comfortable and roomy 4x4 vehicle, to enable all our guests to travel and access these superb and remote locations.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC TUTORS AND GUIDES

This tour will be led by Martin Sammtleben, Geraldine Westrupp and James Rushforth.

## DAILY ITINERARY

### Day 1: Arrival in Reykjavík

Participants will be arriving on a variety of flights; Flybus tickets will be sent out in advance. The first night's accommodation in a three-star Reykjavík city hotel is in-

cluded. We will meet for introductions and a tour briefing at 19:00 before heading out into the city for dinner together.

Hotel Reykjavík (D)

### Day 2: Drive to Þórsmörk

Our adventure starts after an early breakfast, as we follow the ring road south before branching out off the beaten track onto the 4x4 road to Þórsmörk. We will stop to explore Gluggafoss and Nauthúsagil Ravine on the way – two beautiful and seldom frequented waterfall locations. The drive is exciting, with no less than 15 rivers to ford. Fortunately, we will be travelling in a specially modified vehicle driven by an experienced Icelandic driver. The challenging approach will make for some dramatic photo opportunities and the landscape we will pass through is superb. Our accommodation, The Volcano Huts in Þórsmörk are perfectly located for exploring this fascinating area.

Volcano Cabins Þórsmörk (B,L,D)



### Day 3: Exploring Þórsmörk

Þórsmörk is tucked away between 3 ice caps, Mýrdalsjökull, Tindfjallajökull and Eyjafjallajökull the latter of which brought European air travel to a standstill during its 2010 eruption! Þórsmörk or 'Thor's forest' offers some fabulous and unusual photography. Over the next two days, we will explore this intricate network of birch studded canyons. This will be both on foot and using the vehicle to get us further afield. One such canyon is the Stakkholtsgjá a mystical 100 metre deep canyon. Entering the gorge we pass through high palagonite cliffs festooned with dripping green vegetation and fascinating caves. The ravine itself leads to a majestic waterfall. The volcano huts are in a stupendous location for photography.

Volcano Cabins Þórsmörk (B,L,D)

### Day 4,5: Southern Highlands & Fjallabaksleið Syðri

Leaving Þórsmörk we will return to the ring road to make a quick stop at Hvolsvöllur to resupply before entering the southern highlands proper. More challenging driving awaits with several large river crossings as we drive





Fjallabaksleið Syðri, one of Iceland's most stunning and awe-inspiring mountain roads with with photographic stops at the lake Álftavatn and Mount Hattafell together with any other sights that catch our creative attention. Our remote highland accommodation is situated directly underneath the mesmerizing and legendary Mælifell mountain. This stunning solitary green moss covered volcano is surrounded by a dramatic black expanse of volcanic desert and it is an ideal base for exploring the nearby Hólmsárlón lake together with the opportunity to explore several secret craters.  
Strútur Mountain Hut (B,L,D)

#### **Day 6: Strútur to Hrauneyjar via Landmannalaugar**

Frequently cited as one of the most scenic drives in the world, our southern approach to Hrauneyjar via Land-

mannalaugar along the F208 contains a wealth of photographic opportunities. This really is the road less travelled. The journey is fascinating with many river crossings and stunning vistas which unfold one after another. We may make a short diversion to the Eldgjá canyon before arriving at the Landmannalaugar campgrounds for some evening light passing through stunning landscape we continue North to our comfortable Highland Hotel, home for the next four nights.

Highland Hotel Sprengisandur (B,L,D)

#### **Day 7,8,9: Landmannalaugar Exploration**

For the next three days we will explore some magical locations in the Fjallabak Nature Reserve:

**Fjallabak Nature Reserve:** this area in the Icelandic Highlands surrounds Landmannalaugar and has been

protected since 1979. The entire area is more than 500 metres above sea level and characterised by colourful mountains, geothermal valleys and volcanic activity. The colour is due to the rhyolite and obsidian making the ground appear green, blue, pink, red and yellow. Lava fields, rivers and lakes also make their mark on this nature reserve. We will explore and photograph the very best that this unique area offers.

**Hrauneyjafoss waterfalls & Sigöldugljúfur canyon:** this superb location is a little north and close to our hotel on the Sprengisandur Road. After parking a short walk of one kilometre takes us to the edge of the Sigöldugljúfur canyon and we can look down on the turquoise water flowing in the river below. This rugged canyon winds, twists and turns into the distance. Waterfalls of all de-





scriptions burst through its sides, splashes of green adorn the canyon walls, complementing the bright water below. You can stroll along the canyon's rim to capture many unique perspectives of the waterfalls. Sigöldugljúfur is also called the “Valley of Tears” for to some it looks like the canyon is crying!

**Landmannalaugar in Fjallabak:** an outstanding visual spectacle. Winding between the pyramid peaks lie a series of braided rivers, blue crater lakes and steaming hot springs that gave the area its name (bath of the landmen). The natural hot pools located at Landmannalaugar campsite area provide the perfect place to relax and enjoy the landscape. There is a lifetime's worth of exploration to be done around here. Thanks to the proximity of peaks such as Bláhnjúkur and Suðurnámur, it's possible to make the most of the golden hours as well as taking advantage of any dramatic light throughout the day. Our vehicle makes exploration very accessible for many locations.

Highland Hotel Sprengisandur (B,L,D)

## Day 10: Hrauneyjar Highland Hotel to Reykjavík

Our drive back to Reykjavík on the last day of our Highlands exploration provides a suitable finale to the tour and we will stop at several locations including:

**Háifoss, Granni & Hjólpfoss:** Háifoss, one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Iceland is 122 meters high and the third highest in the island. It is situated in Fossá river, which is a spring water tributary to the Þjórsá, Iceland's longest glacial river. It runs through Þjórsárdalur and has created a deep gorge where the two waterfalls Háifoss and Granni cascade down. We can photograph from the rim of the canyon or from the bottom depending on energy levels.

**Ljótípollur:** an explosion crater and lake in the south Highlands. Its name means ‘Ugly Puddle’, despite the fact it is an incredibly beautiful site. Ljótípollur features blue waters, green vegetations growing up and down its slopes surrounded by vividly coloured red lava rock. It is part of the Veiðavötn volcanic area in the Fjallabak Nature Reserve.

**Hnausapollur:** Bláhylur lake also known as Hnausapollur, is an easily accessible and stunning sky-blue crater lake



in the heart of Iceland's Southern Highlands. It is just a short drive from Ljótípollur.

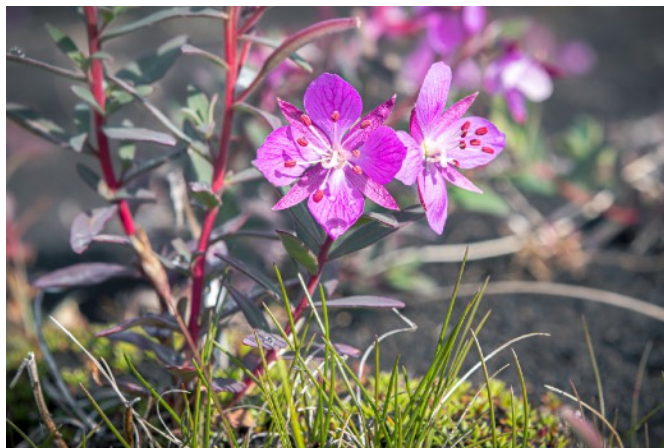
**Gjáin Valley:** located on the very edge of the Þjórsárdalur valley, the lush green Gjáin valley is surrounded by stark and barren landscape which gives us an interesting contrast to the greenery of Gjáin. We will encounter a large waterfall called Gjárffoss, a beautiful green oasis in the surrounding black desert.

Once back in Reykjavík we check in to our city hotel before heading out for a final celebratory dinner together. Hotel Reykjavík (B,L,D)

## Day 11: Homeward Flights

WPH services finish after breakfast. Guests may transfer on this day to Iceland's international airport for homeward flights. If you would like to stay at the hotel for an extra night, please enquire at the time of booking this holiday.

(B)



## 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.

## 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. The Flybus transfers are included and tickets will be sent out closer to departure.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Accommodation 10 nights
- All meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Guide/driver
- Airport transfers in Iceland
- Sleeping bag

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Alcohol and soft drinks
- Snacks and beverages other than with meals
- Anything not listed as included

## ACCOMMODATION

In Reykjavík the first and last night is in a 3 star city hotel with private bathrooms. Two nights in the Volcano Huts Þórsmörk comprise modern cabins with single or double rooms. The toilets are shared. They are close to



the rooms & inside the building. There are also hot showers and more toilets outside the building. There are also excellent natural hot tubs. The Strútur Mountain accommodation (2 nights) is all together in one sleeping area. WPH will provide new unused sleeping bags. There are hot showers and toilets outside close by the main building. The Highland Hotel (4 nights) Single or double hotel rooms with private ensuite bathrooms. If you pay a single supplement this will ensure a private room in Reykjavík (2 nights), Volcano Cabins Þórsmörk (2 nights) and the Highland Hotel (4 nights).

## FOOD

In Reykjavík we will eat in city restaurants. There is a restaurant/bar in Þórsmörk and a restaurant/bar in the Highland Hotel. In Strútur meals will be prepared and cooked by the guides.

## ALCOHOL

This is rather expensive in Iceland; it might be worth considering bringing a bottle of your favourite 'tippie' especially to drink in the remote areas! All the restaurants that we eat in serve alcohol.

## SPENDING MONEY

Icelandic Krona can be easily obtained at the airport ATM machine on arrival or later. There are ATM machines in Akureyri and Mývatn. Credit cards are accepted in almost 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.

### VISA REQUIREMENTS

Citizens of the Schengen countries, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia and most South American countries do not need a visa to travel to Iceland.

All other citizens need to check with either the [Icelandic Directorate of Immigration](#) or their local authorities.

### 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.



### CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

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

- Pair of warm trousers, fleece lined are great
- Thermal tops e.g. 'smart wool' (base layer)
- Thermal leggings e.g. 'smart wool' (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
- Casual clothes for hotel wear
- Sun cream, sunglasses
- Head torch
- Basic first aid items
- Swimwear and towel





### PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT & INFORMATION

- In addition to your chosen camera equipment you will need to carry a day pack that will also hold a few extra items such as water, spare layer etc. Specially designed camera rucksacks like F-Stop, Lowepro and Peak design will be fine.
- 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, 17–50mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom.

- Spare camera (highly recommended)
- Tripod and remote release
- Neutral density, graduated filters and polariser, if you use these. At least one neutral density filter of 4 to 6 stops is recommended.
- 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 tour as it may not be possible to buy more during the trip.
- Film users should bring enough film, as it will not be possible to buy in most 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, so you might need a travel plug adapter.

## MAPS AND BOOKS

Iceland maps can be bought at [ferdakort.is](http://ferdakort.is)

Maps are also for sale in the local shops/garages. Small maps 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.

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

## PARTNERS

Non-photographer partners will be very welcome. Although this is 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 tour and 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](#)

All images in this PDF by James Rushforth.