

WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



ICELAND'S HIGHLANDS

LANDMANNALAUGAR, ÞÓRSMÖRK & SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Landmannalaugar's rhyolite mountains
- Canyons of Þórsmörk
- Mælifell Volcano
- Landmannahellir & Rauðufossar
- Hólaskjól and Ófærufoss waterfalls
- Rauðibotn Crater
- Frostastaðavatn Lake & Strútur Crater
- Drive the F208 – Iceland's most beautiful road
- Háifoss and Granni waterfalls
- Braided channels along the Tungnaá river
- Rauðufossakvísl

INTRODUCTION

Iceland offers some of the best photography locations worldwide, none more so than within the vast interior of Iceland, in the wild uninhabited region known as the Highlands. Travelling into these areas is only possible during the summer months when the combination of a specialist vehicle and some cosy mountain accommodation allows the serious landscape photographer an unrivalled opportunity to visit a number of unique and seldom frequented locations – including some of the remotest and most beautiful mountain scenes in the world. Your photographic guide James Rushforth, author of *Photographing Iceland* is ideally qualified to enable you to make the very best of your exploration. We will be travel-

ling in a specially modified 4x4 vehicle expertly driven by our Icelandic driver-guide. It should come as no surprise that the walking trails between Landmannalaugar and Þórsmörk have been nominated several times by National Geographic as a world-class location for hiking and photography. There will be options to opt out of the hiking and to explore more locations close to our base or perhaps drive a little further afield with a driver, we can be very flexible on this.

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 ac-



commodation 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.
Accommodation: Hotel Reykjavík (D)

Day 2: Drive to Þórsmörk

Our adventure starts after an early breakfast, as we follow the ring road south to Þórsmörk, stopping to explore Gluggafoss and Nauthúsagil Ravine on the way – two beautiful and seldom frequented waterfall locations. The drive is difficult, with no less than 15 rivers to ford, the F249 claiming more vehicles than any other road in Iceland. Fortunately, we will be travelling in a specially modified vehicle, the challenging approach making for some dramatic photo opportunities. The Volcano huts are perfectly situated for exploring the labyrinth of interlocking valleys, with a bar and restaurant on site.
Accommodation: Volcano Huts Þórsmörk (B,L,D)

Day 3: Exploring Þórsmörk

Tucked away between the Mýrdalsjökull, Tindfjallajökull and Eyjafjallajökull ice caps, the latter of which brought

European air travel to a standstill during its 2010 eruption, Þórsmörk or 'Thor's forest' offers some of the best day hiking in Iceland. Over the next two days, we will explore this intricate network of birch studded canyons, both on foot and using the vehicle. Walking is not compulsory and there are excellent views from our accommodation.

Accommodation: Volcano Huts Þórsmörk (B,L,D)

Day 4&5: Southern Highlands & Fjallabaksleið Syðri

Leaving Þórsmörk we will make a quick stop at Hvolsvölur 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 mountain roads – with stops at Álftavatn and Hattafell. Our highland accommodation is situated directly underneath Mælifell, a stunning solitary volcano situated in a dramatic black expanse of volcanic desert. This is an ideal base for exploring the nearby Hólmssárlón lake, with the opportunity to explore several secret craters.

Accommodation: Strútur Mountain Hut (B,L,D)



Day 6: Strútur to Landmannalaugar

Frequently cited as one of the most scenic drives in the world, our southern approach to Landmannalaugar along the F208 contains a wealth of photographic opportunities. The journey is bumpy with many river crossings but any discomfort is more than compensated for by the stunning vistas which unfold one after another. We will make a short diversion to the Eldgjá canyon before arriving at the Landmannalaugar camping grounds in the evening. After dinner, the natural hot pools located at the campsite provide the perfect place to relax after a day's driving.

Accommodation: Landmannalaugar Huts (B,L,D)

Day 7&8: Landmannalaugar Hiking

Comprised of pure Rhyolite, the mountains of Landmannalaugar are justifiably world-famous and are undoubtedly one of the most dramatic landscape photography locations in the world. Due to a long cooling process, this slow-formed crystallised igneous rock gleams red, yellow, orange and brown when it catches the light. Add in purple, blue and green ash deposits from previous



eruptions and you have 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 land's men).

There will be a choice of hiking options depending on the conditions and group ability. There is a lifetime's worth of exploration to be done from the doorstep 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. Hiking is not obligatory and the views surrounding the campsite are stunning for anyone preferring a rest day.

Accommodation: Landmannalaugar Huts (B,L,D)

Day 9: Landmannalaugar Surroundings

A short drive west along the F225, negotiating several more river crossings, leads to Landmannahellir and the Rauðufossar river. We will then make the 4 km hike to the source of the Rauðufossakvísl, where a beautiful series of waterfalls, pools and surreal red ferrous rock awaits. Despite its close proximity to Landmannalaugar, this area is very much off the beaten track and it's easy to find solitude here.

Accommodation: Landmannalaugar Huts (B,L,D)

Day 10: Landmannalaugar to Reykjavík

The last day of the trip offers a fitting finale to the tour. On the drive back to Reykjavík we will stop at the volcanic crater lakes Ljótípollur and Hnauðapollur, visit Háifoss and Granni, one of the highest and most beautiful water-

falls in Iceland, and finally stop at Gjáin, a beautiful green oasis immersed 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. Accommodation: 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

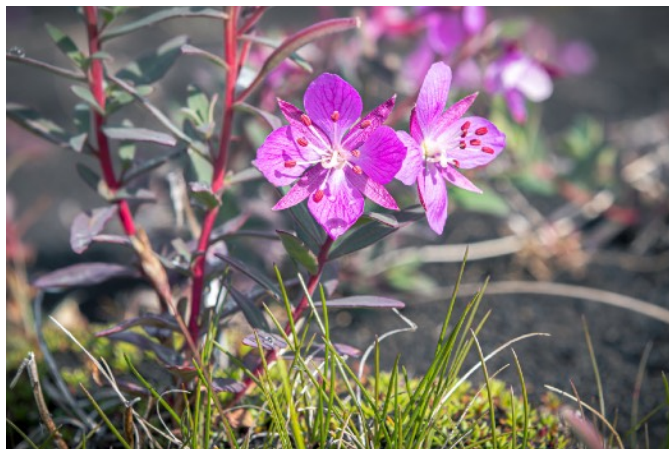
- Accommodation 10 nights
- All meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Guide/driver
- Airport transfers in Iceland

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Alcoholic beverages
- 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. Outside Reykjavík there is one night in a hotel with private facilities. Three nights in the Volcano Huts comprise modern cabins with single or double rooms. The toilets are shared and close by in the hallway. There are hot showers and toilets are outside the building. Close by, there are also excellent hot tubs. The Landmannalaugar accommodation (4 nights) is all together in one room and sleeping bags are necessary. The hot showers and toilets are outside and good quality. The hot tubs on site are a given as this is a famous geo-thermal area. If you pay a single supplement this will ensure a private room in Reykjavík (2 nights) Volcano Cabins Þorsmörk (3 nights) and the Highland Centre Hotel (1 night).



FOOD

We eat well. In 'civilisation' we will eat in local or accommodation restaurants. In Strútur & Landmannalaugar a series of hearty mountain meals will be prepared by the guides.

ALCOHOL

This is rather expensive in Iceland; it might be worth considering bringing a bottle of your favourite 'tipple' 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, repatri-

ation 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 frequently be walking in snow and on ice so good quality warm walking boots are recommended.

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
- Summer weight sleeping bag
- 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)
- Sturdy travel tripod for low light photography
- Remote release 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 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 plugs, 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 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.