

## Trek At the Doors of Hell

TFN 2012

Trek along Mt Hekla, the best renown of Iceland's volcanoes

6 days from/to Reykjavik– 8 days including Vestmann Islands extension - Trekking in hut and camp with 4wd support vehicle - Difficulty Level: moderate - 6 to 8 hours daily hiking – multi-national group – English speaking guide and assistant – 6 to 12 participants

This concentrated itinerary is part of our collection of trips that speak to the purest hiker with a spirit of adventure. This year, we are offering several departures for a maximum number of twelve participants. The Hekla volcano has always fascinated men and the magic that revolves around its reputation, which goes well beyond Iceland’s shores. Considered during the Middle Ages as an access to hell, Ancient Rome, in it's day, advised fishermen to see for them what lay beyond if they ventured as far. The volcano's eruptions have often ruined the countryside and were the source of worry for the people of Iceland, who feared and revered the volcano at the same time. But what was feared the most was that an eruption from one of the faces of the volcano would ruin its perfect shape. This beautiful strato-volcano (a volcanic edifice built over centuries through a series of volcanic eruptions) is still active and closely monitored by the volcanologist’s seismographs. We hike around the entire volcano from a reasonably safe distance in order to maintain safety and we stay informed of the relative volcanic activity.

With the exception of a lightweight daypack, all equipment and luggage is transported by a 4x4 support vehicle, which will make numerous detours in order to meet us at our evening destination. The guide is linked by radio to our base station and to the 4x4 assistance vehicle if required.

If you have more than a week to spend in Iceland, then it is possible to link this trek, before or after it, with a 6 day-overland discovery on the South Cost making altogether a fabulous journey of 13 days.

**Itinerary:** (B: breakfast – L: lunch – D: dinner)

### Day 1: Reykjavik – Hella – Rangá River

130 km – 2 hours driving– 3-4 hours hiking – 100 m elevation gain/loss - hut (L-D)

Early morning rendezvous with your guide at your accommodation. Hiking clothes and daypack ready for trekking (A bag with clean clothes for the end of your trip can be stored in your Reykjavik accommodation or in our store in the village of Hella). The trip begins. Approx. 2 hours road transfer to the trailhead. The majestic Hekla volcano rises above a grassy plain and marks the entrance to the high volcanic lands. It is probably Iceland’s most famous (or infamous!) and active volcano. Beginning on foot by late morning crossing grassland along the bank of river Eastern Rangá.

### **Day 2: Heklu Bæir – Hekla farmland**

6 hours hiking – 150 m elevation gain/loss – hut or camp (B-L-D)

In the direction of the farms cowering under Hekla's south face. These farms have had to move many times over the centuries as eruptions have engulfed them. However, much of the countryside is now verdant with some former lava flows covered in green moss and arctic birch.

### **Day 3: Southwest side of Mt. Hekla**

5-6 hours hiking – 200 m elevation gain/loss – hut (B-L-D)

Green moss, « bonsai » arctic birch grove along with the pure water springs, creates the feeling, perhaps, of a real Japanese garden. In August on this day, we can take a little longer as the berry and mushroom picking gets in the way of our passage.

### **Day 4: West side of Mt. Hekla**

7 hours hiking – 300 m elevation gain/loss – hut (B-L-D)

We cross the river Western Rangá, then we hike the last series of hills made from palagonite rock (sub-glacially formed) that protects the last fragments of burned countryside. On the far side, we arrive onto a moon-like surface at the foot of Mount Hekla and cross a stretch of perfectly flat volcanic slag. The black surroundings, so dark they resemble the blue colour of a crow's feathers.

### **Day 5: Valagjá – Pass of the lambs**

6 hours hiking – 300 m elevation gain/loss – hut (B-L-D)

We walk away from “the Gateway to Hell” (as Hekla was known in the middle ages) and the landscape begins to soften; the green colours of the mosses slowly covering lava fields and the pumices that rain on the land with each eruption. Crossing the “pass of the lambs” we walk in the direction of the majestic monolithic crown of Mount Loðmundur, surrounded by marshland and rich pasture, reflecting in the beautiful lake Loðmundarvatn. Until early August if weather and time permit your guide may propose the easy ascension of Mount Loðmundur after dinner, a flat-topped volcanic table mountain that erupted through glacial ice during the Ice Age. From the top of this monolith in good weather conditions nearly all central Iceland stretches before our eyes.

### **Day 6: Landmannalaugar**

5-6 hours hiking – 300 m elevation gain/loss – 230 km – 4 hours driving (B-L)

Hike on Domadalur to landmannalaugar. The area consists of more geological elements than you can count, but most obvious are the famous rhyolite mountains coming in all shades and colours. This place is quite famous and the access is now fairly easy by 4wd vehicle. It is the only place where we will meet other people in any numbers during the course of our journey. From Landmannalaugar we drive to Reykjavik where we arrive in late afternoon or early evening.

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**Notice:** Itinerary may be reversed or slightly modified, especially before the middle of July or in September. The duration of the daily hikes are only indicative and can be shorter or longer depending on weather, on terrain condition and on average shape of the group.

**Trip extension:** This trip can be combined with the 6 day South Coast & Highlands Discovery (see our 13 day-Walking between Ice & fire). You can also add 2 days to this trip by choosing to go on an extension to the Westmann Islands Archipelago. You can also stay a couple of days in Reykjavik enjoying the world's most northern capital. From there you can take short excursions to the Blue Lagoon or go whale watching...

### Dates 2012:

TFN 617: Jun 17 to 22	☼ ✓
TFN 624: Jun 24 to 29	☼ ✓
TFN 701: Jul 01 to 06	☼ ✓
TFN 708: Jul 08 to 13	☼ ✓
TFN 715: Jul 15 to 20	☼ ✓
TFN 722: Jul 22 to 27	☼ ✓
TFN 729: Jul 29 to Aug 03	♥
TFN 805: Aug 05 to 10	♥
TFN 812: Aug 12 to 17	♥
TFN 819: Aug 19 to 24	♥ ☆
TFN 826: Aug 26 to 31	♥ ☆
TFN 902: Sep 02 to 07	♥ ☆ ❄
TFN 909: Sep 09 to 14	☆ ❄
TFN 916: Sep 16 to 21	☆ ❄

☼ Clear nights - ✓ Birds - ♥ Blueberries & mushrooms - ☆ Colours of fall and Northern lights - ❄ Fresh falling snow on summits

**Price: 1300 €**

### Payment on line with Credit Card:

- Confirmation booking fee is **40%** of basic trip price, or 500 € for this trip
- Balance to be paid on line 60 days prior to departure

A pro forma invoice will be sent to you after we will have received your booking. Discount or extra charge, if any, will figure on this invoice.

Balance has to be paid 60 days prior to arrival.

(Payment by bank wire: Please contact us!)

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### Included:

- English speaking guide from day 1 to day 6
- Bus transfers to and from the mountains
- Transport of luggage by 4x4 assistance vehicle
- Accommodation in mountain huts and tents
- All meals from lunch day 1 to lunch day 6
- Family discount
- Travel agent sales commission

### Not included:

- Flights to/from Iceland
- Transfers from/to airport
- Accommodation and meals in Reykjavik
- Showers in the huts
- Drinks and other personal expenses
- Personal travel insurance

**Family discount:** -20% for children 8 to 11 years old and -10% for 12 to 16 years old included. This discount will be credited on our final invoice sent after we will have received your booking confirmation fee.

**Early bird discount:** -10% if you book more than 150 days before arrival and -5% more than 120 days before arrival

Doesn't apply for Reykjavik accommodation and airport transfers, for optional excursion, for children having a family discount and for private groups quotes

### Small group surcharge:

+ 200 € for a small group of 5 participants      + 300 € for a small group of 4 participants

If the group doesn't reach the minimum of 6 participants when booking your trip, a small group surcharge will apply and will be added on our final invoice. But, If at your arrival the group has reached the minimum size, we will refund this amount to you in cash in Iceland or by transferring it on your credit card. We will be grateful if you have paid this extra charge and that you see that your group is composed by 6 or more adult participants to mention it to your guide in the beginning of the trip

**Group size:** Multi-national group 6 to 12 members (Note: for group sizes of 4-5 persons a small group surcharge applies) Fjallabak's staff or Fjallabak's representatives accompanying professionals (e.g. photographers, journalists etc....) and other discounted travellers such as children, are excluded from the participant count (minimum and maximum)

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**To book this trip:** You can book directly through us unless we have a representative in your country. Then you should book your Fjallabak trip through him, without any extra charges for you. They will help you arrange your accommodation in Reykjavik at arrival and departure if you need, and will provide you with information about holiday insurance and flights to Iceland

**Transport:** A small bus for the transfer to starting point of the trek and return. Assistance jeep on the trek, carrying all luggage, equipment and supplies as well as tired or injured members of the group.

**Food:** We pride ourselves on providing the best cuisine in the highlands! Breakfast is Scandinavian-style, with muesli, breads, jams, fish and cheese. Packed lunch, with a variety of sandwich fillings, from smoked meats and fish to local cheeses. Dinners involve fresh, local fish and meat dishes, with pasta, rice or potatoes, fresh vegetables and salad. Vegetarians and those with food allergies can be fully catered for with a range of tasty options. It is essential that you inform our office of any special food requirements at the time of booking!

**Accommodation during the trip:** Sleeping bag accommodation in mountain huts (usually one comfortable, mixed bunkhouse) and depending on route and conditions, at the peak of the season 1 or 2 nights may be spent in spacious double tents equipped with comfortable mattresses. Showers are available in most of the huts.

**Trip preparation and notes: Walking level - Moderate.** 6-day assisted trek, carrying a light daypack. This should present no serious difficulty for persons with at least some mountain walking experience, plus a good level of personal fitness. An experienced Icelandic guide assisted by a driver leads the trek. The group is expected to assist with all aspects of making and breaking camp, including meal preparation. Once in the mountains, each group becomes an independent entity. The camaraderie, teamwork and friendships forged, add much to the richness of each person's experience. This trek passes through some areas of complete wilderness. Most of the trekking is off-track, with underfoot conditions constantly changing. Therefore, sturdy, well worn-in hiking boots are a must. Most days involve river crossings, so it is essential that all trekkers carry suitable footwear to change into. [See our kit list for more information.](#) We trek for 6-7 hours per day, on average, but this may be longer, depending on weather conditions and group speed. Maximum altitude doesn't rise more than 1000m. Elevation change for most days should be no more than 200m, rising to 400m the last day.

**Itinerary & Security:** The day by day itinerary as it is indicated here is subject to slightly changes depending on natural circumstances (late or early heavy snow, eruption threat, river inundation, storm...) The guide knows the field perfectly and is able to judge exceptional circumstances. The guide and the driver of the assistance vehicle are connected via the Fjallabak

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VHS Radio channel. They are also connected to the hut wardens, to other colleagues working in the same area, to the civil security and the mountain rescue team.

Maps from Landmælingar Islands / The Icelandic Geodetic Survey

Touring map 1:500 000 South Iceland, 1:250 000 <http://www.lmi.is>

Thórsmörk-Landmannalaugar 1:100 000 <http://www.mm.is>

### **Airport transfer: (not included!)**

Keflavik International Airport is 50 km from Reykjavik city centre. We recommend clients take the Flybus shuttle roundtrip service from the airport. See, <<http://www.re.is/Flybus>>

### **Accommodation in Reykjavik, the capital city: (not included!)**

It is possible to choose different types of accommodations in Reykjavik. We recommend that you book your accommodation directly online. It could be cheaper than to book it through us. Check info about accommodations rates and booking In the information section of our site.

**Extension of your stay :** From early July until mid-September, this trip can be combined with an extension to the Vestmann Islands (book in advance at the same time as the trip). Because you may not return to Iceland any time soon, and if you have a little more time, you should of course extend your stay for a few days, independently, in the most northern capital in the world. 1 or 2 extra days in Reykjavik who offers a relaxed and original ambiance with excellent coffee shops, great bookstores, fascinating Small museums and galleries, interactive art, extraordinary outdoor pools, spas and a rather unusual nightlife during the weekend. You can also book one or two extensions that can be booked by your guide or our organisation when in Iceland.

### **Optional tours & excursions after or before the trip :**

To be booked with Fjallabak when booking your trip or at the beginning of the trip.

- 1) Individual extension to the **Westmann Islands**, 2-3 days (see program on line)
- 2) The **Golden Circle** excursion in the gushing springs of Geysir, to the waterfall Gullfoss and Pinovella, the valley of the Parliament c.a. 65 € - 8 hours
- 3) The Golden Circle + rafting on the river of Hvítá c.a. 120 € - 10 hours
- 4) Snorkelling in the River Silver in the National Park of Þingvellir c.a. 90 € - 4 hours
- 5) Whale watching in the Bay of Faxaflói (Reykjavik) c.a. 55 € c.a. 3 hours (50% children disc.)
- 6) Laugar Reykjavik SPA 30 € - Swedish massage c.a.60 € available only by booking in advance
- 7) Bus fare to the Blue lagoon including entrance c.a. 42 € duration flexible 4 to 9 hours

Museums, concerts and events during the summer festival etc... <http://www.visitreykjavik.is>

*Decide your extension in advance because changing your flight once here in Iceland can be very expensive or impossible!*

## Westmann Islands Extension

2 extra days

A beautiful Individual extension after the tour

**D6:** The Fjallabak trip/trek you have been taking part in is now over and on its way to Reykjavik. You leave your trip companions and stay overnight in the village of Hella (or you take the ferry to Heimaey the same evening)

**D7:** By regular bus from Hella you reach at the wharf of the new harbor of Landeyjarhöfn at the foot of volcano Eyjafjallajökull to take the ferry Herjólfur to the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago. It takes 40 minutes for the ferry to reach Heimaey, the largest and only inhabited island of the archipelago. Heimaey is dominated by Eldfell, « the mountain of fire», a new volcano whose eruption increased the island's area by one third and threatened the important fishing harbor in 1973. Take an evening walk on the volcano, still warm! The Westmann Islands are home to the largest established colony of Puffins in the world, with about 8 millions of birds (observation until August 15th). It is often possible to admire the great Gannet diving for fish, and if you are lucky, you will catch a glimpse of killer whales or huge Fin whales. Little cruise around the island of Heimaey depending on weather conditions.

**D8:** Embarkation on the ferry Herjólfur to regain the mainland at Landeyjarhöfn. You have the flexibility to choose between different ferry departures time. Just check that the ferry you choose correspond with the bus schedule to Reykjavik. Two hours transfer by regular bus to Reykjavik Bus terminal (possible transfer to Keflavik International airport for American flights).

**Price per person:** (The exact prices will be confirmed in January 2012)

250 € in a double room in standard B&B (twin bed)	300 € in a single room in standard B&B
300 € in a double room in hotel***(twin bed)	350 € in a single room in hotel***

**Included in the extension:** (10% Travel agent sales commission)

- Transfer to Landeyjarhöfn harbor and from Landeyjarhöfn to Reykjavik Bus Central (BSI)
- Ferry to/from Heimaey
- Birds watching cruise around the islands
- Accommodation including breakfast

**Not included:**

- Lunches, dinners, drinks and personal expenses –
- Taxi in Reykjavik
- Accommodation in Reykjavik

All summer **except** during the Islands Festival the first weekend of August!