

Trek from Mount Hekla to the Ocean

THO 2012

Hut to hut Fjallabak Great Classic

Crossing the world famous eruptive fissure from the April 2010 eruption

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

“How was my trek in Iceland? An amazing diversity of dramatic landscapes... A trip to the genesis of the planet... Every possible shade of green set against dark volcanic sands, blood-red rock and shimmering glaciers... Hostile Iceland, friendly Iceland, a clear, unspoiled beauty... An incredible trek!”

Specially suited for nature lovers, this short exploration trek is ideal for walkers who do not have much time for longer holidays but dream of discovering the unique mountains of Iceland by foot, without carrying a heavy backpack, and also want a cozy shelter each night. Presenting no difficulty for good walkers, each member carries only a light daypack. Every day involves an average of 6-8 hours hiking. A 4x4 truck carries all personal effects, heavy equipment and supplies. And we appreciate the importance of good food, so we provide what we believe is the finest cuisine to be found in the Icelandic mountains!

The isolation, for much of your time, is complete. It is just us and the mountains. Most of the hiking is off-track, exploring hidden valleys, hot springs and numerous other features of the area.

The remoteness of the terrain, coupled with an ever-changing climate can make this a most challenging environment; therefore, safety is our primary concern. Your guide and support vehicle are radio equipped. Our guides, all experienced mountaineers with extensive local knowledge, are fully trained in wilderness first aid and rescue procedures.

To complement this, our personal clothing and equipment systems must be sufficient to ensure your comfort in all kinds of weather – see our kit list for advice.

But that is not to say that these mountains are devoid of life! Botanists will be captivated by the many species of Icelandic flora, from myriad mosses and grasses, to alpine herb fields, berries, shrubs and trees. Birdwatchers should keep binoculars ready as we surprise many ground nesting species, such as golden plover, ptarmigan and snow bunting. The raven watches from on high and nearer the coast, many varieties of seabirds look for our attention.

This trek will lead us from the foot of Mount Hekla at the edge of the volcanic rift, through the rift, all the way to the ocean. Each day will bring stunning but totally different new sights that compete to outdo the beauty of those seen the day before.

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

D1: Mt Hekla - Hrafninnusker caldera

160 km – 3 hours driving - 6-8 hours hiking – 400 m elevation gain/loss - hut (B-L-D)

Rendezvous with your guide at your accommodation and departure by bus in the early morning. Drive through vast meadows and moors where innumerable horses and sheep graze until we reach the dramatic landscape of Mount Hekla, Iceland’s most active volcano, at the edge of the rift. We drive up along the foot of the volcano, crossing black ashes and huge lava fields. Trek starts before lunch. Slow climb to the colorful plateau of Hrafninnusker, glittering with innumerable black, glass-like obsidian stones. Walking among countless bubbling, steaming hot springs, we head toward our overnight shelter by the banks of the Markarfljót river.

D2: Hike Ljósártunga to Hvanngil

6-8 hours hiking - 300m-elevation loss - hut (B-L-D)

Following the course of the Markarfljót canyon, we descend south through hills of rolling grassland, crossing clear streams, enjoying a spectacular view of the Mýrdalsjökull icecap.

D3: Hike through Emstur desert

6-8 hours hiking – 100 m elevation loss/gain - hut (B-L-D)

Across a desert of black sand devoid of vegetation, we walk along the impressive mass of the Mýrdalsjökull glacier, so close that we feel we can almost touch it. Hut accommodation

D4: Emstrur to Þórsmörk

6-7 hours hiking – 400 m elevation loss - hut (B-L-D)

Along narrow canyons where powerful glacier rivers flow. Overnight in the smiling, forested valley of Þórsmörk (The Woods of Thor, the Nordic god), surrounded by majestic falling seracs of three glaciers.

D5: Hike to Þórsmörk

5-6 hours hiking – 300 m elevation loss - hut (B-L-D)

A day to wander in the magnificent valley of Thorsmörk, explore deep canyon and approach the glacier dominated by the now world famous volcano Mt Eyjafallajökull.

D6: Pass to Skógar - **The New Volcano!**

8-9 hours hiking - 900 m elevation loss/gain – 160 km – 3 hours driving (B-L)

Crossing the pass of Fimmvörðuháls between Eyjafallajökull and Mýrdalsjökull. We climb some 800 m (2600 feet) before our long descent all the way to sea level. **At the pass we cross the volcanic fissure from the April 2010 eruption.** With 9 to 10 hours this hike is the longest one of the trek. (This last day also involves crossing some narrow ridges, so those who suffer from

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extreme vertigo may choose to ride to the coast on the truck!) End the trek at the foot of the stunning Skógafoss waterfall.

If weather conditions do not allow this option, we walk out of Thórsmörk along the valley, exploring hidden canyons and glacial lagoons. Drive to Reykjavik. Extraordinary view of the ocean and the Westmann Islands archipelago. Arrival in late afternoon to your Reykjavik accommodation. (For those taking the Westmann Islands option, transfer to the ferry terminal)

Notice: Itinerary may be reversed or slightly modified, especially before the middle of July or in September. The duration of the daily hike 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:

THO 708: Jul 08 to 13	☼ ✓
THO 722: Jul 22 to 27	☼ ✓
THO 805: Aug 05 to 10	♥
THO 819: Aug 19 to 24	♥ ☆
THO 902: Sep 02 to 07	♥ ☆ ❄
THO 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

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>

Thórsörk 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 round trip 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 Westmann 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

VEX 2012

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!