

Trek at the Origin of Earth

TOR 2012

Our famous great classic!

A great trek crossing the volcanic belt from Mt Hekla to Eldgjá trough Hrafninnusker caldera

13 days from/to Reykjavik – Assisted trekking with 4wd support vehicle – Difficulty Level: moderate to strenuous - 6 to 8 hours daily hiking – 12 days hiking with daypack – Huts and camps - multi-national group – English speaking guide - maximum 12 participants

This wonderful, challenging trek in the south volcanic highlands can be compared, without a doubt, to the most beautiful, remotest treks in the world. The most hidden parts of the Öräfi volcanic desert are a collection of strange and majestic landscapes, created from the great volcanic rift that splits Iceland in two. Where we walk, there are few tracks – few signs, if any, of man’s existence. This is one of the few places in this world where silence is complete. A true wilderness that will leave you spellbound with natural wonders at every turn.

Our guides, all experienced mountaineers, will lead you safely through this incredible region. Starting at the foot of the imposing Mt Hekla, Iceland’s most active volcano, this trek will lead you through a world of volcanic features – huge lava fields, mountains of rhyolite, basalt, obsidian and pumice, through hot springs and fumaroles, blast craters and fissures. You will discover dream-like, moss-filled valleys and drink from the freshest, clearest streams. And always watching over you are the majestic, shimmering icecaps, themselves huge, dormant volcanoes surrounded by vast black sand flats, criss-crossed by myriad melt water streams.

Presenting no difficulty for good walkers, on most days each member carries only a light daypack as a 4x4 truck carries all personal belongings, heavy equipment and supplies. Every day involves an average of 6-8 hours hiking. Accommodation, during the trek is a combination of some nights in comfortable expedition tents and some nights in the well equipped mountain huts, all in beautiful locations.

The isolation and severity of the landscape demands that each tour member is in good physical condition and that they actively participate in the trip i.e. the group must work together to set up camp, prepare food etc.

This trek is designed for those who wish to fully experience unspoiled nature at its best, and to see what they may never even have dreamed still existed. © *Fjallabak*

“Those who wander are not necessarily lost” - JRR Tolkien

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). 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 – 300m-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. But Landmannalaugar is just there and if visiting the area is a must, we will not attempt to stay there overnight as the hut and the camp are really too crowded for our little tribe. Back to Landmannahellir.

Day 7: Day of rest in Landmannahellir

Little walking - hut (B-L-D)

Landmannahellir has been for ages and it is still used now by the shepherds as a base when catching thousand sheep in fall after having been grassing free the whole summer. We are in a legendary place with thousand stories to tell. At the middle of our trek, we have a nice day to rest and wander individually in the beautiful surrounding of Landmannahellir before the next days of intense hiking. During this time your guide and driver prepare the equipment and supplies for the next days of trekking.

Day 8: North Fjallabak - Hrafninnusker caldera

4-6 hours hiking - 500m-elevation gain - hut (B-L-D)

Slow climb to the colourful caldera of Hrafninnusker. Walking among countless bubbling, steaming hot springs, we cross this pearl of the interior, famous for its incredible natural beauty. More obvious are the amazing rhyolite mountains, formed in incredible bands of pink, brown, green, yellow, blue, purple, black, white, orange and red and glittering with innumerable black, glass-like obsidian lava...

Day 9: Hrafninnusker caldera to South Fjallabak

6-8 hours hiking - 500m-elevation loss - hut (B-L-D)

Walking among countless bubbling, steaming hot springs, we cross this pearl of the interior, famous for its incredible natural beauty. More obvious are the amazing rhyolite mountains, formed in incredible bands of pink, brown, green, yellow, blue, purple, black, white, orange and red and glittering with innumerable black, glass-like obsidian lava... Down to Fjallabak South.

We propose two different routes for the last four days of tis trek, described as followed:

Western Itinerary: Instead of going east to Eldgjá fault as in the East itinerary version, we turn west to reach and get around the Tindfjöll Mountains

Day 10: Canyon of Markarfljót - Tindfjöll

7-8 hours hiking - 400m elevation loss - camp (B-L-D)

Instead of going east to Eldgjá as in our Trek Origins (East) we turn South-West in the direction of the Tindfjöll Mountains. If the Markarfljót is known as a powerful muddy glacier river in the upper canyon it is still a beautiful stream of turquoise. This canyon finds its way through a very chaotic area at the limit of dark and clear rocks. Small secret valleys covered by grass and flowers bring us to the foot of the dark Tindfjöll. Camp at Krókur (The hook) on the bank of the river surrounded by green cones. We are sure that this is one of the best spots for meeting elves.

Day 11: Tindfjöll

6-8 hours hiking – 600 m elevation gain/loss - hut (B-L-D)

The Tindfjöll ridge was once the highest volcano of Iceland (over 9000 feet / 3000 m). 6000 years ago it collapsed completely and became a little Alpine chain with peaks welded by a small icecap. We explore a labyrinth of small smiling valleys and canyons sinking in the mountains. Depending on the weather and the group's fitness, the guide may propose to climb the Tindfjöll to have some great panorama view over the wilderness of South Öræfi from Mount Hekla to Mount Eyjafjallajökull, which erupted in April 2010.

Day 12: Eastern Rangá

6-8 hours hiking – 400 m elevation loss - hut (B-L-D)

Our trail crosses easily volcanic lava plateau during few hours. Vegetation disappears as we approach Mt Hekla again. Black slag and ash are covering all the landscape. Then our road rapidly goes down and as we approach the river Rangá, a horizon of grass opens in front of us. Many noisy waders as curlews and golden plovers welcome us. In fact they alarm their young telling them to stay immobile and hide in the moor as some disturbing giants are approaching. In the evening we reach the beautiful bank of Eastern Rangá for a last camp in the clear solitude of the backcountry.

Day 13: South coast to Reykjavik.

2-3 hours hiking – 100 m elevation loss - 130 km – 2 hours driving (B-L)

Crossing soft grassy plain we meet the ruins of older farms abandoned at the turn of the 20th century when a short but hard glacial period that lasted for 50 years forced many Icelanders to emigrate to the New World. At lunchtime we reach a country road at the antic farm of Keldur. Then, by bus we travel across the southern plain, to reach Reykjavik where we arrive in the afternoon.

Eastern Itinerary: Instead of going west to the Tindfjöll Mountains as in the West itinerary version, we turn east around the Torfajökull to reach Eldgjá.

Day 10: Torfajökull - Mælifellssandur

5-7 hours hiking - 200m-elevation loss/gain - hut (B-L-D)

We cross the sands of Mælifellssandur. In the middle of this strange black flatness stands the solitary cone of Mælifell, covered in fluorescent green-coloured moss. We are able to explore the extraordinary landscapes between the southern flank of the Torfajökull caldera and the mighty dome of the Mýrdalsjökull icecap. Beneath this huge sheet of ice lies Katla, another of Iceland’s angriest volcanoes. She last erupted in 1918 and is long overdue for another.

Day 11: Strútslaug - Lake Holmsárlón

7-8 hours hiking - 300m-elevation loss/gain - hut (B-L-D)

Proceed to the shores of the long and narrow Holmsárlón Lake. We reach the place nicknamed the red baptismal fountain. The waterfalls at the end of the turquoise coloured lake plunging into the red crater, is a sight to behold. Of course, we cannot resist taking a bath in Strútslaug, a nearby, natural hot spring pool.

Day 12: Alftavötn - Fault of Eldgjá

6-7 hours hiking - 300m-elevation loss/gain - hut (B-L-D)

We follow the fault of Eldgjá, the longest eruptive fissure on earth, today covered by moss and crossed by a clear stream. As large as the Laki eruption was, it was exceeded by Iceland's A.D. 934-940 Eldgjá eruption, which occurred in the same mountainous region. During the six years that this eruption was active, lava erupted from several vents along a discontinuous 75-km-long (47-mile-long) fissure system and buried more than 781 square km (302 square miles) of southern Iceland. Fortunately, huge eruptions like those at Eldgjá and Laki are very unusual; otherwise, life as we know it would probably not be. Though the hazards posed by lava flows and volcanic gas here on the Big Island are understandably important to us, they are still tiny in comparison to what our big blue planet is capable of.

Day 13: North Fjallabak or South Coast to Reykjavík.

2-3 hours hiking - 300m-elevation loss - 300 km – 5-6 hours driving (B-L)

After the soft landscape of Alftavötn, the “lakes of the swans”, in a short walk we join the trail of Fjallabak North, near the inhabited lands of the Skaftá district, bordering the enormous lava fields of Laki. Then, by bus, we travel on the Fjallabak North route or along the seashore of the South Coast, to reach Reykjavik where we arrive in the late afternoon.

FJALLABAK “The Icelandic Trekking & Adventure Company”

Dates 2012:

TOR 708-E: Jul 08 to 20	☼ ✓
TOR 722-W: Jul 22 to Aug 03	♥
TOR 805-E: Aug 05 to 17	♥
TOR 819-W: Aug 19 to 31	♥ ☆
TOR 902-W: Sep 02 to 14	☆ ✨

☼ Clear nights possible - ✓ Birds - ♥ Blueberries & mushrooms - ☆ Colours of fall and Northern lights - ✨ Fresh falling snow on summits – E: eastern route – W: western route

Price: 2,250 €

Payment on line with Credit Card:

- Confirmation booking fee is **40%** of basic trip price, or 900 € 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!)

Included:

- English speaking guide from day 1 to day 6 and from day 8 to 13
- Bus transfers to and from the mountains
- Transport of luggage by 4x4 vehicle
- All accommodation as described
- All meals from lunch Day 1 to lunch Day 13
- 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

IMPORTANT: All rates are based on current purchasing prices in Iceland. Fjallabak reserves the

FJALLABAK “The Icelandic Trekking & Adventure Company”

right to increase prices already quoted in the event of currency fluctuation, government taxes, or due to any other cost increases that are outside Fjallabak’s control.

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)

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 a tired or an injured member;

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 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!)

FJALLABAK “The Icelandic Trekking & Adventure Company”

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 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 this trip:

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

- 1) Individual extension to the **Vestmann 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!

Vestmann Islands Extension

VEX 2012

A beautiful Individual extension after your trek

D13: 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)

D12: 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 Vestmann 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.

D13: 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!