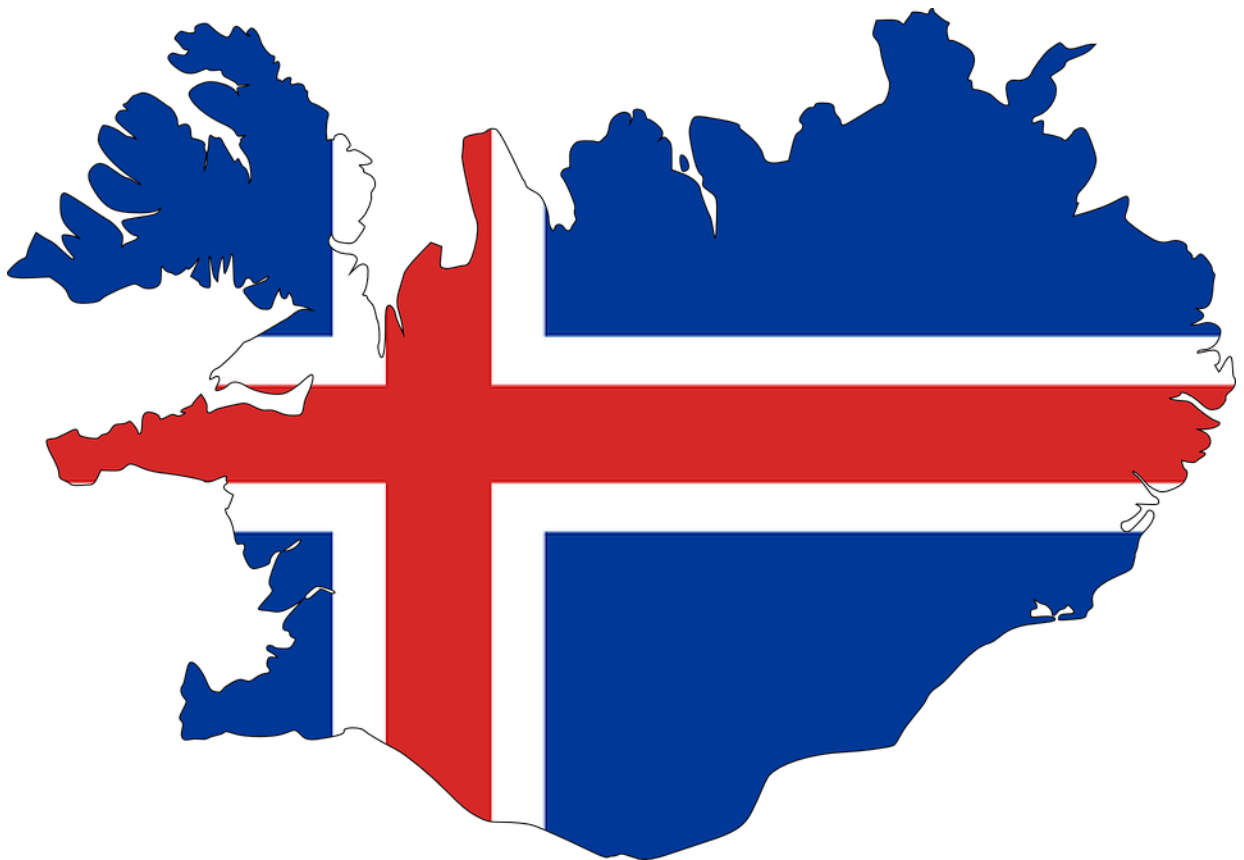


*Sky & Telescope's*  
**9<sup>th</sup> Iceland Northern Lights Tour**  
**October 7<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

*(Departure from U.S. will be October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023)*



Join *Sky & Telescope* for an eight-day tour of Iceland — and the chance to see the Northern Lights! With our tour partner Spears Travel and a local Icelandic guide, we'll explore this fascinating island's unique culture and geology during the day, then each night we'll venture into dark areas away from city lights to view Iceland's *aurora borealis*. The subtly colored, ever-changing aurora is a truly awe-inspiring spectacle not to be missed!

**Option for an extended nine-day tour including an extra night of accommodation in Reykjavik and a full day, guided tour of the Snaefellness Peninsula on October 14<sup>th</sup> 2023, with departure from Iceland on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.**

For more tour information, visit [Spears Travel](#).

If you're ready to book the trip, [click here](#).



Although the Northern Lights are elusive and unpredictable, we've chosen the season and locations to maximize our chances of seeing one or more displays. Iceland always sits right under or near the auroral oval, the band around the Far North where auroras are most common. Late September/early October is a good time for aurora-watching, as the nights are full and dark, and the weather prospects are better than deep winter. We have selected a week when moonlight won't interfere with nighttime viewing.

During the trip, a *Sky & Telescope* editor will give lectures on astronomy, including a talk on the science of aurorae.

## Iceland Northern Lights Astronomy Tour Itinerary: October 7<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023

The friendly people of this island nation have a culture that's a fascinating mixture of both ultramodern elements and customs that date back to the original Viking settlers more than a thousand years ago. We'll stay at premium hotels both in and outside the capital city of Reykjavík and sample delicious Icelandic cuisine. Iceland's tourist infrastructure is modern, and the nation is one of the cleanest and safest in the world. Most Icelanders speak at least some English, so it's very easy to interact with the local population.

### Day 1: October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Arrival in Iceland – Blue Lagoon



Welcome to Iceland! Once you've landed at Keflavík Airport, head through customs to the baggage carousels where you'll collect your luggage. There is a duty-free shop located by the baggage carousels, which you can shop at on arrival, while waiting for your luggage to arrive. Many items such as candy, snacks and drinks are less expensive here than at local shops.

After collecting your luggage, proceed into the arrivals hall where your tour guide will meet you – look for a sign with the Spears Travel / S&T logo. You will be escorted to our group's private coach\*

\*Please note: For group members arriving on an earlier date or on afternoon flights today, you will be responsible for your own transfer on your day of arrival to meet the group either at the Blue Lagoon or the hotel. If you need any additional hotel nights prior to the group dates we can arrange those for you, at an extra cost, as well as transfers and activity tours.

Transfer to local restaurant Vikingarheimar for a ***group, buffet breakfast***.

Following breakfast, we'll visit Gunnuhver Hot Springs and the Bridge Between the Continents before continuing to the world-famous Blue Lagoon spa.



Don't forget to **pack your bathing suit (and water shoes if you prefer not to go barefoot) in your carry-on luggage** for easy access.

A group admission, towel rental and a drink of your choice are included in your package. The Blue Lagoon is a man-made, unique wonder: a lagoon with pleasantly warm, electric blue, silica and mineral-rich geothermal water in the middle of a black lava field. Facilities include modern change rooms with lockers, hair dryers, showers, an indoor geothermal pool, a snack bar and restaurant, a gift shop and other services.

After we've enjoyed our time at the Blue Lagoon, we'll rejoin our guide and tour bus and drive about an hour and a half to Hotel Grimsborgir, in the Selfoss area. We'll check-in for a two-night stay. The rest of the afternoon is free to have a short rest, go for a walk in the fresh air and get ready for the **group Welcome Dinner** this evening.



Watching the fantastic colors of the Northern Lights dance across the arctic sky is an unforgettable experience, and Iceland is one of the best places to see them. They are mostly observed on crisp, still evenings, and your location well away from the city lights gives you the best chance of witnessing this spectacular natural phenomenon. You will simply need to step outside of the hotel and look up into the sky.

We can provide no guarantee, of course, as the aurora borealis is a natural phenomenon – it can be fickle and a bit unpredictable – but

we have seen it on all previous trips S&T have taken to Iceland.

### Day 2: October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Golden Circle

After **breakfast** we'll start the day of touring the Golden Circle. First, we'll visit Þingvellir, a National Park and a remarkable geological area. The beautiful canyon running through the park is the meeting point of two of the Earth's tectonic plates, giving you the chance to see the dividing line between North America and Europe. It is the site of the world's oldest democratic parliament **Alþingi**, founded in 930AD. Located by Lake Þingvallavatn, the largest lake on the island, Þingvellir's combination of natural phenomena and historical significance have made it a symbol of Iceland's national identity.

Leaving Þingvellir, we'll drive through some of the fertile farmlands of southern Iceland on our way to the famous Geysir, which has given its name to spouting hot springs all over the world. You will see one of the most active geysers in the area, Strokkur, shooting up to 30m/90ft. A **group lunch** will be provided in the Geysir area.

Only a few minutes' drive from Geysir is Gullfoss, the Golden Waterfall, one of the most impressive waterfalls in Europe. Here you will see thousands of tons of icy water thunder majestically down a double-tiered falls into a deep canyon.







After a day filled with amazing experiences, we'll return to Hotel Grimsborgir for the night.

**Day 3: October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**Seljalandsfoss – Reynisfjara – LAVA**  
**show – Dyrhólaey**

After breakfast we head along the south coast and explore the land of Njal's Saga — a region of breathtaking scenery and legendary stories. During our drive today we'll encounter the wonderful variety of the south, from the wide alluvial plains



formed by glacial rivers, sea inlets with views of volcanic mountains and moss-covered lava fields to the sheer sea cliffs of Dyrhólaey, the spectacular waterfalls of Seljalandsfoss and Reynisfjara, a wide black-sand beach on the South Coast of Iceland, beside the small fishing village of Vík í Mýrdal. A **group lunch** will be served in Vík.

We'll stop at the stunning serpentine canyon of Fjaðrárgljúfur ("feather river canyon"). The Fjaðrá River flows through the canyon. It has steep walls of up to 100m/330 ft) and is about 2k/1.2 miles

From Vík we'll continue east to the Kirkjubæjarklaustur (Kirk for short!) area where we'll make a stop to have a look around the town, stretch our legs and maybe do a bit of shopping. From there we'll keep going east on the main highway to Hotel Laki, where we'll be staying for the night. There will be some time to settle in and relax before our **group dinner** which is served at the hotel.

If the Northern Lights decide to make an appearance, all we will have to do is step outside and marvel at Nature's own lightshow! Wake-up calls for aurora appearances during the night can be arranged with reception.



**Day 4: October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Skaftafell National Park – Jokulsarlon – Skogafoss – Skogar Folk Musuem**

After a leisurely breakfast this morning we'll head to the stunning Skaftafell area located in Vatnajökull National Park. At Skaftafell we can get up close to the glacial tongue of ice pushing down the valley from Vatnajökull glacier. We'll have a **group lunch** and then go to the stunning glacial lagoon at Jokulsarlon, where icebergs float in a lagoon of icy, azure-blue water, runoff from a huge glacier. Sometimes seals can be seen sunning themselves on the icebergs or at the edge of the glacier.

We'll enjoy a boat ride on the lagoon, floating amongst the icebergs.

After our boat ride, we will continue on to Skógafoss which is just a short walk from the parking lot. We'll also pay a visit to the Skógar Folk Museum, a complex of 3 sites exploring early Icelandic history with folk relics and a model turf-house village.

After this we'll make the lengthy journey back across the South Coast and check in at Hotel Ranga for the next two nights, enjoying **group dinner** on arrival. This evening we can relax at the hotel or go for a walk and hope to see dazzling aurora overhead.



### Day 5: October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar)

Once we've had a good **breakfast** to start our day we'll head to the south-coast port of Landeyjahöfn where we'll board the ferry to cross over to the fascinating island of Heimaey, in the Westman Islands. Here we'll have a tour of the island and learn about the various volcanic eruptions that formed it, including the Eldfell eruption of 1973, which partially buried the main town and nearly filled in the town's harbour. A visit to the Eldheimar museum, dedicated to the eruption, is included.

Following our **group lunch** on the island we'll board the ferry to return to the mainland and back to Hotel Ranga. After we enjoy our **group dinner** at the hotel we'll have use of the hotel's observatory to scan the sky for northern lights.

### Day 6: October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Hellisheiði

Following **breakfast**, we'll check out of the hotel and enjoy the countryside scenery on the drive to the capital city of Reykjavík.

A visit to Hellisheiði is first on the agenda! The Hellisheiði Geothermal Power Plant is located south of Hengill and produces hot water and electricity. Together with Nesjavellir, it produces about 50% of all the hot water in the capital area. The plant was launched in 2006 and has a capacity of 200 MW in thermal power and 303 MW in electricity. In litre terms, it produces 950 litres per second. Everything beyond the geothermal fluids generally runs into the re-injection system down to the groundwater system in the geothermal reservoir. A hydrogen sulphide abatement unit is located at the plant, which uses the so-called Carbfix method, which filters and re-injects the carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulphide in the geothermal reservoir dissolved in geothermal fluids. In the geothermal reservoir, gases mineralise in the rock and form Iceland spar and pyrite. This is a process that reduces carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Westward bound again to the capital city of Reykjavík. We'll arrive to the art deco Hotel Borg late afternoon, our home for the next two nights. After check-in there will be time to take a walk around the city center and have dinner (on own account).



After dinner meet up with the tour guide and group at the designated time and place to go on our evening Northern Lights Tour. We will head out into the countryside, far away from the light pollution of the city, watching the night sky and hoping the aurora will dance for us. Tours are weather dependent.



## Day 7: October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Reykjavik

After **breakfast** at the hotel, we'll set out on a Reykjavík city tour (approx. 3-4 hours) with stops at Hallgrimskirkja, Perlan with admission to the observation deck, and the National Museum (with admission and guided tour).

Information about the main stops is shown below.

**Hallgrimskirkja** (Hallgrim's Church) is Reykjavík's signature landmark, and its tower can be seen from almost everywhere in the city. The 1937 design was inspired by the shapes and forms created when lava cools into basalt rock. Construction took place from 1945 to 1986,



with the tower being completed long before the main building. A singular feature is a gargantuan, German-built pipe organ, finished in 1992, whose powerful notes are capable of filling the huge interior space with a range of uplifting tones.

Standing directly in front of the church is a fine statue of Leifur Eiriksson (c. 970-1020), the first European to land on the shores of the New World in what is now North America in the year 1000 A.D. (about 500 years before Columbus).

**Perlan or The Pearl** was built in 1988 and is a remarkable building, unique in Iceland and probably the whole world. It consists of a glass dome constructed atop huge tanks in which natural hot water is stored for heating the city. The Pearl offers the visitor great scenic views of the capital area and beyond.

**The National Museum** showcases objects that provide insight into Icelandic cultural history - displays that encourage visitors to dwell on the past, present, and future. Reopened after extensive refurbishment, the museum houses new, dynamic exhibitions that fulfill all the modern standards required of such an establishment housing the nation's treasures.

After the conclusion of the guided tour, you may choose to stay at the National Museum to have a better look at the items there or be dropped off at the Settlement Exhibition at the Reykjavik City Museum (about 200m from Hotel Borg). An open ticket will be provided for you to visit the Settlement Exhibition at a time of your choosing.

Lunch is on your own followed by a free afternoon to explore Reykjavik. Reykjavík has a wide range of restaurants to choose from, with various types of cuisine and price points.

Here are a few suggestions for places to see on your free time:

**Art & Culture.** Reykjavík Art Museum also known as Hafnarhús (translating as Harbor House) which serves as the institute of contemporary art. Current developments in art are explored through diverse exhibitions of Icelandic and international artists. An exhibition of paintings by the Pop artist Erró is a permanent feature.

**Shopping.** Reykjavík has become known for cutting edge design, international and design jewelry, hip fashion, art galleries, and a vibrant music scene. The trendy 101 quarter in the city center around the main shopping street of Laugavegur and the nearby Skólavörðustígur offers



fabulous shopping at very affordable prices. On the flip side of the cutting edge designs are the traditional Icelandic woolen goods with patterns carried on through the centuries.

**For the taste buds.** Stop by at a local hot-dog stand and try the famous Icelandic hot-dogs or *pylsur* with all the special trimmings. This is very popular amongst the local people, and you may see the long queue, especially on weekends.



There will be a ***group farewell dinner*** this evening at a local restaurant, Caruso Harbour or similar. A glass of wine, beer, mixed bar drink or soft drink are included.

Our main tour ends tomorrow and some of our group, those not taking the Snaefellsnes Peninsula day tour, will be leaving us.

### Day 8: October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023: End of Main Tour and Departure

All good things must come to an end, including your visit to Iceland. After **breakfast** and check out you will be transferred from Hotel Borg to Keflavík airport for your departure flight. We will schedule your airport transfer to be approx. 4 hours before the flight departure, giving you about 3 hours for check-in and security clearance. Should you be on a very early morning flight it is possible you won't be able to have breakfast at the hotel



### Extended tour:

### Day 8: October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Snæfellsnes Peninsula Day Tour

After an early **breakfast** at the hotel our guide will collect us and we'll board our coach for our day trip north of the capital city, along the west coast. We'll explore the stunning scenery and landscapes of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, a "must see" for nature lovers.

The Snæfellsnes peninsula in the west of Iceland is almost like a miniature version of the whole country. You'll see the emblematic Snæfellsjökull glacier, white and black sand beaches, bird cliffs, spectacular mountains and volcanic craters, incredibly rich trout lakes and salmon rivers, lush valleys, and unique harbours in charming fishing villages. The stunning landscapes of the peninsula have captured the imagination of people all over the world ever since Jules Verne wrote the famous science fiction novel "Journey to the Centre of the Earth" in which the amazing Snæfellsjökull glacier is where the journey begins. Recently Ben Stiller filmed parts of his critically acclaimed blockbuster "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" here, notably in the charming village of Stykkishólmur.

A **group lunch** and **group dinner** will be provided during your tour today.

Be on the lookout for Northern Lights on the drive back to Reykjavik, weather permitting.

Return to Hotel Borg at approximately 10:00pm.

### Day 9: October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023: End of Extended Tour and Departure

All good things must come to an end, including your visit to Iceland. After **breakfast** and check out you will be transferred from Hotel Borg to Keflavík airport for your departure flight. We schedule your airport transfer to be approx. 4 hours before the flight departure, giving you about 3 hours for check-in and security clearance. Should you be on a very early morning flight it is possible you won't be able to have breakfast at the hotel.

We wish you a great trip home and hope you will bring back many lifelong memories of Iceland. We look forward to seeing you in the Land of Fire and Ice again!

**Góða ferð!**



**Included:**

- Private coach with driver and English-speaking guide for the program as outlined
- Breakfast at Viking World Restaurant
- Blue Lagoon Comfort Entrance (use of towel, one drink of your choice, silica mud mask)
- 2 nights' accommodation at Hotel Grimsborgir
- 1 night accommodation at Hotel Laki
- 2 nights' accommodation at Hotel Ranga
- 2 nights' accommodation at Hotel Borg
- Breakfast daily at hotels
- 11% VAT on accommodation and ISK300/night lodging fee
- Five 2-course group lunches including coffee/tea\*
- Six 3-course group dinners including coffee/tea\*
- Golden Circle Guided tour (approx. 8 hours)
- Ferry passage to Vestmannayaer, Westman Islands and return
- Entrance to Eldheimar exhibition, Vestmannayaer, Westman Islands
- Friðheimar geothermal greenhouse and horse stable
- Entrance to LAVA show
- Boat tour on Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon
- Entrance to Skogar Folk Museum
- Entrance to Hellisheidavirkjun
- Reykjavík City Tour (guided, approx. 3-4 hours with stops at Hallgrímskirkja, Perlan with entry fee to the observation deck, and the National Museum with entrance fee and guided group tour)
- Open ticket for entrance to the Settlement Exhibition at the Reykjavik City Museum
- Unguided transfer Reykjavík to Keflavík Airport on day of departure
- Free WiFi on the coach

***\*\*Please inform us of any special dietary requirements including food allergies***

**Additional Inclusions for extended tour:**

- Full day guided tour of the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, including 2-course group lunch and 3-course group dinner
- Free WiFi on the coach
- One additional night of accommodation at Hotel Borg, including breakfast

**Not included:**

- International airfare to/from Keflavik
- Drinks with lunches and dinners other than coffee/tea and one complimentary drink at Welcome and Farewell dinners
- Meals not mentioned
- Guide on day of departure from Iceland
- Extra fees for portage, grab & go lunches, room service, items of a personal nature
- Unexpected fees introduced for access to nature sites on private land
- Transfers for individual arrivals outside group times
- Entrance fees not mentioned above
- Optional tours
- Travel insurance (highly recommended – (Spears can send you a quote)
- Early check-in and late check-out at hotels (please request rates if you wish these services)
- Tips and gratuities
- Anything else not mentioned under “included”

Tour Note: In rare cases a change of itinerary may be necessary during your program in Iceland should weather or road conditions do not allow the operation of the scheduled itinerary. Certain outdoor activities may be cancelled. Proposed visits to venues may not be possible due to alterations in operating hours. In this case no refund will be given but a reasonable alternative will be substituted where and whenever possible.