



ADVENTURE
EDELWEISS TOURS

ICELAND - FIRE AND ICE

Experience largely unspoiled and pure nature on this tour through the Highlands of Iceland.

RIDING DAY 1 : REYKJAVÍK - SELFOSS

Standard Route (214 km / 133 miles)

Hotel Change "Route" (238 km / 148 miles)

REYKJAVÍK - ROAD 41 - GARDHABAER - HAFNAFJORDHUR - ROAD 44 - HAFNIR - ROAD 425 - GUNNUHVER SPRING - STAÐARHVERFI - GRINDAVÍK - BLUE LAGOON - ROAD 43 - ROAD 427 - ROAD 42 - KLEIFARVATN - HAFNARFJÖRÐUR - ROAD 408 - RING ROAD 1 - HVERAGERÐI - SELFOSS - ROAD 35 - LAUGARVATN

Today we start our adventure tour from Reykjavik to Selfoss. The highlight of the tour that will surround us over the next few days is the wild but still picturesque landscape. And with our motorbikes, we will be able to enjoy it in the best possible way.

Now, if you're wondering why we haven't been to Reykjavik yet, don't worry, we'll be back on our last day to take a closer look at this exciting capital. First, we head southwest to the Reykjanesskagi peninsula, where we can walk across a small bridge between the two continental plates that make up Iceland.

Shortly after, we stop for a short photo stop at one of Iceland's most visited attractions, the Blue Lagoon.

The Blue Lagoon is a geothermal spa located in the middle of a lava field near Grindavík on the Reykjanes Peninsula...

Due to the mineral properties of the water, it is said to have a healing effect on psoriasis.

Afterwards we continue along the coast before heading inland to our hotel for the night.

Highlights:

#1: Gunnuhver Spring



The temperatures beneath the spring exceed 300 °C, which makes it one of the hottest spots in south-western Iceland. In the high temperature area, there are mud springs and fumaroles. The energy of the volcano system is harvested in a geothermal power plant.

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#2: Blue Lagoon



Bláa Lónið – the Blue Lagoon – once was a waste product of the geothermal power station. The power station furthers a 460 °F hot mixture of salt- and freshwater from more than 2 km below. After using it for producing electricity and teleheating the water flows into surrounding lava fields. That's how the milklike-blue geothermal lake with a steady temperatur of 98-105 °F arose. The magnificent restaurant

at the Blue Lagoon is carved into lava rock and offers a great view of the lake. Drinking water is – like nearly everywhere on Iceland – for free.

RIDING DAY 2 : SELFOSS - SAUÐÁRKRÓKUR

Standard Route (289 km / 180 miles)

Hotel Change "Route" (273 km / 170 miles)

LAUGARVATN - GEYSER STROKKUR - GULLFOSS - ROAD 35 - HRINGSJÁ - HVERAVELLIR - AFANGAFELL - ROAD 731 - RING ROAD 1 - VARMAHLÍÐ - ROAD 75 - GLAUMBÆR - SAUÐÁRKRÓKUR

Today is one of our great off-road days! We head inland towards the north, where we will get to know more highlights of this great island: The Golden Circle is the most popular travel route in Iceland and leads across the country's south and southwest.

And it is precisely on this route that three of the island's most famous sights are located. Two of them are the famous geysers "Geysir" and "Strokkur", which will amaze us with their huge hot water fountains.

And to see how the water naturally moves from top to bottom, we stop a little later at the third sight, Gullfoss, the "Golden Waterfall".

After admiring the thundering masses of water, the 200 km Kjölur route takes us through the Icelandic highlands, between two huge glaciers to an altitude of 700 m, which we reach near the mountain Kjalfell. Passing the Blöndulón reservoir, we soon reach an original grass sod church in Varmahlid; our last stop before a well-deserved night's rest in Sauðárkrókur.

Highlights:

#1: Geyser Strokkur



The 'big geyser' is the eponym for all geysers but rarely shows his power to spout. His little brother 'Strokkur' which means 'butter churn' lies right next to 'Geysir'. He spouts quite often, every 5 to 10 minutes and the hot water reaches up to 80 to 115 feet.

#2: Gullfoss



Gullfoss means 'golden waterfall' and it is one of the famous waterfalls on Iceland. The water of the glacier river Hvítá overthrows behind a huge wall of spray 105 feet down over two spectacular cascades into a 2 miles long and 2,300 feet deep gorge. On sunny days 42,300 cubic feet of water plummet down into the deep and transform the spray into a shimmering rainbow. In winter the spray solidifies to shiny ice. At the waterfall the tour guide has an

interesting story to tell!

#3: Víðimýrarkirkja



The well preserved Vidimyri church in Varmahlid in the north of Iceland dates back to 1824 and is traditional for the 19th century. The roofs are made of grass and the peat layers are quite interesting and fascinating.

RIDING DAY 3 : SAUÐÁRKRÓKUR - AKUREYRI

Standard Route (181 km / 112 miles)

A shorter stage today takes us along a fantastic coastal road past two fjords. One of them, the fjord Skagafjörður, is about 40 km long and up to 46 km wide and lies between the large peninsulas Skagi and Tröllaskagi.

Our destination today is Iceland's second-largest town, Akureyri, which lies on the second fjord of today, Eyjafjörður.

Eyjafjörður is 60 kilometers long and 24 kilometers wide, making it the longest fjord in Iceland.

Akureyri, on the other hand, is the tourist and cultural center of the north. If we arrive in time, we still have enough time to explore the town or walk through the beautiful botanical garden.

But cool cafés, gourmet restaurants, and a vibrant nightlife also set Akureyri apart from most places in rural Iceland.

And for the motorbike fans among us, there's a motorbike museum to top it all off.

Highlights:

#1: Siglufjörður



This little fishing village was the herring capital in the 1940s and 1950s. Nowadays the population is only about 1000 and the glorious days of the big fishery can be "experienced" in the Herring Era Museum. For centuries isolated, two recent tunnels connect Siglufjörður to the rest of Iceland.

#2: Akureyri



Akureyri is the most beautiful town on Iceland. The longest fjord of the island - Eyjafjörður – and the idiosyncratic light during summer nights are responsible for this reputation as well as the impressive backdrop of snowy mountains. Just 17.000 inhabitants but they have a university, museums and parks. The Akureyri church is accessible via 100 steps and from it's entry in an exposed location you will have a great view over the city and the harbor. The modern and unconventional building offers 17 magnificent stained-glass windows on the inside. This city is a base camp for expeditions into an environment full of natural wonders. In the summer time Akureyri really shows off with all its gardens and flower boxes. A visit to the botanic garden, where all Icelandic plant species are represented, is recommended to all those who miss the green up here in the north.

RIDING DAY 4 : AKUREYRI - HÚSAVÍK

Standard Route (158 km / 98 miles)

Today we set off for the northernmost overnight stop on our tour. Along the way, we visit two great natural sights, the waterfall Goðafoss, steeped in history, and Lake Myvatn with the lava formations Dimmuborgir.

Goðafoss, also known as the Waterfall of the Gods, got its name through a historical story. Around 1000 AD, as Christianisation progressed, an invasion of Norway seemed certain if Iceland held on to its pagan beliefs. Therefore, the legislator of the time decided that Christianity should be the official religion for the good of the people. In connection with this decision, according to legend, he threw idols of the old gods into a beautiful waterfall, and this is where the name Waterfall of the Gods comes from. The second highlight of the day, Dimmuborgir, or the Black Fortress, is a dramatic lava flow near Lake Mývatn. The area around Dimmuborgir is characterized by large boulders and numerous caves and caverns created by intense steam bubbles.

From here, the route leads partly on gravel roads to Húsavík. The famous Icelandic Whale Museum is located directly at the harbor and offers a wealth of information about whales, dolphins, and their habitat. In addition, Húsavík is considered by many visitors to be the whale-watching capital of Europe. Therefore, we accompany one of the local guides on his boat to experience this natural wonder living in the beautiful bay of Skjálfandi. The surrounding Vik mountains provide a breathtaking background.

Highlights:

#1: Goðafoss



A magnificent waterfall is nestled into the rough landscape right next to the ring road. The Goðafoss has its name from a historic event. In the annual Alþing in the year 1.000 A.D., the people's parliament decided to no longer worship the Nordic gods and convert to Christianity. Afterwards they threw all their Nordic god figures and statues into the waterfall. On each side of the Godafoss there are short and

beautiful trails for a walk along the river ending at the waterfall. In summer the rocky riversides are green. In winter a thick layer of snow glisters as bright as the waterfall. All year round the Godafoss is a little gem.

#2: Mývatn



An excursion to Mývatn is worth a visit. The 'lake of gnats' is among the most popular tourist places in Iceland due to its unique and beautiful location, richness in fish, diversity of birds and remarkable geological phenomena. Mývatn is located right on top of a very active volcano belt and got its shape from a stream of lava 3.800 years ago. Even though the lake is 14 square miles, the deepest spot is only

15 feet, and so it has a vast number of small islands. A trip around Mývatn can offer lots of sightseeing: The lava castles of 'Dimmuborgir', the 'Hverfjall' ringfort crater, the geothermal area 'Námaskarð', a crater lake called 'Víti', the pseudocrater 'Skútustaðir' and of course the opportunity to swim in 'Mývatn Nature Bath'.

#3: Húsavík



Húsavík is a typical fishing town at the bay of Skjálfandi with around 2.200 inhabitants. We can find interesting exhibitions of the marine ecosystem, the habitat and ecology of whales in the famous whale museum. Additional information about all the different whale species of the North Atlantic are on display. Different rooms host topics such as beached whales, history of nature, whale watching,

whale hunt and dolphins. A separate room is reserved for Keiko, the most famous orca of Iceland. Skeletons of nine different whale species can be found in the whale gallery.

RIDING DAY 5 : HÚSAVÍK - EGILSSTAÐIR

Standard Route (264 km / 164 miles)

Today we have a slightly longer route ahead of us again. Due to the long summer days, however, we have enough time to explore the surroundings. A drive around the Ásbyrgi Canyon offers many natural spectacles and is definitely worthwhile.

Anyone visiting Ásbyrgi Canyon will quickly notice the canyon's cliff walls, which are up to 100 meters high, and the dense birch and willow forests below, which form an area that cannot be found anywhere else in Iceland.

This popular natural spectacle is about 3.5 kilometers long and 1.1 kilometers wide. It is only a small part of the vast and dramatic Vatnajökull National Park, but undoubtedly one of its most breathtaking.

Later that day, we turn into an almost surreal sulfur hot spring area. Here we find Dettifoss, a prime example of an Icelandic waterfall.

Dettifoss is fed by the mighty glacial river Jökulsá á Fjöllum, which flows out of Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull. The thundering waterfall has an average water flow of 193 cubic meters per second (6,186 cubic feet). It is 100 meters wide and plunges 45 meters into the Jökulsárgljúfur Gorge.

The hotel for tonight is in Egilsstaðir on the Lagarfljót, an elongated lake and river of the same name where, according to legend, the Lagarfljót worm, a sea monster, resides. Egilsstaðir is the largest town in East Iceland, with a population of around 2500. The town was established in the 1940s near the farm of the same name. The first houses in today's small town were built in 1944.

Highlights:

#1: Asbyrgi Canyon



The horseshoe-shaped depression is part of the Jökulsárgljúfur National Park and measures approximately 3.5 km in length and 1.1 km across. For more than half of its length, the canyon is divided through the middle by a distinctive 25 meters high rock formation called Eyjan ("the Island"). The canyon's steep sides are formed by cliffs up to 100 metres in height.

#2: Dettifoss



That water can not only be smooth and splashing but also strong and rough will be demonstrated by the Dettifoss – the 'tumbling waterfall'. It is the biggest on Iceland and Europe's most powerful waterfall. Grey masses of water fall down on a width of 330 feet into a canyon. Because of its toneless color and the surrounding rugged rocks the Dettifoss appears almost threatening. As a visitor we can

look at this blustering spectacle from a safe distance at the brink of the cliff.

RIDING DAY 6 : EGILSSTAÐIR - HORNAFJÖRÐUR

Standard Route (308 km / 191 miles)

Today's stage takes us from Egilsstaðir to Höfn. Our first stop this day is the Snaefellsstofa Visitor Centre. Here we learn more about Iceland's largest glacier area. The Snæfell Wilderness Area derives its name from Mount Snæfell, which at 1,833 m is the highest mountain in Iceland not covered by a glacier. Snæfell is a central volcano with magnificent rhyolite formations created by eruptions over the last 400,000 years. Exactly when the last eruption took place and whether the volcano is active or extinct today is disputed.

Later, we continue along the winding coast towards Vatnajökull and its national park. The Vatnajökull glacier is the largest glacier in Europe and covers 8% of Iceland's land mass.

The Vatnajökull glacier covers an area of about 8,100 square kilometers and is up to one kilometer deep in places.

Vatnajökull also hides under its ice Iceland's highest peak, Hvannadalshnjúkur, which is 2,200 meters high. It also hides some of the country's most active volcanoes.

Djúpivogur, located on the east coast of Iceland, is a traditional trading and fishing town. The oldest wooden house, dating from 1790, has been restored and turned into a cultural center with a museum and craft workshops.

Highlights:

#1: Snaefellsstofa Visitor Center



The visitor centre at Skriduklaustur is the information centre for the eastern territory of Vatnajökull National park and opened in June 2010. The center also has an interesting exhibition on the area and the nature. The Vatnajökull glacier measures 3.400 square miles and is the third biggest plateau glacier in the world. Only the ice shields of Greenland and the Antarctic are bigger. Before we arrive at

the visitor center there are two more waterfalls named Litlanesfoss and Hengifoss. If you want to take a walk instead of riding to the visitor center there is a parking lot right by the road 931 which leads all around the lake. First you will reach the Litlanesfoss with its impressive basalt columns and 1,5 hours later there will be the Hengifoss. In the background of the waterfall you can see reddish granular layers of clay, which arose from volcanic ashes. A high concentration of iron oxide is the reason for the red color.

#2: Folaldafoss and Öxi Pass



The Folaldafoss is a waterfall in the East of Iceland and is clearly visible from the gravel road 939 across Öxi, a mountain pass between Skriddalur and Berufjördur. The road is rough and lies in curves and small bridges.

RIDING DAY 7 : HORNAFJÖRÐUR - KIRKJUBÆJARKLAUSTUR

Standard Route (208 km / 129 miles)

Today is a day full of natural spectacles. First, we will reach Jökulsárlon, a glacier lagoon. An amphibious craft tour will offer the best opportunity to take a lot of unique pictures. The countryside between Skaftafell and Vík is characterized by steep cliff coasts, which appeared at the end of the last ice age due to tectonic movements. The cliff of Lómagnúpur, close to Núpstaður, is very conspicuous. Before the land arose it was one of the highest cliff coasts in the world with around 2.200 feet.

Before we arrive in Foss we will see pygmy rocks, very regularly formed basalt columns, which one can also find in other places in Iceland. The Vatnajökull glacier will accompany us all day long until Kirkjubæjarklaustur, our base camp tonight. If we arrive early today, we will have the chance to visit another waterfall named Fagrifoss not far from the hotel.

Highlights:

#1: Jökulsárlón



This 7 square mile 'glacier river lagoon' shines in a bright blue and is the biggest and most famous glacier lake in Iceland. In the 19th century the glacier started to shrink and left this 530 feet deep lake. A vast number of icebergs, many thousand years old, are floating in it and provide an incredible picture. More fascinating perspectives will open up on an amphibious craft tour across the Jökulsárlon.

Maybe we can spot seals playing around in the water or relaxing on the ice floes. This glacier lake is also well known as shooting location for a couple of very successful hollywood movies like 'James Bond – Die another day' and 'A view to a kill', 'Tomb Raider', 'Beowulf', und 'Batman Begins'.

#2: Vatnajökull



The Vatnajökull is a plateau glacier in the southeast of the island and has a surface of 3.400 square miles which is around 8 % of the size of Iceland. The volume of the ice is estimated at 720 cubic miles and the ice layer thickness at 3000 feet. Some of the most active volcanos are located beneath the glacier. For example the area of Grímsvötn with the three volcanos: Gjalp, Þórðarhryna and Pálsfjall. In

2008 the territory was incorporated in the new Vatnajökull national park and is now the biggest national park in Europe.

Like most glaciers, even Vatnajökull loses in size; about 10% since the end of the 19th century. This corresponds to a contribution of the equivalent of 1 mm to the current rise in sea level. And it has a direct impact on Iceland's uplift, as the weight of the ice cap, which rests on the countryside, is reduced.

RIDING DAY 8 : KIRKJUBÆJARKLAUSTUR - FLÚÐIR

Standard Route (215 km / 134 miles)

Today is the second big off-road day - full of challenging gravel roads and adventurous river crossings! We ride over small roads into the highlands. The highlight of today will certainly be Landmannalaugar. The play of colors from the rhyolite mountains and other geological elements - such as sulfur, iron, and moss - turns the slopes into an incredible fairytale landscape. This colorful landscape contrasted with the obsidian lava fields is both unique and breathtaking, simply the perfect place for any nature lover.

The warm water streams of the region offer a welcome refreshment on the way to the hotel. So don't forget the swimming suits.

The earlier we start, the easier the river crossings are. Because the longer the sun shines, the higher the river levels rise. After a long and successful day off the road, we continue west, where we can then relax at the hotel from the adventurous road sections.

If this route is not passable or you just don't feel like crossing a river, the guides have a less demanding but still beautiful alternative route up their sleeves.

Highlights:

#1: Water crossing and highlands



Again through the highlands, this time on the gravel road F208. There are about 20 water crossings, some very easy, others quite challenging. The reward is a magical, secluded landscape of lava, sand, and moss. Afterwards, the famous hot springs in Landmannalaugar offer well-deserved relaxation!

#2: Landmannalaugar



Landmannalaugar means 'the warm springs of the people of Landsveit' and is – due to close volcanos – the most colorful part of the highlands. The volcano Bláhnjúkur for example consists of greyish blue pitchstone while the reddish brown hills of the Brennisteinsalda volcano consists of quartz trachyte or rhyolite. Sporadically the ground appears to be grey, blue or white because of sulphur and chalk. Additional colors come from green moss and white snow fields. A completely black obsidian lava field named Laugahraun completes the unique color range of this bizarre scenery.

Optional Route (273 km / 170 miles)

If you don't feel like river crossings or don't feel safe enough for them, you can stay on the ring road today and relax. Still, there's plenty to see and the scenery is gorgeous, so you can expect more than a boring transfer day.

We start just behind the small town of Kirkjubæjarklaustur, so the lava that flowed out of the Laki fissure in 1783 has now covered itself with a dense carpet of green moss. An almost surreal picture.

Afterwards, we descend briefly to the so-called Black Beach, which - nomen es omen - consists of pitch-black lava sand. Not far from there is Cape Dyrhóey with its well-known, much-photographed rock gate.

The highlight of the day is the Skogafoss waterfall, which cascades down from a height of 60 meters. Unlike most other waterfalls in Iceland, Skogafoss can be viewed from below, which makes it particularly impressive.

Shortly after, you can see the Eyjafjallajökull volcano towering on the right, which became world-famous in 2010. The eruption emitted so much ash that air traffic in the North Atlantic had to be suspended for several days.

After crossing the Markarfljót River, we re-enter more densely populated areas and shortly thereafter reach Flúðir or Selfoss.

Highlights:

#1: Cape Dyrhólaey



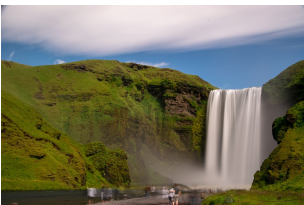
Cape Dyrhólaey is a peninsula of volcanic origin in the south of Iceland and is located about 6km west of the village of Vík. According to experts, the peninsula was formed over 80,000 years ago. The walls of the impressive volcanic island rise steeply up to 120 meters.

On the way up to the rocky plateau of Cape Dyrhólaey, you are greeted by a lighthouse. It dates back to 1927 and is still very well preserved. From here you have a fantastic view of

the black lava beach and the village of Vik with its towering rock spires. But the main reason why most visitors come here is the rock gate in front of the cape.

This spectacular rock formation appears to be man-made, but it is completely natural. Boats can even pass through the gate - presumably when the sea is calm. If you look inland, you will see a fantastic panorama of Iceland's mountains and glaciers behind you. (www.franks-travelbox.com)

#2: Skogafoss



The river Skógá plunges 63m over a 25m wide cliff on the former coastline of Iceland. The impressive cliff, over which the waters of Skógafoss thunder, once lay directly on the sea and was formed by the waves.

Today, the enormous cliff stands in the middle of Iceland's green landscape. Skógafoss actually means "forest fall" in English. Unfortunately, there is not much or nothing left of the forests that once existed here. (www.franks-travelbox.com)

RIDING DAY 9 : FLÚÐIR - REYKJAVÍK

Standard Route (256 km / 159 miles)

Today we set off for Reykjavík! No less spectacular and beautiful than the other days, we drive towards Reykjavík, passing the historic Þingvellir (Thingvellir). This important place is the birthplace of one of the oldest parliaments in the world.

The drive on well-maintained coastal roads offers us another fantastic view of the capital Reykjavík before we finally reach it. For those who want to spend a little more time in the capital, there is also a shorter route that gives us a little more time to explore the city.

During dinner, we can then review the experiences of the last nine days before saying goodbye to this spectacular country and its natural sights. We have made it, the dream of many motorcyclists comes to an end, but the memories will last for many years to come.

Highlights:

#1: Þingvellir




The old parliament Þingvellir is placed right into the rift valley between the American and the European continental plates. Þingvellir means 'plain of people's assembly' and is very important in the history of Iceland, so it became a UNESCO world heritage. Viking chiefs held gatherings there to discuss life and laws for the first time in the year 930! This makes it one of the oldest parliaments on earth. In 1.000 A.D. they concluded the Northern beliefs and converted to Christianity. In 1944 they proclaimed the republic of Iceland. And all of it here. The Þingvallavatn is the biggest lake on this island, 32 square miles big and 380 feet deep. The present size of the lake resulted from an earthquake in 1789 and a lot of volcanic activity is still all around.

#2: Reykjavík



This city is the most northern capital in the world. Reykjavík has around 120.000 inhabitants and is therefore the biggest city on Iceland. The name means 'smoking bay' and is probably the first thing the vikings saw when they arrived to this place. The city was founded by a viking called Ingólfur Arnarson and was a little village of farms until the end of the 18th century. Today Reykjavík is an aspiring town, especially in the art and musical range you can find a flourishing scene, which you can experience during a walk through all the little alleys. A lot of attractions invite you to stay a little longer in this pulsating city.



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