

THE ARCTIC - ICELAND CIRCUMNAVIGATION | SYLVIA EARLE



INTRODUCTION

Discover the rugged and scenic beauty of Iceland on this incredible 11 day voyage. As we circumnavigate Iceland, prepare to be blown away by a land of dynamic contrasts and indescribable beauty, a place where you can witness the inspiration of old sagas and hear the tales of mysticism.

This land of exploration and adventure is home to a unique landscape characterised by volcanoes, roaring waterfalls, geothermal beaches, and lava fields. You can kayak through deep pristine fjords before landing on beaches of jet black sand, uncover the wonders of Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Europe, or step foot on the island of GrÃ-msey, the northernmost inhabited point of the country sits within the Arctic Circle itself. This is a truly remarkable experience that will show you hidden secrets and wonders of Iceland, far removed from the well-trodden tourist path.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Reykjavik

Arrive in Reykjavik and make your own way to our group hotel. Welcome to Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland and starting point of our expedition. After arriving via scheduled commercial flight service, you are free to explore this fascinating city. Reykjavik is home to a wealth of cultural institutions including museums, galleries, and the Hallgrímskirkja church. Leisure possibilities inside the city include parks, gardens, and thermal baths. You can also take advantage of Reykjavik's wide range of shopping possibilities, excellent dining options, and famous nightlife. Your hotel for the night has been arranged by us and is included in the price of the voyage.

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DURATION

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DAY 2: Embarkation & Hvalfjordur

After breakfast at the hotel, a transfer is included to the pier to board our ship, the Greg Mortimer. Sail into Hvalfjörður, a beautiful fjord just north of Reykjavik with wide areas of flat verdant land along majestic mountains, and beaches cut with creeks. The fjord is approximately 30 kilometres (19 miles) long and five (three miles) kilometres wide. The area is rich in bird life and is home to seals, perfect for Zodiac cruising, kayaking and hikes. Historically, Hvalfjörður was home to one of the main whaling stations in Iceland, with ships heading out into Faxaflói Bay. It was one of the most important naval stations in the North Atlantic during World War II, when Iceland was occupied by the Allies after the Nazis conquered Denmark. The old whaling station and a war museum can be found in the fjord.

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DAY 3: Stykkisholmur & Latrajarg Cliffs

Stykkisholmur is the starting point of our adventures on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, gateway to Snæfellsjökull National Park. One of the defining landmarks in Stykkishólmur are the old houses in the old city centre, some of which were owned by Danish traders. The oldest house in Stykkishólmur is the Norwegian house, which dates back to 1832. The inhabitants take great pride in preserving the old houses and walking in the centre of town is like walking in another era. An area of diverse landscapes, characterised by lava fields and glistening fjords and home to bird-rich Breidafjörður Bay. The area is crowned by the magnificent, ice-capped Snæfellsjökull volcano, a 700,000-year-old dormant subglacial volcano, visible from Reykjavik on a clear day and immortalised in Jules Verne's Journey to the Centre of the Earth. Disembark the ship at approximately 8.30 am to commence today's full day (7 hours) excursion visiting the following areas: Arnarstapi was an important trading post in the past and had a much bigger population than it has now. Columnar basalt, ravines and grottoes surround the Arnarstapi pier. There is a large arctic tern colony in the village itself, and a walk along the coastline is a great way to see birds such as kittiwake, arctic tern and fulmar. You will also pass magnificent lava formations. The seaside and the cliffs between Arnastapi and Hellnar were made a Natural Reserve in 1979. A sculpture of Bardur Snæfellsas by Ragnar Kjartansson stands by the beach at Arnarstapi. Though Grundarfjörður is not the most well-known town in Snæfellsnes, Mount Kirkjufell is certainly one of the most famous mountains in Iceland, if not the world. It is not unusual for photographers from all over the world to make their way to Grundarfjörður for the sole purpose of photographing this unique landmark which has even starred in a number of films. However, there is a lot more on offer in Grundarfjörður than just Mount Kirkjufell. Nature abounds, with vibrant birdlife and spectacular waterfalls. En route to Isafjörður, we sail past the immense Látrabjarg cliffs, Iceland's westernmost point and home to a huge population of razorbills and puffins.

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DAY 4: Westfjords

Over the next two days, explore the Westfjords region featuring outstanding landscapes with jaw-dropping views of dramatic fjords carved by ancient glaciers, sheer table mountains that plunge into the sea and pristine North Atlantic vegetation. The region features attractive towns such as Isafjordur, the famous Dynjandi waterfall, and spectacular fjords offering kayaking excursions, hiking trails, and bird-watching. In true expeditionary style, we keep our itinerary flexible to allow for spontaneity based on weather and sea conditions. We plan to visit Hornstrandir peninsula, one of Iceland's remotest and most pristine regions filled with many deep and dramatic fjords, towering bird cliffs, stunning natural beauty and opportunities for wildlife encounters. Enjoy the bountiful silence and magnificent landscapes seen only by the few adventurers that make their way here.

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DAY 6: Akureyri & Myvatn

Picturesque Akureyri is Iceland's second largest city outside the capital area with a superb snow-capped mountain backdrop. Explore the old town, with its beautifully maintained period houses before heading inland to nearby Mývatn region - an area said to be the most geologically active area in Iceland. Shore Excursions (choose one of the following): Option One (up to 9 hours) The Goðafoss waterfall is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Iceland. In the year 1,000 the Lawspeaker Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði made Christianity the official religion of Iceland. After his conversion, Þorgeir threw his statues of the Norse gods into the waterfall earning the waterfall its name - waterfall of the gods. Námaskarð is well-known for its sulphurous mud springs called solfataras and steam springs called fumaroles. Even though you won't find any pure spring water in this wonderful geothermal site of Iceland, the beauty of the colourful minerals and the gigantic mud craters are truly impressive. Dettifoss is a waterfall in northeast Iceland and is reputed to be the most powerful waterfall in Europe. The falls are 100 metres / 328 feet wide and have a drop of 44 metres / 144 feet down to the Jökulsárgljúfur canyon. Option two (up to 7-8 hours) The Goðafoss waterfall is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Iceland. In the year 1,000 the Lawspeaker Þorgeir Ljósvetningagoði made Christianity the official religion of Iceland. After his conversion, Þorgeir threw his statues of the Norse gods into the waterfall earning the waterfall its name - waterfall of the gods. Dimmuborgir is an area strewn with enormous lava rocks and cliffs. The formation of these extraordinary lava cliffs and pillars are the result of molten lava flowing over a pond in the eruption of Lúdentsborgir and Þrengslaborgir some 2,300 years ago. The most famous of these formations is "The Church", aptly named, as this is a cave, open at both ends and with a dome-like ceiling. Námaskarð earns its well-known for its sulphurous mud springs called solfataras and steam springs called fumaroles. Even though you won't find any pure spring water in this wonderful geothermal site of Iceland, the beauty of the colourful minerals is impressive and the gigantic mud craters are truly impressive. Mývatn Nature Baths: Drawing on a centuries-old tradition, the tastefully designed complex offers bathers a completely natural experience that begins with a relaxing dip amidst clouds of steam rising up from a fissure deep in the Earth's surface, and ends with a luxurious swim in a pool of geothermal water drawn from depths of up to 2,500 metres / 8,200 feet. Both options will end with a transfer to Húsavík, where you can explore the small town at your own leisure before reboarding the ship to sail to Grímsey Island.

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DAY 7: Grimsey Island & Husavik

Located approximately 40 km (25 miles) off the mainland, Grímsey is a verdant grassy island, probably best known for its proximity to the Arctic Circle, which cuts across the island. Many people travel to Grímsey just to say they have stepped across the imaginary line. With a tiny population of approximately 100 inhabitants, it's a fantastic place for Zodiac cruising, kayaking, and photographing seabirds such as guillemots, gulls and puffins. Leaving Grímsey to return closer to the mainland, we spend time scanning the waters of Skjálfandi Bay around Húsavík, a town known as the Iceland's 'whale watching capital', home to up to 24 different whale species, as well as dolphins and 30 variety of birds. The largest animal on Earth, the blue whale, has also been spotted in Skjálfandi Bay, and if you are lucky, you might catch a glimpse of this magnificent creature as well as others, such as orcas, fin whales and pilot whales.

DAY 8: Mjóifjörður

Mjóifjörður (meaning narrow fjord) is an 18 km (11 mile) fjord on Iceland's east coast length is a little-known gem cherished by locals. Hidden between Nordfjörður and Seydisfjörður mountains that provide shelter and pleasant weather, the fjord is known by locals as an excellent place to soak in the peaceful surroundings and for its spectacular waterfalls - ideal for kayaking and Zodiac cruising. Mjóifjörður is an exceptionally beautiful, tranquil and remote area with spectacular cliffs, and because of the fjord's still weather it has lush green hills and exceptionally rich flora lining its shores. It also has the impressive Prestagil (The Priest's Ravine) and the Hofsárgljúfur Canyon with delightful rivers and waterfalls. If it weren't for the weekly ferry that comes here once a week in the winter, the local people would be completely isolated. At Asknes are the remains of an old whaling station, the largest in the world at the time, built by the Norwegians around 1900, with over 200 workers. Today, on the way to the tiny village, Brekkuborpi, where only about 20 people live, a shipwreck on the shore acts as a haunting reminder of the town's whaling past.

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DAY 9: Vatnajökull National Park


Höfn is a lively fishing town with a healthy population of 1,800, and gateway to Vatnajökull National Park – one of the most spectacular and special parts of Iceland, home to Europe’s largest glacier, Vatnajökull - our shore excursion for the day. We’ll visit Skaftafell National Park which was established in 1967, but from 2008 it became part of the larger Vatnajökull National Park, Europe’s second largest after Yugyd Va in Russia. Inside the national park you can find glacier tongues resting on the green fields of the lowland, Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon, a glacial lagoon open to the ocean and filled with floating icebergs that wash up on shore and stand gleaming on the black beach, dubbed Diamond beach. The park also boasts colourful mountains and deep valleys, as well as rich birdlife, reindeers and seals.

DAY 10: Westman Islands

Located off Iceland’s south coast, the Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar) were formed by volcanic eruptions around 10,000 years ago. Sail past Surtsey Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site that emerged from the sea in 1963 and is one of the youngest land masses on Earth. Westman Islands are surrounded by 15 other uninhabited islands and around 30 rocks and skerries offering refuge for rich array of seabirds. Westman Islands are considered to have the largest Atlantic puffin colony in the world, and when sailing around the islands it is not uncommon to see puffins but also whales and seals. Heimaey is the main island in the archipelago and it has a population of around 4,200. Ashore on Heimaey, the only inhabited island in the archipelago, we see half-buried houses that remain from a violent 1973 eruption and visit the impressive Eldheimar Museum to learn about the volcanic eruption. Eruptions are a big part of the history of Westman Islands where there are two volcanoes - one that erupted around 6,000 years ago and of course, Eldfell that erupted in 1973, forcing all of the island’s inhabitants to evacuate for the mainland. Serendipitously, due to bad weather the day prior to the eruption, all the fishing boats remained in the harbour and were able to help transport Heimaey’s inhabitants to the mainland.

DAY 11: Disembarkation in Reykjavik


After breakfast, bid farewell to the expedition team, crew and newfound friends as you disembark in Reykjavik, where the voyage ends. A transfer to downtown Reykjavik or to the airport is included.

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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Cabin on board ship
Inclusions	<p>Inclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All airport transfers mentioned in the itinerary. • One night’s hotel accommodation including breakfast, in Reykjavik on Day 1. • Half-day tour of Reykjavik on Day 2, prior to embarkation. • Onboard accommodation during voyage, including daily cabin service. • All meals, snacks, tea and coffee during voyage. • Beer, house wine and soft drinks with dinner. • Captain’s Welcome and Farewell receptions including four-course dinner, house cocktails, house beer and wine, non-alcoholic beverages. • All shore excursions and Zodiac cruises. • Educational lectures and guiding services provided by Expedition Team. • Complimentary access to onboard expedition doctor and medical clinic (initial consultation). • One 3-in-1 waterproof, polar expedition jacket. • Complimentary use of Muck Boots during the voyage. • Comprehensive pre-departure information. • Port surcharges, permits and landing fees. • Gratuities for ship’s crew and local guides. <p>Exclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International or domestic flights - unless specified in the itinerary. • Transfers - unless specified in the itinerary. • Airport arrival or departure taxes. • Passport, visa, reciprocity and vaccination fees and charges. • Travel insurance or emergency evacuation charges. • Hotel accommodation and meals - unless specified in the itinerary. • Optional excursions and optional activity surcharges. • All items of a personal nature, including but not limited to alcoholic beverages and soft drinks (outside of dinner service), laundry services, personal clothing, medical expenses, wi-fi, email or phone charges.
Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request, contact us for more details.

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Notes	Itinerary subject to change depending on weather and ice conditions. In order to experience some of Iceland’s incredible scenery, a number of the shore excursions on this itinerary require overland coach travel away from the coast.
Price Dependent upon	Departure date, season and availability.

SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures is passionate and dedicated to sustainability measures and understands the crucial part sustainability plays within the tourism industry.

We use local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprint. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you’re visiting. Our guides are all highly qualified (most with university degrees) or equip with many years of experience and are paid above the standard wage. Whether it be our knowledgeable local guides, locally produced meals or the transport on tour, we do not use imported goods when local products are available. We aim to minimise our impact on the environment and give as much back as possible to the communities we work in.

We ensure that we have as little negative impact on the wildlife as possible and minimise disturbances. We also encourage the education and visitation of protection and conservation services, specifically associated with the area. You will also find that we visit many locations and landmarks of which we encourage you to explore yet advise you to remain culturally aware and sensitive. We further encourage you to buy appropriate souvenirs and discourage the buying of anything wrongfully made or taken from the environment i.e. shells and endangered species products. Information on how you can be environmentally conscious, and travel responsibly will be made available in pre-departure information and en-route by guides and staff. Furthermore, in our further efforts of supporting the communities, a percentage of the funds generated from your tour (10%) will go back to our charities and assist us supporting the next generation and the environment they live in.

Being environmentally accountable is a crucial part of our organisation. Chimu is currently striving towards using less paper, taking several initiatives to do so and tracking our progress along the way. Our goal: A paperless organisation. For this reason, all information given to you will be sent electronically. We encourage those who choose to travel with us to support our aspirations and actions and ask that you reconsider printing out documentation. To view these documents, you can download them to your iPad or portable computer before and during your trip.

For more information visit our [sustainability page](#).

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