



HARVARD
Alumni Association

EXCURSION TO ICELAND

MARCH 14–18, 2025

This short program provides a deep appreciation of what Iceland has to offer, for all tastes and interests. In addition to its breathtaking natural beauty, Iceland is also home to world-class art museums, fabulous cuisine, and flourishing nightlife—with the long winter nights allowing for opportunities to view the spectacular Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights*).

Iceland is closer than you think—and more fun than you've ever dreamed. This mid-Atlantic Island is the USA's closest European neighbor. Raw forces of nature such as glaciers and volcanoes have been shaping the face of Iceland for 20 million years and are still hard at work. Reykjavik, the world's most northernmost capital, a culturally active city with great culinary treasures and entertainment options. It is small and easy to get around, everybody is friendly and speaks English; with 357,000 inhabitants total in Iceland and a country size of Kentucky.

**Please note that the visibility of the Northern Lights is entirely dependent on weather conditions. If we don't succeed the first night, we will try again the next night, and the next, but there is no guarantee you will see them on this program.*

STUDY LEADER: Stephen Mitchell, Robert S. and Ilse Friend Professor of Scandinavian and Folklore

SCHEDULE BY DAY

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

FRIDAY, MARCH 14

DEPART U.S. FOR ICELAND

Depart on an evening flight to Reykjavik from Boston or New York (direct on Iceland Air).

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

ARRIVE REYKJAVIK

Welcome to Iceland!

Meet your guide and private tour bus at Keflavík International Airport.

Take a short drive along the dramatic landscape of Reykjanes Peninsula to the Víkingaheimar (Viking World) Museum. Conveniently located near Keflavík airport, this museum focuses on the Vikings who explored Greenland and North America. A highlight is the *Íslendingur*, a replica of a Viking ship that sailed between Iceland and

North America in the year 2000 to celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of the Viking Leifur Eiríksson's voyage to North America.

The museum's café will serve up a delicious Icelandic breakfast buffet—a great start for your program.

Proceed toward Reykjavík, passing through the town of Hafnarfjörður, known for its Viking and elf heritage.

Arrive at the hotel by late morning for a guaranteed early check-in. Enjoy some leisure time before an early evening lecture* from your Harvard Study Leader, followed by dinner at the hotel.

**Please note that the location of the lecture may be a short walk from the hotel. Dinner will be back at the hotel.*

Later this evening, weather permitting, embark upon your first attempt to view the Northern Lights**.

***Please note that we will be using a scheduled Northern Lights tour, which is open to the public. This option allows us to repeat the tour on subsequent*

nights at no additional cost if the first night is not successful. As the Northern Lights are a natural phenomenon and beyond our control, we cannot guarantee they will be visible during your program. They are visible in Iceland from September through April, but visibility is subject to Northern Lights activity and cloud coverage.

Overnight: *The Canopy Hotel* (B, D)

SUNDAY, MARCH 16 GOLDEN CIRCLE & FONTANA SPA

Today, head to the Golden Circle region. No visit to Iceland is complete without this beautiful and educational area of natural wonders. This is a full day tour of the south-west of Iceland and includes three of the best-known attractions Iceland has to offer.

Visit Þingvellir (pronounced Thingvellir) National Park, site of the world's oldest democratic parliament founded in 930 AD. Every year Vikings across the land met here for many days to discuss laws, conduct business, and even make marriage arrangements. Þingvellir is also the site where the North American and European tectonic plates at the dramatic Mid-Atlantic ridge, so you will have the unusual chance to walk between two continents.

A treat for the day is a stop in the hot spring town of Laugarvatn for a taste of sweet rye bread that has been naturally baked in the geothermal heat of the ground. Watch it being dug up and sliced for you to enjoy with some fresh Icelandic butter.

Then, enjoy a bath experience and soup buffet at Fontana spa, a naturally occurring hot spring bath. Experience the healing powers of the geothermal springs, soak in a natural pool, listen to the bubbling hot spring in the steam rooms, or take a dip in the refreshing lake. Sample traditional Icelandic delicacies for lunch at the spa's cafeteria before continuing the Golden Circle.

Experience Gullfoss the "Golden Waterfall" from a series of paths with great views. This is one of the most impressive waterfalls in Europe with thousands of tons of icy water thundering majestically into a deep canyon.

The nearby Geysir area is home to the famous erupting Strokkur hot spring, as well as numerous other hot springs, fumaroles, geysers, and boiling mud pools.

Have dinner together followed by a possible Northern Lights tour in case the previous evening was not favorable due to the weather.

Overnight: *The Canopy Hotel* (B, L)

MONDAY, MARCH 17 ICELANDIC TOURING SOUTH SHORE

After an early breakfast and lecture, we head over Hellisheiði Heath, past Hveragerði, through Selfoss town to the beautiful South shore region. If the skies are clear, you'll have a view of two famous volcanoes. Beautiful Mt. Hekla is Iceland's most frequently erupting volcano (last eruption in year 2000). Eyjafjallajökull's 2010 eruption halted international air traffic.

Visit the LAVA Volcano & Earthquake Center, which features an interactive exhibition exploring the art and science of geology and the volcanic systems in Iceland.

Next, stop at Seljalandsfoss, a ribbon-shaped waterfall you can walk behind (depending on trail conditions). Then, continue driving along the hills of Eyjafjallajökull, a beautiful setting with rich farmland.

Visit breathtaking Skógafoss, one of Iceland's most photographed waterfalls. Nearby is the local Skógar museum. Here you can see buildings and objects that show how Icelanders lived in the countryside over the last few centuries.

Pass the Dyrhólaey headland with its sheer cliffs and onwards to Reynisfjara, where you can take a walk on the beach. The thundering waves are a truly powerful experience. You can also get a view of the Reynisdrangar rocks, located 66 meters (215 feet) above sea level.

On the way back to Reykjavik stop at the fishing village Stokkseyri for a farewell dinner at the lobster restaurant, Við Fjöruborðið.

Overnight: *The Canopy Hotel* (B, D)

TUESDAY, MARCH 18

FREE TIME / DEPART FOR U.S.

After checking out of the hotel, head to the airport. But first, make a detour inland to Hellisheiði Power Plant for a private guided tour and lecture on Carbfix (Carbon Fixation). It is not only trees and vegetation that bind carbon from the atmosphere—huge quantities of carbon are naturally stored in rocks. The Carbfix process was developed to help nature re-balance the carbon cycle by imitating and accelerating natural storage of CO₂ in favorable rock formations.

The rest of the morning is free to explore the city until around 2:00PM when you will be transferred to the airport for your flight back home. (Pick up at your hotel 3 hours before departure of your flight).

(B, L)