It is called “The Land of Fire and Ice” due to its mix of bubbling mud pots, steamy geysers, and hot springs with expansive glaciers and long winters. In addition to its breathtaking natural beauty, Iceland is also home to world-class art museums, fabulous cuisine, and flourishing nightlife—where the action on the friendly pub scene lasts right through the long winter nights.

Another draw is the Aurora Borealis—the Northern Lights. These bright, dancing lights are the result of collisions between electrically-charged particles from the sun that enter the earth's atmosphere. The lights appear in many forms, from patches or scattered clouds of light to streamers, arcs, rippling curtains, or shooting rays that light up the sky with an eerie pale-green or pink glow. February in southern Iceland is one of the best* times and places to view this phenomenon because of the extended darkness.

Also, you have the opportunity to take advantage of optional tours for both traditional and offbeat attractions, including “elf-spotting tours”, Viking feasts, whale watching, horseback riding, lava fields, and a variety of sports and leisure activities. This brief (just five days!) but satisfying program, provides an insightful appreciation of what Iceland has to offer, for all tastes and interests.

*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: Joyce E. Chaplin is the James Duncan Phillips Professor of Early American History at Harvard University. She received her BA from Northwestern University and her MA and PhD from the Johns Hopkins University. She was a Fulbright Scholar to the United Kingdom in 1985-86. Before joining the faculty at Harvard in 2000, she taught at Vanderbilt University for fourteen years. Professor Chaplin’s research and teaching interests include the history of early America, especially topics in the history of science, race, and cultural encounter, as well as maritime studies.

Her potential lecture topics include the initial settlement of Iceland, volcanoes, and Iceland and the environment.

GROUP SIZE: 20-30 guests

PRICING: $2,480 per person double occupancy, including international airfare from Boston or New York / $520 single supplement
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9
DEPART U.S. FOR ICELAND

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

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10
ARRIVE REYKJAVIK / CITY TOUR / NORTHERN LIGHTS

Arrive in Reykjavik early this morning where you will be met and escorted to your hotel for a breakfast buffet.

This morning take a city tour of Reykjavik for a wonderful introduction to Europe’s smallest capital city. The tour covers the Old Town, the shopping districts, the Parliament, Hofdi House, Hallgrim’s church, the Harpa concert hall (and much more).

After you return to the hotel, lunch is on your own. Dinner tonight will be at a restaurant near the hotel.

This evening take an excursion to view the Northern Lights, weather permitting.

Overnight: The Radisson Blu 1919 Hotel (B, D)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11
TINGVELLIR NATIONAL PARK / GULLFOSS WATERFALL / EYJAFJALLAJOKULL VOLCANO

Today capture the essence of Iceland. First stop is Tingvellir National Park, the site of the world’s first parliament. Continue on the South Coast tour to see the majestic dual-folding Gullfoss waterfall and gaze upon the Great Geyser, which spouts steam with amazing force. Pass close by the Eyjafjallajokull Volcano, which recently caused so much chaos with European air traffic, and stop to peer into the watery depths of Keri volcanic crater.

This evening enjoy a traditional Icelandic lobster feast at a local restaurant on your way back to the hotel.

Overnight: The Radisson Blu 1919 Hotel (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12
DAY AT LEISURE

Today is at your leisure for independent exploration of Reykjavik. Discover a city rich in art and culture—from the Icelandic Sagas to contemporary art, Reykjavik has a buzzing cultural scene. Visit the galleries and museums of the city, enjoy the tax-free shopping, or pamper yourself in one of the many local spas.

There will also be a variety of optional activities available: take a snowmobile safari to the top of a glacier, ride an Icelandic pony or search for Puffins and Whales.

Dinner is on your own tonight.

Overnight: The Radisson Blu 1919 Hotel (B)

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13
BLUE LAGOON / DEPART FOR U.S.

Today take a brief tour through the exotic, moonlike Reykjanes peninsula, first stopping at Bessastadir, the official estate for Iceland’s President. Continue to the renowned Blue Lagoon, an azure pool of mineral-rich warm water amid a lava field. There are facilities to shower and change at the site before continuing to the airport for your return flight to the US. (B)

ACCOMMODATIONS:
The Radisson Blu 1919 Hotel, Reykjavik
This historic hotel stands in the center of Reykjavik, only a short distance from many of the city’s most popular attractions. The 88 rooms and suites, designed in elegant neutral colors, feature amenities like video-on-demand and free high-speed, wireless Internet. The on-site restaurant serves fresh international dishes made with local produce. Guests can also take advantage of a well-equipped fitness center and business center and three modern meeting rooms.