

ICELAND

ITINERARY

DAY 1 - Arriving in Iceland

The flight to Reykjavik takes just over 3 hrs. As soon as you clear customs and immigration the group catches the “FlyBus” into the centre of town. A couple of years ago the Icelandic authorities forbade private vehicles accessing the airport to reduce congestion: FlyBus drops you in the city centre where you rendez vous with the farm truck which completes the trip to the farm. It sounds more complex than it is! Dinner on the first evening is included and after the meal there will be a detailed briefing about the ride.

DAY 2 – Ride from Hveragerdi to Torfastaðir

This morning we drive the short distance to the stable and meet the horses. The ranch has about 300 horses which include saddle horses, stallions, brood mares and young stock. Not only does the ranch organise riding holidays in Iceland, but buy and sell horses, thus keeping their riding horses up to scratch. A walk around the stable is a fascinating insight to Iceland horse-management.

There's a chance to take your horse into the ménage and get the feel of each other before the ride begins. The morning's trail leads across a broad plain, along the river bank with views of hills, mountains and glaciers on all sides. After reaching the striking rock called Dímon, which is well known from the Saga of Njáll, we cross the old bridge over the river Markarfljót and reach the farmhouse where we stay overnight.

Njall's saga dates from the year 960 and deals with a decades-long blood feud, the consequences of vengeance and the defence of family honour. The saga is full of omens, prophetic dreams and life-and-death duels! All good stuff and ideally suited to fire-side conversation.

Distance ridden: 25 km; 4 hours riding.



The
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DAY 3 - From Stóra-Mörk to Thórsmörk

Today we follow the river Markarfljót (which also features in the Saga of Njáll) across the slopes of the infamous glacier and volcano Eyjafjallajökull, riding over soft ground covered by the ash of the volcano's 2010 eruption.

As we approach the valley the trail crosses several rivers including the torrential glacial river Krossá, before we reach the beautiful nature reserve known as Thórsmörk.

We stay overnight at the mountain hut in the valley and enjoy the spectacular landscape and surprisingly rich vegetation of birch woods, canyons and lava formations shaped by rivers and volcanos.

Distance ridden: 25 km; 6 hours riding.

DAY 4 - From Thórsmörk to Stóra-Mörk

The day begins with a visit of the "Elves Church", a distinctive volcanic formation. Then ride on to the enormous canyon Stakkholtsgjá which is about 2 Km long with vertical sides rising up 100m. The canyon narrows and ends in a waterfall (not accessible on horseback). We follow the riding trail that leads out of the valley, over green heathlands and back to the path again on the floor of the valley.

Nearby is Stóra-Mörk farm where we stay overnight.

Distance ridden: 30 km; 6 hours riding.

DAY 5 - From Stóra-Mörk to Torfastaðir

Good trails criss-cross the shallow rivers before joining the old road through the green hills of Fljótshlíð. On our way back towards Torfastaðir farm we pass another farm where one of the most famous Vikings, Gunnar of Hlíðarendi, lived and died, once again, according to the Saga of Njáll. A short distance further on is Vellir farm.

Distance ridden: 25 Km; riding time 5 hours.



DAY 6 - Black sand beach ride

This morning we ride out from the farm in the opposite direction to Thórsmörk and meadow trails lead to the seaside and a black sand beach.

After breakfast and check-out we box the horses to the small fishing town Thorlákshöfn, where we set off on a ride on the long, black beach. The sand is derived from pumice, hence its course, black nature. We follow the beautiful beach along the surf of the North Atlantic for a few kilometres, until we reach the beautiful area where the mighty glacial river Ölfusá meets the sea and forms a large delta. We ride through shallow water at the edge of the delta and reach the grassy river bank. The trail leads into an important conservation area that consists of an extensive wetland meadow, to reach farmland in the Ölfús area. On our way we have plenty of opportunity to try all paces; it feels so far from civilization surrounded by the spectacular views of mountains and the volcanos Hekla and Eyjafjallajökull, weather permitting. We also have good chances to see sea and wetland birds of different kinds living in the Flói Bird Reserve between the ocean shore and the river. After we have reached the old cemetery at Arnarbæli we ride along the river Gljúfurá and through pastures with grazing horses. This is the end of the ride. Time for good-byes and the bus takes you the short distance to the Blue Lagoon.

Thousands of people visit The Blue Lagoon each year so tickets are 'timed' limiting the numbers of people at any one time, so it's never crowded. You can bask in the milky-blue lagoon, sauna and steam room; enjoy a mud mask and drink of your choice from the in-water bar, the perfect way to ease those riding muscles.

The bus takes you back to a waterfront hotel in the capital. Dinner at a local restaurant.

DAY 7 - Whales and puffins

An early start to catch the 09:00 sailing from the harbour, which is a short distance from the hotel. The voyage begins at Reykjavík's Old Harbour, just minutes away from the city centre. The boats offer great comfort, a fantastic interior and large outside viewing decks. The friendly guides, along with the captain and crew, point out where to spot the whales and provide information (in English!) about the different species of whales and seabirds. It's important to emphasize that we follow the Ice Whale code of conduct to respect and protect the wildlife of Iceland. See <http://icewhale.is/>

Once we're back on shore we make our way to the award-winning Omnon chocolate factory, what better way to warm up after a sea voyage! Dinner at a local hotel.

DAY 8 - Returning home

Transfer by FlyBus back to the airport.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL WENDY MINOR ON **02476 840572**
OR EMAIL **WENDY.MINOR@BHS.ORG.UK**

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