

# Iceland Circumnavigation

## Helicopters, Glaciers and Volcanoes

Onboard Ultramarine



# Expedition Overview



## A Rare Voyage Around All of Iceland

Explore the Land of Fire and Ice on our 12-day Iceland **Circumnavigation: Helicopters, Glaciers and Volcanoes**, which takes you around the entire island nation, starting and ending in Reykjavík. Explore by small polar ship, helicopter, Zodiac, kayak, on foot, and occasionally by coach, as you witness thundering waterfalls, vast glaciers, erupting geysers, volcanic cliffs, and remote wild coasts. Cross the Arctic Circle, spot iconic puffins, marvel at Vatnajökull Glacier, and photograph Dettifoss—Europe’s most powerful waterfall.

- Circumnavigate the entire island nation
- Heli-flightsee over remote parts of Iceland
- Observe iconic puffins
- Spend three days in the remote Westfjords
- Cross the Arctic Circle by foot
- Photograph Dettifoss waterfalls and Vatnajökull Glacier

# Day by Day Itinerary



## Day 1 Arrival in Iceland

### Arriving in Reykjavik

You may arrive in Reykjavik at any time during Day 1 of the itinerary and make your way to the included hotel.

## Day 2 Embarkation in Reykjavik

On the morning of Day 2, your luggage will be collected from the lobby of your hotel, transferred to the ship and stored in your cabin. Ship embarkation will usually occur around 4 pm. You and your shipmates will meet in the lobby of the hotel and board the waiting buses for transfer to the ship. Information about transfer timing will be posted in your Reykjavik hotel.

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### Days 3–5

#### The Westfjords: Iceland's Hidden Gem

The seldom-visited Westfjords—where land meets sea in the most dramatic fashion—are often referred to as “Iceland’s best-kept secret.” This rugged peninsula at the country’s remote northwestern tip is rife with fjords, mountains, tumbling cliffs, gushing waterfalls, colorful beaches, rolling green hills, high moorlands dotted with rocky outcrops, small lakes, and the occasional shaggy Icelandic sheep or grazing ponies. A few modest outposts of civilization, in the form of small fishing communities nestled along the fjords and shores of the Denmark Strait, face out into the mighty Atlantic, keeping alive a maritime heritage that stretches back to the Viking days.

The Westfjords are the least developed of Iceland’s coastal areas and, consequently, the wildest. Guests will venture into this territory on Zodiac cruises and guided shore landings at unspoiled wilderness sites where they can hike and explore on foot.

One of the many waterfall highlights is Dynjandi, meaning “thunderous.” Without a doubt, it’s one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Iceland. The water plunges from a height of 100 meters (328 feet), tumbling over numerous ledges to create an ethereal, otherworldly ambience. You’ll also get to visit Vigur, a private island where guests can delve into Icelandic culture and heritage as far back as the 11th century. Vigur is widely regarded as a capsule of Icelandic heritage.

One of the island’s co-owners is polar explorer Felicity Aston, the first woman to ski solo across Antarctica. You’ll learn about the Icelandic tradition of eiderdown harvesting, as well as the wide array of Arctic birdlife and seals that inhabit the island.

It’s estimated that Vigur is home to more than 7,000 breeding ducks, 100,000 puffins, Europe’s largest colony of black guillemots, and vast flocks of Arctic terns. You’ll also have opportunities to ramble about the island, taste local food, and visit the island café.

Today’s adventure options include Zodiac cruising, sea kayaking, our paddle excursion program, and, potentially, a guided shore hike. Right across the bay lies Mongufoss, one of Iceland’s most remote and beautiful waterfalls, which we’ll visit by ship.

On our final day in the Westfjords, our Expedition Team will seek out more of the region’s rarely visited, remote corners. If weather conditions permit, we aim to offer guests a helicopter flightseeing experience in the Westfjords.

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### Days 6–8

#### Northern Iceland: Birds, Waterfalls and Crossing the Arctic Circle

We’ll spend the next three days exploring Northern Iceland by Zodiac, on foot, and occasionally by coach. The north of Iceland, with its long valleys and peninsulas, is interspersed with mountains, lava fields, and smooth hills carved over time by the unceasing flow of rivers. Many first-time visitors are surprised to see that the deep indentations along the northern coasts are alternately lush with vegetation—or completely barren. Your sense of awe will grow as we approach the Arctic Circle and experience the captivating brilliance of the midnight sun.

Prepare to be overwhelmed by some of the most impressive waterfalls in Europe, including thunderous Dettifoss and historic Goðafoss, the “Waterfall of the Gods.” Equally striking are the geological wonders of Mývatn and the lava fields of Dimmuborgir—featured in numerous scenes in *Game of Thrones*. At Hverir, bubbling mud pots and steaming vents create a surreal landscape, while at Skútustaðir you’ll encounter pseudocraters—volcanic features formed not by eruptions but by underground steam.

You can also fulfill a polar milestone on this voyage by crossing the Arctic Circle. We’ll visit Grímsey (population: 70), the only part of Iceland that lies within the Arctic Circle. We hope to see large colonies of puffins here.

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Other highlights in Northern Iceland include Skagafjörður, a fjord known for its impressive birdlife. Guillemots, kittiwakes, puffins, and other seabirds nest on the near-vertical cliffs of Drangey. We'll also visit Siglufjörður, a quiet fishing village rich in history. Later, after one of our waterfall excursions, we plan an evening stop in the beautiful seaside town of Húsavík.

As we journey along the northern coast, watch for potential whale sightings. Minke, humpback, and occasionally fin and orca are seen in these waters. The scenery will tempt you to reach for your camera again and again. But we invite you to pause, put it aside, and simply embrace the wonder of this enchanting landscape.

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### Day 9

#### East Iceland: Fjords, Mountains, and Icelandic Heritage

East Iceland is defined by fantastic scenery, featuring deep narrow fjords, towering mountains, the country's largest forest (Hallormsstaðaskógur), lush farmlands, abundant fjords, and picturesque fishing villages.

This morning we find ourselves on Seyðisfjörður a fjord marked by stunning scenery, steep mountains carpeted in verdant green, with streams cascading down picture perfect alpine valleys. It's also home to the Skálanes Nature and Heritage Center, a place rich in biodiversity, science, cultural heritage, and education. Here, we hope to meet with local scientists, who host students and fellow researchers throughout the year. There is a network of trails available to us with options suited to all abilities, and local science and cultural educators will be happy to share their knowledge with us along the way.

While reindeer sightings are not everyday occurrences, they do happen, so we'll scan the hillsides carefully. Arctic foxes are also occasionally seen in the mountains above Skálanes. Beyond science and research, Skálanes is devoted to preserving cultural heritage through practice and story.

Iceland's traditions are felt here, not only in the epic sagas but also in the enduring ways of people who for centuries have lived in harmony with this harsh yet beautiful land—where nature, science, and culture intersect.

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### Day 10

#### Southern Iceland: Djúpivogur and Vatnajökull Glacier

Djúpivogur sits where east and south Iceland meet. Here, the rugged, verdant topography of the east gives way to the gentler forelands of the south, which ultimately rise to Vatnajökull, Iceland's famous ice cap, crowned by its tallest peaks, the 2,100-meter (6,890 feet) Hvannadalshnúkur. Though Djúpivogur has the infrastructure to welcome ships like Ultramarine, it remains a small community, situated amid ranges of triangular mountain peaks. These mountains are lush with vegetation, accented by rocky outcrops, lingering snowfields, and cascading waterfalls—landscapes we won't want to leave.

From here, we'll travel westward by coach, as the south coast's waters are shallow and wave-battered, making them inhospitable for landing. Instead, we'll journey inland to Vatnajökull National Park, celebrated for its glaciers, volcanoes, waterfalls, and geothermal springs. We'll explore Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon, marvel at its drifting icebergs, walk along Diamond Beach with its striking black sands, and hike this otherworldly coastline.

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### Day 11

#### The Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar): Nature-Rich Archipelago

Today we explore The Westman Islands by ship and Zodiac. The archipelago of 15 islands, and surrounding sea cliffs, are teeming with birdlife. In fact, The Westman Islands group is home to one of the largest puffin colonies in the world, and is also renowned for its rich fishing grounds and whale population. Formed by below-sea-level eruptions, the soil is shallow and not suitable for agriculture—which is obvious when you see the large stretches of rocky terrain and lava. However, some rare plants grow in Herjólfssdalur Valley.

The Westman Islands are rich in stories, none more dramatic than the volcanic eruption of 1973 that destroyed many buildings on Heimaey, the largest—and only inhabited—of the islands. Evidence of the event can still be seen today. Heimaey is also home to one of the most remarkable harbors in Iceland, with an entrance so narrow it is unforgettable on approach.

As we near its tightest passage, look to the starboard side to glimpse Klettsvík, a sheltered cove once home to the killer whale Keiko—better known to the world as “Willy,” star of the film *Free Willy*. Following the movie’s release, a campaign was launched to grant Keiko real freedom. His gradual reintroduction to the wild included time here in Klettsvík, where he first encountered the open waters of Iceland before eventually swimming free.

Beyond its human and cinematic history, Heimaey is also a haven for large seabird colonies. Puffins nest in great numbers here, and we will have the chance to visit one of the colonies by foot at the island’s southernmost point. The walk itself is rewarding: meadows of tall grass swaying in the wind, sheep grazing contentedly, and cobalt-blue seas stretching southward.

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### Day 12

#### Disembarkation in Reykjavik and Onward

Your ship is scheduled to arrive in Reykjavik between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. local time. After breakfast, and once the ship has docked, you will have time to bid farewell to your Expedition Team and shipmates before completing the disembarkation process, which takes about an hour. After disembarkation, you will be transferred to a central downtown location.

# Arrival & Departure Details



\* Arrive anytime on Day 1 or earlier. Day 1 includes an optional briefing.  
 International flights are not included in the cost of the voyage.



## Day 1 Arriving in Reykjavik

- Arrive in Iceland and check in to your nearby hotel
- Explore Reykjavik—from geothermal baths and Viking sites

Arrive in the Icelandic capital and make your way to your included hotel. You will have the rest of the day to explore this fascinating city, known for its Norse history and stunning architecture.



## Day 2 Embarkation in Reykjavik

- Spend the morning exploring on your own
- Rendezvous at the hotel for an afternoon transfer to the ship

Enjoy your complimentary breakfast at the hotel. Your transfer to the ship is scheduled for the afternoon, leaving you time to explore Reykjavik in the morning and have lunch on your own before you rendezvous back at the hotel for the bus transfer to the port.



## Final Day Disembarkation in Reykjavik and Onward

- Say good-bye to your Expedition Team as you disembark in Reykjavik

You'll disembark in Reykjavik, Iceland's bustling capital, at the end of your journey. If you have booked post-expedition accommodation, we provide a transfer to a central downtown location.

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## Airport Transfers

- A transfer to the city center is provided upon disembarkation
- No transfer to the airport is included

## Arrival

An arrival transfer from the Keflavik International airport to Reykjavik is not included, you will need to arrange your own transportation. Most airports used on our voyages have good taxi ranks in the arrivals area, or you can often pre-book a transfer online.

## Departure

A transfer is provided, upon disembarkation, from the Reykjavik port to a central downtown location at the end of the expedition. A transfer to the airport is not included.



Photos captured with a telephoto lens from a responsible distance, following regulatory/AECO guidelines.



# Book Your Next Adventure

Contact your travel professional or a Quark Expeditions Polar Travel Advisor.

**Toll free and local numbers:**

**North America**  
(Toll Free) 1 888 332 0008

**U.K.**  
Tel +44 203 514 2712  
(Toll Free) 0 808 120 2333

**Australia**  
Tel +61 2 72580333  
(Toll Free) +61 1800 953518

**France**  
Tel +33-1 80 14 01 05  
(Toll Free) 08 05 08 66 46

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