

## ARCTIC ADVENTURES INFORMATION PACKAGE

**3 DAYS**

# SOUTH COAST

## GOLDEN CIRCLE, JÖKULSÁRLÓN GLACIER LAGOON & ICE CAVE

Welcome to your information package for the 3 day South Coast, Golden Circle and Ice Caving Adventure. Together, we will visit the famous Golden Circle attractions as well as some of Iceland's most stunning natural attractions on the south coast. You will see picturesque waterfalls, geysers, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, black sand beaches, majestic glaciers and last but definitely not least... the jaw-dropping glacier lagoon, Jökulsárlón. On top of this you explore an ice cave and hike on a glacier!

To help you prepare, we have put together an information package to read before your trip. This package will hopefully make a difference, adding to your comfort, knowledge and expectations about Iceland and building excitement about your trip.

**It's time to get ready for an exciting adventure in Iceland!**





## ABOUT THE TOUR

On this 3 day adventure tour of the Golden Circle and South Coast of Iceland you will see some of Iceland's most incredible landscapes, historic places and natural gems. This is a fabulous way to see a huge range of attractions in a very short time, giving you a great impression of the diverse nature which Iceland has to offer. Everything from the rift valley at Þingvellir, erupting geysers, beautiful **waterfalls** black sand beaches and surreal icebergs to exploring a natural ice cave. You will even set foot on the ice... with an easy hike on an outlet glacier of Vatnajökull, Europe's largest icecap. Don't forget to bring your camera - you are in for a real treat!



# ITINERARY - 3 DAY SOUTH COAST

## Day 1



**Start point:** Your choice of pick up point in Reykjavík

**Approximate driving distance:** 294 km (183 miles)

**Highlights:** Golden Circle, Seljalandsfoss, Skógafoss, Vík, Auroras

**Accommodation:** in the area around Vík

Your adventure starts in Reykjavík with **pick up** at 08:00 from your hotel or a nearby authorized meeting point in Reykjavík. Picking everyone up can take up to 30 minutes, so your patience is greatly appreciated.

Up first is the Golden Circle with Iceland's three most famous attractions Þingvellir National Park, Geysir and Gullfoss Waterfall.

You will visit **Þingvellir National Park**, listed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** for its amazing history and geology. The vikings who settled Iceland founded their historic first parliament, Alþingi, here in the year 930. You will see Almannagjá, the fault line forming a rugged rift valley, where the American and Eurasian tectonic plates have slowly edged apart. Þingvallavatn, the largest lake in Iceland, Öxarárfoss waterfall and Peningagjá, which means coin fissure are all nearby. Þingvellir occupies a special place in the heart of every Icelander.

Next up is **Geysir**, located in the valley of Haukadalur, home to the famous Great Geysir which gave us the English word "geyser". The Icelandic word "Geysir" stems from the verb "að geysa", meaning to gush. Nowadays, Great Geysir is taking a well-earned rest, his little brother, Strokkur, erupts superheated water up to 30 m high every 8-10 minutes. Get your camera ready, you don't want to miss this!

Onwards to the magnificent **Gullfoss Waterfall**, the cascade drops 32 m in two stages, dropping into a dramatic crevice. Gullfoss is on the upper part of the powerful Hvítá River which has flowed from its source at Langjökull, Iceland's second largest glacier, around 40 km to the north. The viewing platforms around the thundering falls offer outstanding vantage points.

The south coast highlights are still to come, with a visit to the stunning **Seljalandsfoss Waterfall** - here you get the opportunity to walk behind the beautiful cascade. We recommend you put on your rainwear for this refreshing activity, there is a lot of spray. We then jump back on the minibus and head to **Skógafoss Waterfall**, you will feel the power of the tumbling torrent as it drops from the former sea cliffs. There is plenty of spray, again, we recommend wearing rainwear if you want to get close!

Our accommodation for the night will be at a country hotel or guesthouse in the area around **Vík**, a nearby coastal town. After dinner, your guide will give a short introduction to the **Northern Lights** and go over the aurora forecast for the evening with the group. Hopefully, the chances will be good and you will be shown the best place to watch out for them. However, this has been a long day of driving for your guide and he/she needs to rest for the following day. Your guide may take a short walk with you to the best viewing point, or just point you to the nearby location. The places where we stay are located in quite remote areas, well away from city lights. Darkness is needed to see the lights at their best, you will be in a great location... so fingers crossed, and let's hope the Northern Lights will come out to dance!

## Day 2



**Start point:** Around Vík

**Approximate driving distance:** 270 km (168 miles)

**Highlights:** Reynisfjara - Ice Cave - Jökulsárlón - Northern Lights

**Accommodation:** In the Vatnajökull national park area

We enjoy breakfast at our hotel before driving to our first attraction of the day, **Reynisfjara**, Iceland's most popular black sand beach. The setting is really dramatic with powerful Atlantic waves rolling ashore, huge basalt columns, impressive rock formations and cliffs. See the famous Reynisdrangar basalt stacks standing like crazily-shaped natural obelisks out in the ocean beneath Mount Reynisfjall - a truly captivating sight.

We stop for lunch and then continue our journey east, through unique lava landscapes and volcanic sand deserts, crafted by great glacial floods from famous volcano mountain glaciers.

You can now start looking forward to a totally unforgettable experience - a visit to a natural crystal ice cave in a stunning outlet glacier of Vatnajökull is next on the agenda. New ice caves are formed each winter when the glacial rivers retract and water freezes. So each year there are new caves and each and every one is incredible. Your certified glacier guide will give a safety briefing before you go into the cave. You will be amazed at the way the light shines through the ice, your guide will tell you the fascinating story of this magnificent ice cave and how incredibly blue ice is formed.

Prepare for more amazement as we continue to **Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon**. It's a fabulous natural phenomenon, a constantly growing lake that's filled with the icebergs which calve off the Breiðamerkurjökull glacier, a tongue of Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Europe. This is one of Iceland's most famous tourist destinations and also a great favorite of the Icelanders, you will truly understand the reason why! The immense beauty will leave you spellbound and totally speechless, as you watch huge and surreally shaped icebergs floating through the vast lagoon on their way to the ocean.

Do these scenes look familiar? Footage of quite a few famous films has been shot here including James bond (A View to Kill & Die Another Day), Interstellar, Batman Begins, The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, Tomb Raider and last but not least... the popular TV-show, **Game of Thrones**!

A short walk away, you will come to the Diamond Beach, which acquired its name from the glistening icebergs sitting stranded on the black sand, the beauty of these sparkling ice diamonds is mind-blowing. If you do the tour close to mid-winter the mystical light of twilight gives this place a very special magic.

Early in the evening we arrive at our accommodation in the Vatnajökull National Park area, quite often we stay near Skaftafell. Tomorrow is all about the glaciers, so any of the country hotels and guesthouses we use around Vatnajökull National Park will give us a fabulous starting point.

After dinner your guide will go over the aurora forecast with you, and if things look hopeful, you will be directed to the best vantage point. Once again, your guide needs to rest ready for tomorrow. Your accommodation will always be located out in the darkness of the countryside, so you will be in the best place. Will those lights swirl their radiant colors across the night sky, we certainly hope so, as always, though, we have to wait and see!



## Day 3



**Start point:** Around Skaftafell

**Approximate driving distance:** 434 km (270 miles)

**Highlights:** Vatnajökull national park - Glacier hike

**End point:** Your selected drop off point in Reykjavík

We start nice and early with breakfast at our hotel before checking out. Today is truly a spectacular day spent mostly in Europe's second largest national park - Vatnajökull National Park, which is filled with diverse landscapes, terrain and ecosystems.

We start our day with a **glacier hike** on **Svínafellsjökull**, an outlet glacier of Vatnajökull Glacier. On average, the ice is 400 m thick and it extends over approximately 8,100 square km, roughly 8% of Iceland's total area, making it the largest ice cap in Europe. Your certified glacier guide will issue you with crampons and all the other glacier gear and give you a safety briefing - then it is onto the glacier for a stunning but easy hike. You will see and learn all about the dynamic forces of nature which create crevasses, moulins, amazing ice formations and also the blue and greenish tones in the ice.

After enjoying three exciting days of ice caving, glacier hiking and seeing the breathtaking sights along the south coast and within the incredible Vatnajökull National Park we make our way back to Reykjavík.

A couple of stops are made along the way, as always in winter in Iceland, the weather is somewhat in charge. We get back to Reykjavík between 20:00 and 23:00 in the evening.



\*\*\* Your safety is always our number one priority. Keeping this in mind, please note that Arctic Adventures may adjust the itinerary and/or take different routes or glaciers. These changes are generally due to weather and road conditions although other factors may also be the reason. However, our experienced travel planners aim to optimize your experience of the tour and make sure it's always the best possible. During the darkest winter months in Iceland, daylight is limited. Therefore, we kindly ask that participants arrive at the meeting points agreed with the tour guide on time so that we can see all the fascinating sights in daylight.

# PICK UP INFORMATION

Arctic Adventures offers a pickup service from authorized points in the Reykjavík area. However, these do not include private apartments, Airbnb apartments or Keflavík International Airport. Please have a look at our website where you can find [detailed information regarding our pickup](#) procedures and a list of selected locations where we can pick you up.

If your accommodation is not on the list, then please choose the nearest pickup location. We have provided maps and directions for all major hotels, hostels and guesthouses in the Reykjavík area on our website. You can update your pick up location on [my.adventures.is](#) up to 48 hours before your tour starts.

Keep in mind that the driver guide on your tour probably has to pick up at a few locations so it might take up to 30 minutes for the guide to reach your pickup location. Our vehicles are all marked with the Arctic Adventures logo so please look out for a vehicle looking something like the one below.

Want to know more? Read more about [Pick up Information on our website](#).



! Please note that several tours might have pick up at the same pick up location and time as yours. Our guides will have a lists of all passangers for all the cars. Please have your voucher ready when the car arrives.



# ACCOMODATION AND MEALS

On this tour, you will be spending the first night at a country hotel or guesthouse in the area around Vík í Mýrdal. On the second night you will stay at a country hotel or guesthouse in the Vatnajökull National Park area, most often close to Skaftafell. The specific places we stay at depends on availability but all of the guesthouses and hotels have some things in common, they offer standard comfortable rooms with made up beds and private bathrooms with towels. They all provide free WiFi for guests. We are often asked if hair dryers are available, and they certainly are, if you can't find one in your room, then you just need to ask at reception.

## Hotel Breakfast - Included

Breakfast at your accommodation is included. This will be a Nordic style breakfast buffet generally offering bread, crispbread, cereals, fruit juice, teas, coffee, milk, butter, jams, sliced vegetables, fruit, boiled eggs, cheese, ham and often salami. Extras often include yogurt or the famous Icelandic Skyr, we recommend that everyone visiting Iceland tries this particular delight.

## Lunch and Dinner - Your Choices

Along the way, we will be stopping at gas stations, shops/supermarkets and restaurants where you can purchase snacks, food and meals. Examples of what you can find at these places are sandwiches, warm meals, hot dogs, soups, hamburgers, chocolate bars, snacks, drinks, etc. Normally, we eat dinner at the hotel we stay at or find another restaurant in the area. Keep in mind that some of the hotels we stay at offer a more extensive evening menu but country hotels sometimes offer just the dish of the day rather than a menu. Some of the freshest fish in the world and delicious wild mountain lamb dishes feature strongly on Icelandic menus. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the meals, just ask your guide on the tour, he/she will be happy to provide information about the food options available.

## Allergies and Dietary Restrictions

In the booking process, you will be asked whether you have any dietary restrictions. For example, if you are vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, lactose free, diabetic or have allergies. Please also mention your dietary restrictions to your guide on the tour so that he/she can do his/her best to accommodate them.

Generally, accommodating dietary needs is not a problem on the road. However, if you have complicated dietary restrictions or require specific alternative items, e.g. if you are vegan/lactose intolerant and also need to be gluten free, it may be best to bring them with you or ask your guide to stop at a local supermarket before leaving Reykjavik. Options on the road can be limited and we don't want you to get hungry.



## ABOUT THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

Northern Lights or aurora borealis? It just doesn't matter, they are exactly the same, the words just come from different languages. The lights occur when streams of particles thrown out from the sun collide with gas particles in the earth's atmosphere. The type of gas particle will determine the color of the aurora producing green, dark or bright red, purple, blue, pink or yellow tones. Green lights occur most often, although red aurora appear least frequently, they are more likely to be seen in Iceland than anywhere else in the world.

We are extremely fortunate to have the chance to see Northern Lights on our tours during the winter months. The best time to see them is between September and March when it's dark and clear. The sky needs to be as dark as possible, so the best places to see them are well away from city lights. You also need a good Northern Lights forecast, darkness and no clouds, but they can be elusive, so you need a little luck as well! On this tour you spend your nights away from the city, so you can just wander around, hunting for the Northern Lights in the area near your accommodation whenever you want.

*Further reading:* [All about the Northern Lights](#)



## ICE CAVES IN ICELAND

Ice Caves are ever-changing natural phenomena which are extremely weather dependant. For a natural ice cave to be formed, there has to have been a part of the cave which has been below 0°C all year around, and water must have entered the cold zone of the cave. These caves melt during the warmer months of the year, making them inaccessible during warmer seasons. When the water freezes in the colder winter months, it creates new and unique ice formations, so we are always surprised by different but truly magnificent ice caves each year.

Every autumn, when the temperature reduces, our expert guides explore the vast glacier looking for caves to explore in the winter months. Once our team is confident that the caves are safe, we start our ice caving tours. Please keep in mind that weather conditions can affect accessibility. We will, of course, do everything we can to visit an ice cave on this tour but our participants' safety is always our number one priority, all decisions are made with this in mind. We hope that our participants will understand when, occasionally, we have to make safety decisions which change the itinerary.

*Further reading:* [All about Ice Caves](#)





# FACTS ABOUT GLACIERS

Glaciers can only develop in areas where there is snow in the same place throughout the year, fresh snowfalls then compress the older layers, reducing the air pockets and increasing density. The older snow is transformed into a state which is something between ice and snow, called firn, after around two years. Firn needs to be compressed for around 100 years before it becomes dense enough to be ice.

People are often surprised to hear the glacier cracking as it adjusts and moves. New features form and moulins, ice ridges and networks of crevasses are always building and evolving. The glacier is peaceful but it is also a place of great power, possessing enough force to shape the valley and bedrock beneath it.

The glaciers are subject to freeze/melt cycles each year, glacial rivers in Iceland flow far more generously in spring and summer, swollen by large volumes of meltwater. The overall percentage, of a great glacier, such as Vatnajökull, which melts each year is comparatively small, and every winter more ice is built. However, this is not enough to compensate for the fact that global warming is causing the glaciers to retreat at an accelerating rate. It is so important that we understand these precious ice wildernesses, enjoying them respectfully whilst we have the opportunity. If present trends continue they will not be preserved in fully glory for our great grandchildren to see.

Vatnajökull glacier is the largest volume glacier in Europe, many outlet glaciers or glacier tongues radiate out from this great central ice-hub, including Svínafellsjökull and Falljökull, where our glacier hikes take part.

Further reading: <https://adventures.is/information/about-glaciers/>





# GLACIER HIKING

Glacier hiking is one of the most amazing experiences you can have in Iceland, walking over the surface of the ice is just so special, like traversing a magic white kingdom which time forgot. Encountering different places is such an exciting adventure, and the glacier is very different!

*So what is glacier hiking like?* First and foremost, your glacier hike on Vatnajökull Glacier is rated as an easy hike, the pace is slow and determined by the needs of the participants, anyone capable of hiking at a slow pace for an hour can do it. You are provided with ice crampons which fasten securely onto your hiking boots. The crampons have long spikes to prevent you from slipping and sliding about - you will be more secure walking on the glacier than you would be on an icy sidewalk. You need to wear plenty of layers and waterproof jacket and trousers, together with headwear, gloves and scarves. Obviously, it is cold on the glacier, but temperatures can vary a little, so being flexible with your layers is best. If you like to have a drink or snack when you are hiking, you should bring one.

## Glacier Photography

Cold conditions will deplete camera batteries far faster than warmer conditions. So traveling in Iceland during the winter months you should always make certain your battery is fully charged each day and carry several spare batteries with you. Standing before the most mesmerizing sight you have ever seen and being out of battery is not a happy experience! On the glacier, if you want to make images and colors more vibrant you should use a polarizing filter to reduce glare and reflection. Bright ice and snow will hoodwink your camera into believing there is more light than there actually is, so automatic flash will not always operate when you need it to. If you are using a camera with an exposure compensation meter you should overexpose by 2 thirds.



# CLOTHING

Icelandic people like to say that “there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing”. Being prepared for Iceland’s changeable weather conditions is strongly recommended so that you can fully enjoy your stay here. In our experience, we have learnt that the 3-layer structure is the best way to go, it works well all year around.

1. First a base layer, the one that’s closest to your skin. The best is thermals or any type of insulating layer.
2. Next up we have the sweater (fleece or wool recommended) or primaloft layer. This is the one that keeps the warmth of the base layer in.
3. The third one is the wind and water protection. An outer shell or a parka comes in handy here depending on the season.



Rather than a few warm and bulky garments, we recommend a selection of lighter and more versatile pieces that can be worn in various combinations to better manage the wide range of conditions that you will encounter in Iceland.

Be aware that you must adjust these instructions according to the season when you are visiting Iceland. In summer the kind of hiking pants which zip off to become hiking shorts can be good. It can, on occasions, be warm enough to wear shorts and T-shirts but every day when you are out of the city you need to be prepared for every other kind of weather. In winter, you will need a warm jacket, like a thick down jacket. If you don’t have one, then make sure you pack plenty of thermals, primaloft and warm sweaters to layer. We recommend fleece, wool or even better, the Icelandic lopapeysa.

Your feet need particularly careful consideration, so make sure that you bring comfortable and worn in hiking shoes. We recommend waterproof hiking boots with ankle support (can be rented) or similar. It is recommended that you wear thick socks designed to be worn with hiking boots. For the glacier hiking, you need to use crampons and these can only be fitted to hiking boots, if you do not own a pair you can rent good boots from us simply by adding them in the extras and upgrade section below.

Further reading: [The Weather in Iceland and How to Dress for it?](#)



## PACKING LIST - WHAT TO BRING

We have prepared a general packing list to help you prepare but keep in mind that you will have to dress according to the weather and season every time.

Here is a list of what to bring for the tour:

- ☐ Thermal underwear (top and bottom)
- ☐ Wool or fleece thermal mid layer
- ☐ Warm outdoor clothing
- ☐ Water & windproof jacket and pants
- ☐ Down jacket or extra warm layers
- ☐ Warm headwear (e.g. wool/fleece hat)
- ☐ Gloves
- ☐ Scarf
- ☐ Hiking shoes/boots
- ☐ Warm socks (wool or synthetic recommended)
- ☐ Toothbrush and personal toiletry items
- ☐ Medical supplies and prescription medicine (for example, pain killers and asthma inhaler even if you seldom need them). Band aids, throat lozenges, lip salves, second skin for blisters etc.
- ☐ Pyjamas/nightwear
- ☐ Sunglasses and sunscreen (especially for sunny days on the glacier)

A few other things that might be convenient to bring along are a day backpack and water bottle. Clothing is seasonal but Icelandic guesthouses and hotels are well-heated so you may want a couple of lighter items. In Iceland you will find plenty of swimming pools that are heated all year round, so we recommend you bring a swimsuit and a towel so you can join the locals in the hot pot.

Further reading: [12 Things you should always have in your bag while traveling in Iceland](#)



# GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE THE TOUR

## Medical conditions and medications

Please let us know when you book your tour about any medical condition your guide should be aware of, it is imperative that the guide is aware of this information so that he/she can keep everyone safe and happy. Remember to bring any medication you take or are likely to need. For example, asthma inhalers or painkillers, even if you seldom require them.

## Mobile phone & internet connection

The mobile phone connection in Iceland is strong in most places. Some overseas mobile services do not work here and their fees vary. An Icelandic SIM card will overcome these issues. We recommend getting an Icelandic SIM card if you wish to have signal throughout your trip. Iceland has the highest percentage of internet users in the world and the 4G connection is mostly excellent, although, there are a few places along the road where the connection is spotty. In addition to this, you will also find WIFI signal in all accommodations for this tour.

## Currency and ATM's

The Icelandic króna or ISK is the currency of Iceland. It is quite important that you have enough ISK coins with you because in some places you have to pay 100/200 ISK to use the bathroom. For almost everything else credit, debit and Caxton type cards are accepted, even for small purchases such as a coffee. Other currencies are very rarely accepted. ATMs can be found in Reykjavík and in the small towns you will visit. Outside of the towns there are very few ATMs.

## Luggage information

On this tour you are permitted to take your day backpack and one piece of luggage weighing 20 kg. If you have more or heavier luggage with you, you will need to book storage for the surplus luggage before you arrive, there is a small fee for using this facility. Luggage storage in Reykjavík can be added to your booking using the link in the extras and upgrade section.

## Extras and Upgrades

Extras and rental equipment include hiking boots, luggage storage, waterproof jacket & pants, towel rental & entrance to Mývatn Nature Baths. You also have the option of upgrading to a single room and/or Whale Watching in a powerful Rhib Boat, a standard whale watching and sea angling tour is included. If you have already booked your tour but would like to add extras or upgrade your booking that is no problem. Just use this link:

<https://adventures.is/2-day-tours-rental-equipment-and-upgrades/>

Further reading: [What to know about Iceland](#)

# FURTHER QUESTIONS

You should now be prepared for your upcoming adventure. If you have any questions then please don't hesitate to contact us at [info@adventures.is](mailto:info@adventures.is). We look forward to meeting you and enjoying 6 days of traveling around Iceland together!



### **"Fantastic 3-day tour of Southern Iceland"**



"I booked a 3-day tour of southern Iceland with Arctic Adventures. It was fantastic. My tour guide, Oliver, was personable, knowledgeable, and excellent all around. He was always respectful of giving you lots of space when you wanted it and adding color and commentary along the way. I am generally an "anti-tour" traveller who prefers to go it on my own. But this tour was the exception. I would book again in a heartbeat.

The hotels were solid, 3-star properties and the best available in the rural areas we visited. I really appreciated the thoughtful hotel choices being located so close to the last stop of the day. We generally arrived between 6pm and 7pm and then dinner in each of the restaurants was great. Every room was clean and I got a great night's rest each night in the comfortable beds."

TripAdvisor, reviewed March 2017 by Patricia M



### **" Fantastic 3-day trip"**

"We joined a 3 day trip to South Iceland. Although weather was not all good but we have a great, young and professional guide- Eagle(English name)who managed our itinerary well and tried best to make our trip unique. Thanks for the forgettable experience in South Iceland. We will recommend Artic adventures than others. "

TripAdvisor, reviewed March 2017 by pnbanav

[See more reviews on our tripadvisor page](#)