

HIKING JOURNEY

A Winter Tale In Iceland

8 DAYS



WALKABOUT
GOURMET ADVENTURES

Journey Overview

Winter is a magical season in Iceland, with far fewer visitors, a snow-dusted landscape and the chance to see the northern lights! Our winter adventure brims with outdoor escapades and we have timed our winter tale to give us plenty of daylight hours to enjoy our activities. On our walks we explore the stark beauty and the soft light among frozen waterfalls and we snowshoe along lava fields with sweeping vistas. A dog sledding tour on snow and a visit to the unchained Siberian Husky Kennel at Bergþóra's home, Heiði farm, is another highlight. In Mývatn, snowmobiling is one of the local's favourite ways of travelling through the rough arctic conditions. It is a part of their lifestyle and they love to share their passion with us. Another thrill is to visit the Lofthellir ice cave inside a volcano. It is a permafrost ice cave inside a lava tunnel, boasting incredible ice formations, some hundreds of years old. The tour starts from our hotel and the journey to the cave leads us through rugged tracks along incredible geology. The drive takes us past the volcano Mt. Hverfjall and along Lúdentarborgir crater row. Another thrill on our winter tour is hunting for the Northern Lights. As night falls, we search for the spectacular blue, green, and violet arcs shimmering across the sky above us. It is thanks to the weaker magnetic field around the poles, that electrically charged particles from the sun can enter the earth's atmosphere here. But we don't need to understand the physical part of it to enjoy the amazing Northern Lights above us... and our hotel is in the best spot for seeing the aurora! We have always enjoyed our visits to the Mývatn Nature Baths during summer but it is even more special in winter. It was opened in 2004 and has proven to be one of the region's highlights for travellers. Based on a century's old tradition, the tastefully designed complex offers bathers a completely natural experience. Begin with a relaxing dip in clouds of steam rising up from fissures deep in the earth's surface and end with a luxurious bath in a pool of geothermal water drawn from depths of up to 2,500 metres. Containing a unique blend of minerals, silicates and geothermal micro-organisms, the warm soothing waters of Mývatn Nature Baths benefit both skin and spirit alike. The Sigurgeir's bird museum is the perfect solution for an unfavourable weather day and is on the farm of Ytri-Neslönd beside Lake Myvatn. It was established following the pioneering work of Sigurgeir Stefansson who lived at the farm. Sigurgeir's bird museum is considered the largest known private bird collection in Iceland. There are plenty of other activities that could be an option dependent on weather!

Journey Schedule

DAY 1

Akureyri - Godafoss - Lake Myvatn - Pseudocraters

DAY 2

A Day with The Huskies

DAY 3

Looking for Trolls in Dimmuborgir

DAY 4

Dettifoss

DAY 5

Krafla and Leirhnjúkur Lava Fields

DAY 6

Free Morning - Lake Myvatn - Kálfaströnd - Klasar

DAY 7

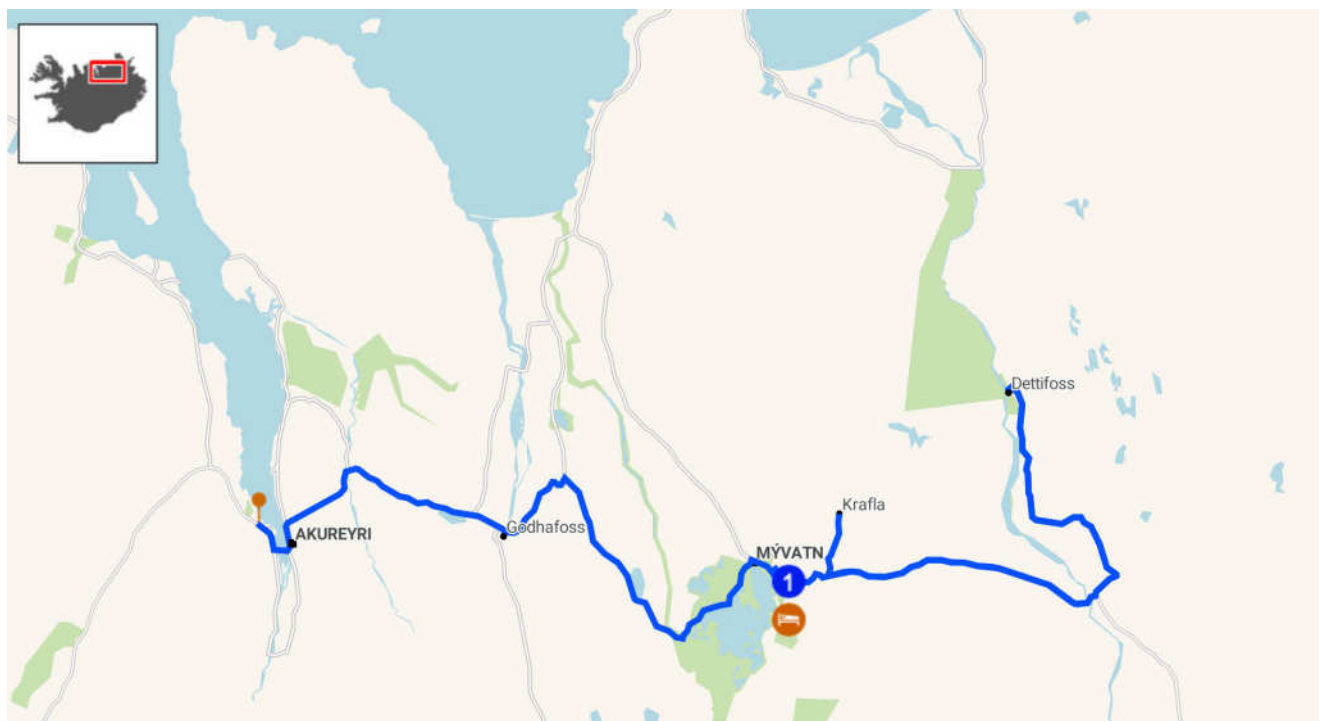
Adventure Day to Lofthellir Lava Cave

DAY 8

Lake Myvatn - Akureyri



Journey Itinerary



DAY 1

Akureyri - Godafoss - Lake Myvatn – Pseudocraters

We meet at 10.00 a.m. in the morning at

Hotel Kea by Keahotels, Akureyri, Iceland

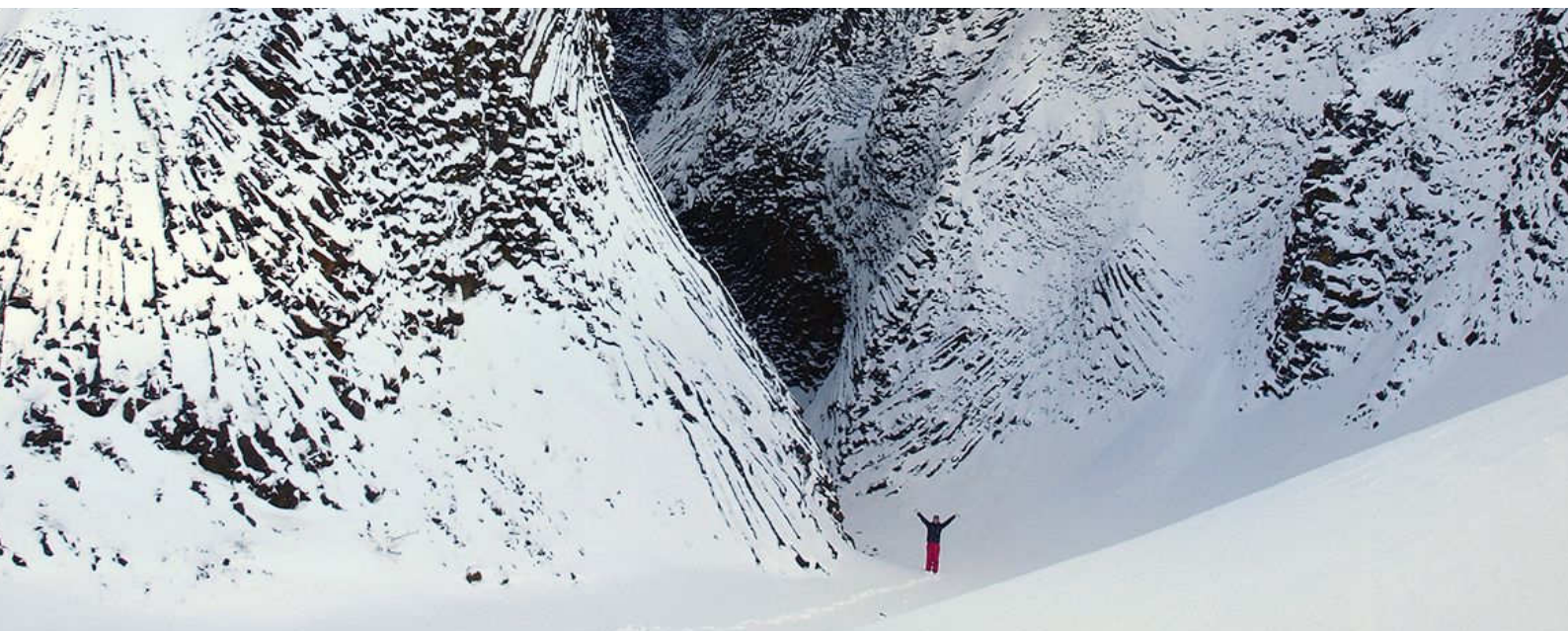
www.keahotels.is

From here we drive to our Hotel Laxa at Lake Myvatn. On our way we get epic views of picturesque Goðafoss, 'Waterfall of the Gods'. It is a wide 12 metre tall waterfall on the Skjálfandafljót River that is segmented into two main components. Goðafoss in winter is spectacular and it is probably the most beautiful time of year to see it. If we are lucky the road will be free of ice but snow will blanket the banks of the Skjálfandafljót River and icicles alternated with the rushing water across the 30 metre-wide falls. This curling horseshoe-shaped waterfall had a key role in Icelandic history. Apparently back in the year 1,000, the

law speaker at the time - Þorgeirr Ljósveitningagoði had the unenviable task of choosing the official religion of Iceland. Perhaps under the pressure of Christianity's convert or die?? methods, Þorgeirr chucked his icons of Norse deities into the falls (which means "waterfall of the gods") but secretly maintained allegiance to the Norse deities! We arrive at our hotel and after check-in, we drive to a nearby restaurant for a late lunch. In the afternoon we have time to explore some of the nearby Pseudo craters. They are volcanic landforms which resemble a true volcanic crater but differ in that they don't have an actual vent from which lava has erupted. Rootless cones are formed by steam explosions as flowing hot lava crosses over a wet surface, such as a swamp, a lake, or a pond which makes the explosions due to the heat difference of the lava and water. There's quite a cache of Pseudo craters at the southern end of Lake Myvatn and we will spend some time trailing amongst them. We return to our hotel and dinner is in the hotel's restaurant. It specialises in local recipes and ingredients. Tonight, is the first night of probably many more to follow when we hunt the Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis). They are a natural phenomenon and cannot be perfectly predicted, even with the abundance of technology. It always is a game of luck and chance but it is one that we all play with a great deal of excitement! Then, when the magic starts to happen, we will be treated to one of the most spectacular shows on earth. It won't always look like the photos and videos you see but looking into the sky and watching nature's unique art dance is an experience we will never forget.

 **3 HOURS**

 **LAKE MYVATN, ICELAND**



DAY 2

A Day with The Huskies

Today's tour is a must for animal lovers as it is simply an opportunity to meet and play with some of the friendliest animals in the country.

After breakfast we make our way to Snow Dogs Unchained Kennel at the Heiði farm, where we meet the incredible Siberian huskies. Here we find at least twenty sled dogs who are waiting to pull sleighs through the Icelandic snowscapes. They are all friendly and used to visitors and love the attention we will bring. We have plenty of opportunities to take some photographs with them and give them a good belly-rub.

Siberian huskies have a very gentle nature and are great with children. They are also some of the world's most beautiful dogs, with their thick fur coat, perked up ears, and intelligent faces. While we play with the animals, we will learn about how dog-sledding works, and how the Siberian husky came to be an ideal breed for it. We will see the amount of care and training that goes into the dogs but also the amount of respect for them; the dogs get plenty of attention, rest and food so that they are always happy to do their jobs. Sled dogs have, over thousands and thousands of years, been bred to excel at what they do and to enjoy it. Huskies have a high amount of strength, energy, and resilience, resistance to cold conditions, and a highly ingrained pack mentality, making them perfect for the job. Because of these traits, the dogs can almost always be outside, it is just when the weather is really bad, they have to be inside, mainly because Bergþóra doesn't want to get too much snow into the building. They also can never roam around outside the fences except for the puppies. Usually two guests and a musher from Snow Dogs share a wooden sled with 8-10 Siberian huskies pulling us on a scenic trail of 6-10 kms, through the Icelandic snow capes, taking approximately 45-70 minutes with picture stops.

We return to our hotel for a hot shower and welcome pre-dinner drink, followed by dinner at our hotel.

 **2 HOURS**

 **LAKE MYVATN, ICELAND**

DAY 3

Looking for Trolls in Dimmuborgir

Today we enjoy the ominous scenery around Dimmuborgir (Dark Castles) with its rugged stacks of towering rocks. Volcanic lava caves, rocks and giant pillars cover a very vast area at the east part of Lake Mývatn. They are the remains of a collapsed ancient citadel, to which the region owes its name. These structures were created 2,300 years ago and the landscape is unique and awesome! It sits on top of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and has a landscape unlike anywhere else in Iceland. Scanning the horizon you can see plumes of sulphur steam coming from vents and volcanic cones and craters looming. There are several stories connected with the region. According to Iceland's myths, Dimmuborgir connects earth with hell. Besides, this place is supposed to be the home of a troll named Grýla, her 3rd husband Leppalúði and their sons, The Yule Lads, 13 very mischievous trolls in total. According to Nordic Christian lore Dimmuborgir is the place where Satan arrived after he was kicked out of Heaven. He created here the Helvetes katakomber (Catacombs of Hell)! Norway's black metal band Dimmu Borgir is named after this place. The Game of the Thrones also used this landscape for some scenes. With or without snowshoes we walk through these magical volcanic formations of Dimmuborgir and at times it feels like illusive fairies and trolls are watching us. We end our walk with a late lunch at the Kaffi Borgir - their curried coconut soup with molasses bread is just the best and their smoked arctic char is divine! We return to our hotel and the rest of the afternoon we can relax and enjoy the surrounds. Dinner is at our hotel.

 **2 HOURS**

 **LAKE MYVATN, ICELAND**



DAY 4

Dettifoss

Today we drive to Dettifoss, possibly by super jeep but it depends very much on the weather conditions. It is Europe's mightiest waterfall, a thundering cascade of glacial water and mist among shattered cliffs. The Jökulsárgljúfur canyon is home to the raging Dettifoss, carved out by a powerful glacier flood caused by a volcanic eruption from beneath Vatnajökull. Melting an immense amount of glacier ice, the subsequent rush of water through the riverbed pressed down so hard that it carried off the earth with it, carving out the deep canyon. Depending on snow conditions, we visit Dettifoss either from the east or west bank. Dettifoss waterfall is the most powerful waterfall in Europe. It is 45 metres high and 100 metres wide with such power that standing next to it is an experience you will never forget. A few minutes' walk from Dettifoss, the water smoothly falls down the columnar basalt to form Selfoss waterfall. It is a beautiful calm waterfall, compared to the power of Dettifoss. Not far from here, on the edge of Jökulsá canyon falls Hafragilsfoss down 120 metres to form a spectacular waterfall. The rough landscape on the way and around the waterfalls is like from another world. On our way back, we will end the day in a relaxing bath at the Nature Bath at Lake Mývatn. It is wonderfully relaxing to soothe yourself in the geothermal hot water and maybe we can already see the first stars in the sky.

 **2 HOURS**

 **LAKE MYVATN, ICELAND**



DAY 5

Krafla and Leirhnjúkur Lava Fields

Today we drive to the Krafla Volcano with its peak looming up to 820 metres above the ground. It is notorious for its violent eruptions and has blown its top 29 times in the last 1,200 years. The experience of walking through the Krafla lava fields is absolutely wonderful. The Leirhnjúkur area is a great plain and the older lava we see dates back to several eruptions from 1724-1729. The newer ones are from several eruptions between 1975-1984. Most likely we won't see much of a trail but will make our own walking path through the snow. We continue towards the fumarole/solfatara field and our walk takes us through more recent lava. The smoke coming from the lava is from this recent eruption. Our route takes us through large blocks of lava and gives a good impression of the surroundings. Along the way we see lots of different colours of lava, created by different eruptions. Our path will lead us up to Mt. Leirhnjúkur's hot spring area, which is part of the Krafla volcanic area and is teeming with ancient lava flows and fissures. Of course, we can't promise to see all this under layers of winter snow, but if we do, the Krafla lava fields are one of the most stunning sights in Iceland. At the more active zone, the snow is melting very quickly and walking along the boardwalks around the lava fields is easy. We return to our hotel and the rest of the evening is at your own leisure.

 **5 HOURS**

 **LAKE MYVATN, ICELAND**



DAY 6

Free Morning - Lake Myvatn - Kálfaströnd – Klasar

Today we have a leisurely morning to relax, keep warm and enjoy our hotel.

We meet after lunch (13.30) and drive the short distance to Kálfaströnd. From here we start our 2 hour walk to see some fantastic lava pillars in all shapes and forms. They are called Klasar or Stírípar. Game of Thrones fans will recognize these beautiful lava pillars in the background of one scene. They are the landmark of the Mývatn area, depicted on many postcards and on assorted chocolate boxes as the icon for Mývatn. Later in the afternoon we return to our hotel and dinner tonight is again at the restaurant of our hotel.

 **4 - 5 HOURS**

 **LAKE MYVATN, ICELAND**



DAY 7

Adventure Day to Lofthellir Lava Cave

Lofthellir cave boasts the greatest natural ice sculptures in an Icelandic lava cave. Our drive to the cave takes us through rugged tracks and incredible geology, past Mt. Hverfjall's volcano and along Lúdentarborgir crater row. From here we continue on foot for 30 minutes across a craggy lava field, but the surreal, lustrous ice formations are well worth the effort. Lofthellir, a 3,500-year old lava cave, is a world of ice and darkness and about 370 metres long. The short entry (approx. 1.5 metres) into the cave is narrow and we need to crawl on all fours to enter. A lost world of ice and magic awaits us, frozen in time, frozen in place. Lofthellir Lava Cave is a unique cave due to its incredible ancient ice formations. The cave is a protected sight and privately owned by local land owners. We need to come prepared, for doing small acrobatics like pulling ourselves on a rope while your feet walk up the side of the cave and our bodies lie in the wet ice and shimmying to the top of an ice mound. Today we need waterproof clothes and we recommend that you wear wool socks and mittens, for the cave is cold and full of ice. This excursion is not suitable for guests with claustrophobia or people who are not in reasonable physical condition. An alternative day program is there as an option.

 **2 HOURS**

 **LAKE MYVATN, ICELAND**



DAY 8

Lake Myvatn – Akureyri

Today we leave our comfortable Laxa Hotel and drive to Akureyri where our tour ends at approximately 12.00 p.m. at Akureyri airport or the Kea Hotel.



Journey Accommodation

Laxá Hótel, Myvatn

NIGHTS 1 - 7



Journey Notes

PRICE INCLUDES

- Pick up and drop off at Hotel Kea by Keahotels or Akureyri airport. Price includes transport between Akureyri on Day 1 and drop off at Hotel Kea by Keahotels or the airport in Akureyri on Day 8.
- Twin share accommodation from Day 1 to Day 7. Including 7 breakfasts, 6 dinners, excursions and visits, except ice cave.

NOT INCLUDED IN TRIP COSTS

- Transport before and after the "tour", 7 lunches, drinks, travel insurance, laundry, medical expenses and items of a personal nature.

WHAT TO BRING

Daypack, walking boots, thick socks, warm jacket, waterproof raincoat (Gore-Tex), snow pants, gloves and some warm clothing is recommended (layers work best in the Icelandic winter) woollen hat, and scarf as well as bathers, sunglasses and sun cream. We can also recommend telescopic walking sticks as being useful. Please restrict your luggage to a maximum of 20 kg.

PLEASE NOTE

All accommodation on tour includes private facilities (toilet and shower/bath).

Single rooms can usually be arranged for a supplement. Please ask for details. We will endeavour to match people together if they would like to share a twin room with another guest to avoid paying the single room supplement. However, as this is not always possible, single" clients will have to pay the supplement.

All activities during the "tour" are optional or can be taken in parts. Guests do not have to be experienced walkers although a good level of fitness is necessary.



Get in touch and book your journey today.



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Follow the journey.



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