

# New Years Land Of The Northern Lights

## 5 days | Starts/Ends: Reykjavik



*NEW YEAR TOUR: Celebrate New Years eve the Icelandic way whilst searching for the Northern Lights. Exploring southern Iceland, you'll visit the Reykjanes peninsula, relax in the Blue Lagoon and see the geothermal activity in the Golden Circle. Enjoy a delicious 4-course meal on New Years eve before heading outside to see the sky lit up by fireworks.*

### HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

#### Trip Highlights

- Reykjavik: Capital of Iceland
- Reykjanes Peninsula: Hot springs, mountains, bird cliffs, light houses and fishing villages
- Blue Lagoon: Relaxing in a natural geothermal spa surrounded by a lava field.
- Hella: Icelandic countryside for Northern Lights hunting
- Eyjafjallajökull Glacier: Home to the famous eruption of April 2010 that halted international air travel for a week
- Seljalandsfoss and Skogafoss Waterfalls

- Golden Circle: Geysir geothermal fields, Gullfoss Waterfall, Strokkur geyser, Thingvellir National Park UNESCO World Heritage Site

#### What's Included

- 4 breakfasts and 2 dinners (a New Year's Eve festive 4-course dinner and a culinary dinner experience in Reykjavik on New Year's Day)
- 4 nights simple hotel and cottage accommodation
- Keflavik Airport arrival and departure transfer (FlyBus shuttle)
- Services of an English Speaking Icelandic Guide
- Transportation in heated coaches with free Wi-Fi on board
- Northern Lights programme during 2 evenings with a combination of lectures, presentations, film and guided searches for the Northern Lights and midnight refreshments
- Entrance with towel into the Blue Lagoon
- Entrance into Skogar folk museum and turf houses
- Use of winter and Northern lights explorer equipment simple non-slip snow and ice grippers spikes for shoes and a flash light that is helpful when walking in the dark and operating a photo camera at night

- This tour is operated in conjunction with our trusted partner and you will join travellers from different operators, not solely On The Go. The sightseeing group may vary in size from 10 – 40 persons.

#### What's Not Included

- International Flights and Visas
- Gratuity for your tour guide. Tipping your tour guide is an entirely personal gesture

### DETAILED ITINERARY

#### Day 1 : Reykjavik

Reykjavik. Welcome to Iceland and the start of your Northern Lights adventure! Your transfer to your accommodation is by Flybus shuttle. Your travel documents include a separate voucher for the FLYBUS airport shuttle, located outside the arrival hall in front of the main airport exit. If you need assistance, contact the Flybus representative at their sales counter in the arrival hall. The transfer takes about 45 minutes to BSI bus station in Reykjavik. There you might either continue with the same bus or be transferred to a smaller coach to your accommodation in Reykjavik (see information on your separate voucher), according to instructions

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of the driver. For the check-in at your accommodation in Reykjavík see separate voucher.

## OPTIONAL NORTHERN LIGHTS EVENING TOUR FROM REYKJAVIK

If you wish to maximize your chances to see the Northern Lights, you might want to book an evening Northern Lights bus tour on the arrival day at the front desk of your accommodation, if the weather conditions are good. These tours can be booked on the same day and they start at 21:00 or 22:00, depending on season. Pick up from the accommodation starts 30 minutes prior. A decision is usually made between 18:00 - 19:00 whether the excursions will be operated or not.

Distance covered: 50km/31mls

### Overnight - Reykjavik

#### Day 2 : Blue Lagoon



Reykjavik - Reykjanes Peninsula - Blue Lagoon - Hella. Departing our Guesthouse this morning (see tour voucher for exact time). We meet our tour guide and fellow travel companions for the next three days. We start with a city tour of Reykjavik where we'll see some highlights of Iceland's quiet capital. Next we head out to the Reykjanes peninsula famous for hot springs, picturesque mountains, bird cliffs, light houses and quaint fishing villages. Later on we get to relax in the warm blue waters of the famous Blue Lagoon. This evening, we hear all about the Northern Lights and once darkness falls we head out in the garden and wait for this beautiful natural phenomena to appear.

Important: Please carry your swimwear and toiletries for the Blue Lagoon in your hand luggage to avoid having to take your main luggage into the Blue Lagoon facilities. There is an extra charge for luggage storage at the Blue Lagoon. The towel is included in the entrance fee and tour package.

Distance covered: 220km/137mls

### Overnight - Hella (B)

#### Day 3 : Glaciers, Waterfalls & NYE!



Hella - Eyjafjallajökull - Skogafoss - Black Lava Beach - Hella. Today we head along the south coast and reach the area near the active volcano that is beneath the Eyjafjallajökull glacier. We travel on to the high but narrow Seljalandsfoss waterfall, which plunges from the mountain and then visit the Skógar folk museums, which contains an outstanding collection of farm and domestic artefacts from Iceland's past and several turf-built houses. Nearby is one of the most impressive waterfalls in the country; the 60-meter high Skogafoss waterfall. We continue to the seaside and stroll on the black lava beach to see the amazing bird cliffs at Reynisfjara near Vík.

In the evening we celebrate New Year the Icelandic way. Before dinner, we join a guided bus tour to visit the bonfires in the villages of Hvolsvöllur and Hella. The traditional Brenna bonfires of New Year's Eve had their origins in the Middle Ages when people built bonfires to burn the old things they no longer needed. In Iceland, there are bonfires all around the country where inhabitants gather,

shoot off fireworks, sing and dance as they wait for the New Year to come in.

Your festive 4-course dinner starts around 20:30 and is served at Árhús Restaurant on the river banks in Hella, which is a small village in South Iceland. Afterwards, we walk through the village and celebrate New Year's with a bang when at midnight the sky opens with thousands of fireworks set off in the village by the local inhabitants. This is an experience of a lifetime; you will never forget. Drink a toast of sparkling wine as you enjoy a real special Icelandic New Year's celebration. (Note that guests at Stracta Hotel join all festivities at Árhús Restaurant).

If the night is clear, you might be lucky enough to see the Northern Lights swirling in a wild and carefree dance across the heavens in dramatic shapes, colors, patterns and sizes.

Distance covered: 200km/124mls

### Overnight - Hella (B, D)

#### Day 4 : Golden Circle



Hella - Golden Circle - Reykjavik. This morning we learn about the Icelandic horse, its unique qualities and history and visit a geothermal greenhouse. There is a variety of hot springs and bubbling pools. The original geyser is now dormant but has been replaced by Strokkur "the Churn" which erupts at 5-10 minute intervals. Continuing on to Gullfoss "the golden falls", a double waterfall that tumbles 34 meters into the Hvítá River. Next we travel inland to Thingvellir National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site before returning to Reykjavik for one night. This evening we

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enjoy a culinary treat at a restaurant located in Reykjavík.

Please order the FLYBUS for the departure day with the receptionist at your hotel according to your flight schedule, the evening prior to departure. Write down the departure/pick up time. The FLYBUS office is open 24 hours. If you have questions, ask your tour guide for assistance.

Distance covered: 210km/130mls

**Overnight - Reykjavik (B, D)**

## Day 5 : Reykjavik



Today our Northern Lights Icelandic experience comes to an end with included FlyBus transfer to Keflavik Airport. Pick up time is according to reservation arrangements that you made with the receptionist at your hotel on the evening prior to flight departure. Your travel documents should include a separate voucher for your transfer to the airport.

Distance covered: 50km/31mls

(B)

## ACCOMMODATION

Highlighted below are some of the accommodation/ hotels which we frequently use on this tour. We reserve the right to substitute these stays to ones of a similar standard.

**Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel or start point and further arrival information.**

### Cabin Hotel

Just a short walk from the waterfront, Hotel Cabin offers comfortable accommodation, rooms are modern

and cosy with en suite facilities.

The hotel also boasts a buffet restaurant and lobby bar as well as complimentary Wi-Fi for all guests. The city centre is an interesting 15 - 20 minute walk away and the local geothermal Laugardalslaug swimming pool is a 5 minute walk away.



### Arhus Cottages

Located in the heart of Hella, Arhus Cottages offer comfortable and homely accommodation just a stones throw from the famous Ranga River. Guest cottages have an alpine style to them and are complete with en suite facilities, fridge and kitchenette. Arhus also has a restaurant and bar that serve up a delicious array of local and international dishes as well as refreshing Icelandic beer. Why not grab a warm tippie and sit outside on the decking whilst waiting for the Northern Lights to appear? Located in the middle of the small countryside town of Hella in Southern Iceland.



## BEFORE YOU GO

### Handpicked Range

Please note that this is part of our Handpicked Range of tours, operated by a trusted partner.

You will join travellers who have booked through different operators for sightseeing each day, some staying at different hotels, and spend your evenings at leisure. The sightseeing

group may vary in size from 10 - 40 persons.

This itinerary should be used as a guide only and may vary from day to day depending on road & weather conditions.

### Airport Shuttle Service

A Flybus/Reykjavik Excursions airport shuttle is included in your tour package. Please note the transfers are on an individual basis and without a guide. The bus operates in connection with all arriving and departing flights from the Keflavik airport. So if you are arriving late at night or your flight is delayed, don't worry, there will be a Flybus waiting for you.

Once you have cleared immigration and collected your bags please head to the exit of the airport where the bus(es) will be waiting. Please note that it may be necessary to change buses at the BSI (central bus station in Reykjavik) depending on your start hotel. The staff of the Reykjavik Excursions/Flybus are very friendly, speak great English and will help with any questions you may have.

The Flybus has free Wi-Fi on board and sometimes USB charging points. It usually takes around 45 minutes to an hour from airport to hotel (and v.v.)

### Optional Northern Lights evening tours from Reykjavik

If you wish to maximize your chances to see the Northern Lights, you might want to book an evening Northern Lights bus tour on the arrival day at the front desk of your accommodation, if the weather conditions are good. These tours can be booked on the same day and they start at 21:00 or 22:00, depending on season. Pick up from the accommodation starts 30 minutes prior. The companies that operate these tours are decide between 18:00-19:00 whether the excursions will be operated or not.

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There are also Northern Lights boat tours in the fjord/bay of Reykjavik. These Northern Lights cruises could get cancelled due to unfavourable weather conditions. When the Northern Lights forecast looks good – but it is too windy to go out on sea – these excursions might still be made by bus. If you are interested to participate in such a Northern Lights cruise, we suggest booking directly with the reception staff at your accommodation once you arrive in Iceland and if the weather conditions are suitable for such optional excursions.

## Northern Lights Programme

This program is a combination of presentations, lectures, film and guided searches at spots that are likely to offer a glimpse of the Aurora Borealis – the Northern Lights. All countryside accommodation in this program offer a Northern Lights wake up call for guests that register for that special service at the reception.

The tour is dependent on weather and therefore Northern Lights sightings are not guaranteed. The Northern Lights are in the northern hemisphere from September through April but are only visible when the sky is clear and free of clouds. Like many natural wonders, the Northern Lights are ephemeral – they may be visible, they may appear for a bit and then be gone (it is not a TV show that you can just turn on and off). But it is worth the patience which is much required. Because they are a winter event, you need to be prepared to wait outside while looking for them. It is best to dress very warmly, in layers, with good footwear, gloves, hats and whatever else will make you comfortable while you patiently await this truly outstanding light show. For the best photos we recommend using a tripod.

## Visas

UK, AUS, NZ, USA and CAN passport holders do not require a visa at present

to enter Iceland for touristic purposes for a stay of up to 90 days.

South African passport holders can obtain a visa prior to arrival for touristic purposes, for a stay of up to 90 days. Please note that there is no Iceland Embassy in South Africa, you will need to apply at the Royal Danish Embassy in Pretoria.

A full passport with two full blank pages and at least 6 months validity beyond date of exit from Iceland upon entrance is essential. Please check your personal visa requirements with your embassy if you are from another country. Please double-check all visa requirements with the relevant embassy at least one month before travel as the above is intended as a guide.

Please Note: Visa information is subject to change. Contact your nearest Iceland Embassy for the most up to date information. Visa procurement remains the responsibility of the passenger and not that of On The Go

## Double rooms in Iceland

Please note that in Iceland double rooms are not very common – instead twin rooms are more likely. We can request double rooms if required but these are not guaranteed.

## Currency

The official currency in Iceland is Icelandic Krona.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars or other major currencies can be exchanged in Iceland, and you'll get a better rate of exchange if you buy and sell in destination. Just about every establishment in Iceland will accept a credit card, including taxis, gas stations, souvenir stands, and even the most remote guest house, so it is not necessary to carry large amounts of Icelandic currency. However, due to the currency's instability some credit cards are still wary of Krona transactions, so check with your bank before you go and don't rely entirely on plastic.

It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

## Time & Voltage

Iceland is on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and does not observe daylight saving.

The voltage here is 220 volts at 50 Hz (cycles/second) which is standard throughout most of Europe (U.K. 240 volts). Icelandic electrical standards are European (50Hz, 220 volts) so many North American electrical devices will require converters and all will require plug adapters.

See 'Special Notes for North American Visitors' for more information.

## Health Requirements

The medical facilities in Iceland are good and available free to European Union citizens with a valid EHIC form or its replacement ID card.

Infectious diseases aren't a problem in Iceland. Inoculations aren't required except if you are arriving from countries that suffer from infectious diseases like cholera.

The biggest threat to your health is likely to be accidental injury or bad weather. Always make sure you have more than adequately warm and waterproof clothing. Selection of appropriate clothing is especially important in Iceland and can even be a matter of life and death. Exercise extra caution in geothermal areas: What may appear to be solid ground can sometimes not be so solid, breaking from underneath your feet with you falling into potentially deadly boiling water.

The water quality in Iceland is excellent and tap water is always drinkable.

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## Food & Drink

Icelandic food is mainly made up of lamb or fish in some form or another. A vegetarian diet isn't as common and as a result not as easy to find in the more remote parts of the country. However that said, Reykjavik is fast becoming a culinary capital with lots of different types of restaurant including European, Asian, Argentinian and lots more. There are number of distinctively Icelandic foods including

- Fish
- Hardfiskur, dried fish pieces eaten as a snack with butter
- Skyr, a yoghurt-like dairy product available in flavoured and unflavoured varieties all over the country. Low in fat and high in protein.
- Hangikjöt, smoked lamb

## The Northern Lights

The Northern Lights are in the northern sky from September through April but are only visible when the sky is clear and free of clouds. Like many of nature's wonders, it's ephemeral – they may be visible, they may appear for a bit and then be gone (it is not a TV show that you can just turn on and off). But it's worth the patience required. Because they're a winter event, you need to be prepared to wait outside, while looking for them. It's best to dress very warmly, in layers, with good footwear, gloves, hats and whatever else will make you comfortable while you await this truly amazing event. The Northern Lights can be pretty spectacular, and for the best photos we recommend using a tripod. Much of Iceland offers a very a good chance to see the Northern Lights when conditions are right, and you're in the right place.

Remember – the Northern Lights are natural phenomena, not guaranteed, but appreciated all the more for their elusive qualities. Please dress very warmly to enjoy Iceland's long winter nights, and perhaps be rewarded with a light show unlike anything you've ever seen!

For Northern Lights forecast and further information visit: <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/AuroraForecast/>

PLEASE NOTE: Our Iceland Circle, South Iceland Explorer and South Iceland Summer Express tours are not Northern Lights tours. The northern lights are not visible in the summer and although our Iceland Circle departs year round, most hotels used on this tour are located in towns and villages and therefore not ideal for Northern Lights viewing due to light pollution. From some of the hotels it might be easy to walk just a short distance to get to a darker location nearby when searching for the Northern Lights. Please ask the front desk of the hotel and your tour guide for suggestions.

## Icelandic Weather

Iceland isn't as cold as its name implies but it's not exactly a tropical paradise, either. Iceland's weather can fluctuate wildly and a warm sunny day can quickly become chilly and wet. You'll need sturdy gear for outdoor activities, and yet, Reykjavik is known for its forward-thinking fashionistas, so packing for a trip to Iceland can be quite daunting. The following pages give you a bit of advice.

It doesn't snow as much in Iceland as you may think, especially in Reykjavik where there is hardly any snow, even in winter. In some parts of Iceland – the north, east, and Westfjords, there is some snow and nice skiing areas where you can take advantage of it.

Thanks to the Gulf Stream, Iceland enjoys a moderate maritime climate: cool in summer and fairly mild in winter. It is an island in the North Atlantic, nestled against the Arctic Circle, so the weather is very changeable and visitors should be prepared for the unexpected. Normal summer day temperatures range between 5-8 °C (41 – 47 F) for lows and 12 -18 °C (54 – 64 °F). The interior highlands are often colder than that – close to 0°C (32°F) even in

summer. Normal winter temperatures range between 0-5 °C (32 – 41 °F). When it comes to Iceland's weather – the one thing you can count on is unpredictability. You never know what is going to happen next! A beautiful sunny day can suddenly turn windy and rainy – then it can all change again in a moment. You may experience every weather imaginable over the course of a few days, especially in late autumn and early spring. Important to remember when packing: Iceland is a very windy place! The best plan is to be prepared for anything and everything AND always dress in layers. The Icelanders have a saying: "there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing."

## Daylight in Iceland

Iceland enjoys/suffers long daylight hours in summer and long darkness hours in winter.

In the height of summer (July) the city of Reykjavik can be awash with daylight for as much as 21 hours a day whereas come January it can be as little just 4 hours of daylight. In the north of the country this can increase to 22 1/2 hours a day in July with sunset being midnight and sunrise 1:20am and come January sunrise is at 11:30am and sunset at 3pm.

## Preparing to pack

Pack for activities first: Start by studying your itinerary to see what you'll be doing on your trip to Iceland. Most outdoor activities (horseback riding, caving, hiking, glacier walking, etc.) will require basically the same gear (with the outfitter providing any specialized gear that's required – helmets, crampons, etc). You'll need to wear heeled boots, such as hiking boots, moisture-wicking socks, long pants, and long sleeve shirts. You'll also want a lightweight, waterproof but breathable shell for rainy or misty days, and a few wool (not cotton) or fleece sweaters for cooler days and evenings. You should consider bringing

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a hat, scarf and gloves all year round. There are also many opportunities to purchase Icelandic woollen goods!

Add in some "city clothes":

In Reykjavik and Akureyri, the only unified theme in fashion is "unique." It's all about personal style, from the frilly dresses and stiletto heels you'd expect to find in New York and London to the hippe-chic styles you might imagine as the norm in any modern city. What you won't find is anything boring and basic – no plain jeans, white t-shirts and sneakers here. Dressing for Reykjavik isn't about changing your personal style, but it is about taking it to the next level. Though, if you plan on going on the weekend Runtur (pub crawl), you'll want to add a few dressier items to your wardrobe. Women generally "dress" in a skirt or dress, or jeans with trendy tops. Men wear tailored dark jeans and button-up shirts, or dark pants and sportcoats. For footwear, men usually wear sport loafers or Converse, while women wear anything from high-heeled boots to open-toed stilettos to fashionable flats.

Be prepared for anything:

A day that starts out rainy and cold can become warm and sunny by mid-afternoon (or vice versa) and when it's pleasant in the city it may be frigid twenty minutes away, so always plan on wearing layers and being ready for a range of conditions. A light, breathable, waterproof shell jacket that can be layered with a wool sweater or cardigan, and a scarf and hat will prove invaluable. And don't forget the bathing suit. Icelanders love swimming and there is a municipal pool in nearly every town. Admission prices are generally just a few bucks, with towels and bathing suits available for rent. Visiting one of these hot spring pools is one of the best ways to experience Icelandic culture, so be sure to come prepared for a soak.

## What to pack

- Clothes for cold/cooler outdoor weather: warm trousers, a woolen pullover or fleece sweater, a warm wind and water proof jacket and rain pants, woollen socks and an insulated bottom layer, like thermal underwear. Remember, it is a winter trip and it is ICELAND, known for unpredictable weather.
- A hat, scarf and gloves that are made from material that will dry overnight are great protection in Iceland's winter weather and strong winds.
- Sturdy comfortable (hiking) boots are necessary for walking and when there is snow and icy terrain. Make sure your feet will be warm and dry – otherwise it is not fun. All sightseeing tours in the countryside involve some short walks here and there. In order to maximize your experience to explore these many nature sites good walking boots or shoes that may get dirty and wet are important.
- Buildings are often very warm, so bring light indoor clothes – t-shirts, lighter shirts and blouses.
- Bathing suits are essential, as a lot of the natural hot water is used to fill swimming pools, which are all over the country. Towels can be rented at most swimming pools.
- Binoculars, especially if you're a bird watcher!
- Sunglasses and a bit of sunscreen are helpful – the air is very clear in Iceland so when the sun shines, it is very bright.
- A camera with lots of film or memory cards. Many travellers say that they shoot twice as many pictures in Iceland than in other destinations. For Northern Lights photography we recommend bringing a second battery for your camera and also a tripod.
- A small alarm clock or cell phone with an alarm clock feature, since not all hotels offer wake-up calls.
- A torch for evening walks and Northern Lights photography in order to operate your photo camera in the dark.
- If you like a drink every now and then, consider stopping at the duty-

free store on arrival at Keflavik Airport because alcoholic beverages are very expensive in Iceland. The same applies to tobacco. Travellers are allowed to bring 1 litre of strong liquor as well as 1 litre of wine or similar drinks into the country, and 1 carton of cigarettes. For more details see <http://iceland.visahq.com/customs/>

## Special Notes for North American Visitors

Electricity in Iceland is 220 volts (as opposed to 110 volts in North America) most modern appliances – computers, cameras, hairdryers – will adapt to either voltage – check the power unit, which should indicate 110- 220 volts. If not, you'll need to bring a transformer. In most cases you'll just need to get an adapter to allow you to plug into Iceland's power outlets. You'll need a two pin adaptor, typically labelled as "northern European". They are available in many electronic stores, or if you forget to bring them, you can often buy them at the international airports before you go.

Cell phones are ubiquitous in Iceland, but they work on a GSM system, which often doesn't work with North American cell phone systems. You should check with your service provider before you travel to see if they have an international cell phone service upgrade available. If not, it's possible to rent a phone from your airline or from an international cell phone rental company before you leave. Once in Iceland sometimes it's possible to rent phones from a telephone company, but that may require a visit to their office during business hours. Because there are so many cell phones, public pay phones are hard to come by. Most hotels have phones that you can use for long distance calls with a credit card for payment.

## Nature Fees

Since the beginning of 2014 it has become apparent that landowners of several scenic tourist sites in Iceland

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intend to start charging fees for visits in the future. The ownership of these sites is not clear. The Icelandic state partly owns these sites and questions the legitimacy of this action by some of the landowners. The Icelandic state has requested landowners not to implement a fee collection but rather to wait for the proposals of the government in regards to the implementation of a "nature pass". The "nature pass" is meant to finance the structure and maintenance of most tourist sites in Iceland. Therefore it is possible that some of the nature attractions around Iceland might charge an entrance fee during your trip. These entrance fees are not included in the tour price and need to be paid by all tour members additionally on spot, if you wish to enter any of these nature sites. Locations, amount of entrance fee, form of payment and other details are not known at the moment and are subject to change.