

The Golden Circle

ICELAND

Ride through the magnificent countryside of south Iceland and experience its must see sites in a unique way. **From the saddle of your Icelandic Horse**, discover the hot springs at Geysir and the cascading waters of Gullfoss. **Ride off the beaten track** to explore highland moors, weird and wonderful rock formations formed by crystalline waters and mountains carpeted by blooming wild flowers and with majestic glacier views.

Trail Riding	 8 days/ 6 days riding	 From £2,278		Family holidays from 8 y.o
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ITINERARY

Highlights

- This tour was nominated by CNNgo as one of the greatest horse treks in the world
- Discover Iceland's famous Golden Circle - Gullfoss waterfall and the hot springs at Geysir.
- Enjoy a ride that's accessible to all riders from 12 years and upwards. The pacing and terrain is well-suited to young riders
- Experience the brisk and freeing tölt, a pace unique to the small and energetic Icelandic horses
- Unwind in the Secret Lagoon's thermal baths after a good day spent in the saddle
- Part of this tour can be booked as a 5-day tour (4 riding days), or as a 2-day tour (2 riding days)

Day 1 — 1: Arrive in Reykjavik - Blesastaðir Guesthouse

Fly to Keflavik airport (not included). Your flight should land before 15:00-16:00 to meet your transfer. If you cannot find a suitable flight, you should fly in a day early and we will be happy to book a hotel night for you.

You will be picked up from the BSI bus station at 18:00 and then taken to the Farm. On the farm, you will be introduced to the Icelandic horses and learn more about their unique gaits, the tölt and the flying pace.

Day 2 — 2: Kálfhóll - Thjórsá glacier river – Blesastaðir - 15km ride

You will start your ride on a pleasant trail along a river fed by Thjórsá glacier. Your first day's ride is a perfect way to start getting to know your horse and the Icelandic trail riding technique; you will be surrounded by beautiful countryside and an easy-going atmosphere. Leave the horses at Sandlækjarmýri field and drive to Blesastaðir Guesthouse.

Enjoy the outdoor hot tub at the farm before a hearty dinner.

Day 3 — 3 : Kálfhóll – Myrkholt - 30km ride

After rejoining your horses, you will head out to explore the surrounding agricultural region of Hrunamannahreppur. You will cross the high-banked Stóra-Laxá River, known for its salmon fishing, before stopping for your picnic lunch at Hrunaréttir, a corral used for the annual autumn sheep round-up. At the end of the ride, you will leave the horses at Hvítárdalur farm and be driven to Myrkholt farm where you spend the night (this is also where you will stay for the next three nights).

The spare horses will run free with you, allowing you to regularly change your mount and enjoy a brisk pace throughout the day.

Day 4 — 4 : Myrkholt – Gullfoss – Myrkholt - 20 km ride

Today you will ride out on soft trails ideal for tölting. You will follow the Hvítá River deeper into the canyon to the thundering Gullfoss Golden Waterfall until you reach the famous Geysir hot spring. Lunch break at Gullfoss. Your day's ride will end at the farm where you will enjoy another hearty dinner in the stunning and serene Icelandic landscape.

Day 5 — 5 : Haukadalur – Haukadalsheiði – Myrkholt - 18km ride

Ride through Haukadalur valley and its stunning birch forests. You will cross clear streams in a mountainous countryside covered in wild flowers that in the summer carpet the landscape with glorious colour. Climbing up to a plateau at the top of Haukadalsheidi will offer you a truly breathtaking view of the surrounding glaciers and mountain ranges. You will also get a sense of how the landscape changes as you move up into the higher ranges of the peaks. You will have another opportunity to explore the famous hot springs at Geysir before heading back to the farm for the evening.

Day 6 — 6 : Geysir – Tungufellsdalur – Kaldbakur – Kálfhóll Farm - 30km ride

Leaving the hot spring area of Geysir you will delve deep into green pastures and open stretches until you reach the bridge at Brúarhlöð canyon. Crossing the Hvítá River, you will head inland through the stunning Tungufellsdalur valley and across the Hrunaheiðar moors. Here, you are truly at one with nature. Leaving the horses at Kaldbakur farm, you will continue on to the geothermic pools at the Secret Lagoon. You will enjoy an unwinding soak and feel your muscles relax after a long day in the saddle.

In the evening, you will have dinner and spend the night at Kálfhóll Guesthouse

Day 7 — 7 : Blesastaðir – Kaldbakur – Hrepphólar – Kálfhóll – Reykjavík - 40km ride

One final day of riding through these beautiful other-worldly landscapes, you will discover more of the fantastic sights Iceland has to offer. You will follow trails passed Mt. Galtafell, passed the majestic basalt columns at Hrepphólar and cross the Laxá river in the shadow of Laxárgljúfur canyon and the vast Laxárdalur valley. After riding through Reykjaréttir corral, you will head along the Thjórsá River to Kálfhóll Farm.

Here, you will say your goodbyes to the staff, guides and the horses and, at around 20:00, return to Reykjavik for the night. Your hotel night is not included - please contact us and we can recommend a good down town hotel. Alternatively if your flight leaves late at night, you can fly out tonight.

Day 8 — 8 : REYKJAVIK - EUROPE

You can take the transfer to Keflavik airport by Flybus in time for your flight home (not included, to your own account).

DATES & PRICES			
DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
01/06/2024	08/06/2024	£2,278	Guaranteed departure
08/06/2024	15/06/2024	£2,278	Guaranteed departure
15/06/2024	22/06/2024	£2,278	Full
27/07/2024	03/08/2024	£2,339	Guaranteed departure
24/08/2024	31/08/2024	£2,278	Guaranteed departure
31/08/2024	07/09/2024	£2,278	Guaranteed departure

Price details

- Flights to your destination (international/domestic) are not included, but can be booked on request - please contact us for rates.
- Rates are per person, based on sharing two or four-bedded rooms. There is no single supplement for the riding days as you should be prepared to share.
- Groups are made up of a maximum of 20 international riders and an English speaking guide. All departures are confirmed regardless of the number of riders on the tour.
- Transfers to and from Reykjavik airport are not included in the price for the trip. See <https://www.re.is/tour/flybus/> for more info on how to get from the airport to the city centre.
- The last night in Reykjavik is not included in the cost of your holiday. Please contact us and we will recommend a good hotel in downtown Reykjavik.
- Vegan and/or Gluten Free diets will incur on an extra supplement of around £90/€100/\$110 per person.
- Children from 8 years of age can be accommodated provided they are good riders, with parental consent and a good riding level
- Discounts are available for families of 3+ (two parents and one child aged 12+), and for children between the age of 9 and 12. Please contact us.

- Rider weight limit is 110kg/17,3 st/242lb

Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

Price includes

SUPPORT TEAM

1 Icelandic tour leader

2 - 4 horsemen in charge of the free running herd

English speaking tour leader from your arrival in Reykjavik

LOGISTICS

1 cook

1 support vehicle and driver

2-3 horses equipped with saddle and bridle per rider

ACCOMMODATION

Double to four-bed rooms in a farm house

Sleeping bags and liners are provided

MEALS

Full board from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 7

EXTRAS

Access to a group first aid kit

Entrance fee for Secret Lagoon on day 6

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Dinner in Reykjavik on day 7 not included - expect to pay around £30 - 45

Beverages and personal extras

Special diet supplement - please see above

TRANSPORT

Return airport transfers (FlyBus shuttle)
International flights

EXTRA

Tips to the local team (not obligatory)

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurance are not included in the above listed price. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend taking out an insurance policy as soon as your trip is booked to cover you in case of cancellation

Optional

EXTRAS

Additional night in Reykjavík, ask us for more information
All additional excursions, activities and expeditions. Including the possibility of snowmobiling on the Langjökull glacier on day 5 (approx. £110)

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

The Icelandic horse is a part of the history of the country and its Viking past. It is characterised by its extra pace - the tölt, which is fast and very comfortable. Some are also capable of an additional flying pace, which is similar to a trot, but much faster and used for racing. Icelandic horses are small, sociable, energetic and comfortable to ride. Icelandic tack consists of simple snaffle bridles, often with drop nosebands and straight cut saddles similar to the English style.

Guide & local team

For many years now, Gestur, Margrét and their 2 sons, Thordur and Egill, have become known for leading magnificent and thoroughly engaging trail rides throughout Landmannalauger and the hot spring area of Giyser. Their horses are well-trained, good-natured and sure-footed; it's always difficult to say goodbye to them at the end of the trip!

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

Riders should be at ease at all 3 paces across uneven terrain and be able to withstand long stretches ridden at a tölt (a smooth 4-beat gait that allows for a comfortable fast-paced ride) or trot.

Rider weight limit is 110kg/17,3 st/242lb

PACE

A good level of endurance is needed for this ride with its progressive increase in pace. For the ride's beginning stages you will ride without the free running herd to allow for greater flexibility of pace. In the final sections of the ride, you will travel as a single herd with the free running horses dictating the ride's rhythm. You will experience the tölt, which is fast and very comfortable. Over the more difficult terrain, the pace will be either at a walk or trot.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

Everyone assists with grooming, tacking and un-tacking of the horses. The whole group gets involved in meal preparation.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

A good physical condition is needed for the 5 days in the saddle over often rocky and uneven terrain. There are some long hours in the saddle (5-8 hours) and the terrain can be rough. The weather can also be unpredictable.

Experience of riding a trail over several days would be an advantage but is not essential. Riders who do not ride regularly would need to get back into the saddle before joining this ride.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Comfortable Icelandic saddles with saddle bags.

Hard hats are mandatory. We recommend our riders to wear a helmet to the correct standard and you should bring your own to ensure a proper fit.

You will be provided with a raincoat but should still bring your own warm coat to wear underneath.

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

During your ride, you will stay in local farms and guesthouses (double to four-bedded rooms with a shared bathroom). Limited phone coverage but WiFi is normally available.

Some of them have an outdoor tub, which is lovely after a day in the saddle!

Please understand that accommodation in the highlands is always basic, with little privacy, small rooms and sometimes limited showers.

MEALS

Lunches are simple picnics; dinners are generous and hearty (fish or lamb, usually). You prepare your own picnic lunch at breakfast time.

Vegetarian diets can be accommodated with advance notice. Vegan and Gluten free diets can be accommodated at an extra cost.

Alcoholic beverages are not included in the tour price and are hard to get in the highlands. They can be bought at a reasonable price in the Duty Free Store at Keflavik Airport upon arrival.

CLIMATE

Contrary to popular belief, the general climate in Iceland is temperate and cool with extreme cold temperatures only recorded in winter. In summer the average temperature is between 10-12°C but can be as low as 5°C and as high as 25°C. Snowfall is rare, but the weather is highly changeable due to the meeting of the polar winds from Greenland and a warmer front of tropical origin. You should therefore prepare for both sun and rain by dressing in layers. In September the nights can become colder with temperatures falling below 0°C.

TIPS

Tips are always welcome, but they are not obligatory. If you are happy with the service provided by the local guides and the support drivers, it is at your discretion to provide a tip in line with the standard of living in Iceland.

PACKING LIST

Important!!

Choosing to ride in Iceland is an incredible experience; however there are some important packing considerations for a riding holiday in this country. Icelandic horses have had no contact with other equine species and are not vaccinated. They do not have any resistance to diseases which are common elsewhere in the world and so it is important to take precautions to prevent the spread of infections.

- You MUST NOT take the following items into Iceland: saddles, bridles, halters, saddle pads, whips, brushes or any leather products which have been in contact with a horse.

- Your riding clothes must be thoroughly cleaned at least 5 days before departure (riding breeches, jumpers, coats, gloves) and should be washed in temperatures of at least 40°C.

- Items which cannot be washed at 40°C, such as riding hats or leather boots, must be thoroughly disinfected at least five days before departure:

1. Wash in detergent.
2. Dry thoroughly
3. Spray with a 1% solution of VirkonS detergent (10g per litre of water)

For more details please visit the Icelandic veterinary authority website: <http://www.mast.is/english/frontpage/import-export/import/ridingequipment-information> here

Head

- A riding helmet is compulsory and we recommend that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. Helmet makers (GPA, HKM, LAS Helmets, Lamicell, Troxel, Equithème) now offer horse-riding helmets that are ventilated, strong, light and comfortable.

- A flyhat to wear over your helmet may be a good idea in the summer months, when flies can be an issue
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana for protecting your neck and face from the sun, wind or rain
- Warm hat for cold evenings/days

Upper body

- Thermals in case of cold weather
- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun or extra warmth
- Down jacket or gilet for cold evenings
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Warm polar fleece or equivalent (plus a spare in case one gets wet)
- Waterproof jacket - rain can be difficult to predict and it's better to be prepared. In the mountains the weather can change quickly

Legs

- 2 pairs of lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Waterproof over trousers
- Casual clothes for the evenings (jeans or walking trousers)
- Thermal trousers for cold days or for sleeping in
- A swimming costume may be useful
- Non-irritant cotton or synthetic underwear

Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged. It is recommended your boots are waterproof as you may be crossing rivers and they can get wet.
- Lightweight shoes or trainers for the evenings
- Sandals/flipflops
- Several pairs of warm socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun, wind or rain whilst riding

Nightwear

- Accommodation is in made up beds but you may find a sleeping bag liner (silk/cotton/fleece) adds extra comfort
- A small camping pillow
- Slippers (you will have to remove your shoes inside the accommodation)
- An eye mask can help with the 24 hour daylight

Other useful items

- Fly net against bugs
- Water bottle (1.5 litres or 2 equivalent)
- Headtorch or small torch for moving around at night - bring spare batteries and bulbs
- Toiletries
- Protein or cereal bars for the longer stretches of riding
- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it after use
- Swiss army knife or equivalent (in checking-in luggage!!)
- Small plastic bags for your rubbish
- Ear plugs (may be useful)
- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- A pair of binoculars

Medical kit

Make sure any allergies (to medication or otherwise) and clearly stated in your medical kit

- Any medication you regularly take
- Painkillers
- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhea medication
- Vitamin C tablets
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent
- Eye drops
- Hydrating/soothing cream
- Plasters

- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc..
- 10cm wide bandage
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Re-hydration sachets
- Antiseptic wipes
- Handwash gel

Our Recommendations

- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bum bag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (camera, sunscreen, lipbalm etc)
- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!
- Carry a copy of your passport and insurance documentation with you.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. **Travel light.** It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when flying a plane or driving a car!).
2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#).