



Steady Plus

ICELAND - THE FJORD TRAIL



This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.



Walking below Dyrfjöll

- ***A journey through the mountainous east fjords***
- ***A centuries old trail over high passes linking dramatic fjords***
- ***Early summer shows the scenery at its best***
- ***Wild flowers, puffins and eider, prolific birdlife***
- ***Lightweight overnight carry one night/two days***
- ***24 hours daylight in June/July***

Iceland

Iceland: an enigma, a land of contrasts. There are volcanoes, lava fields, ice caps, geothermal activity and great waterfalls but around the coastline there is a hauntingly beautiful landscape of snow streaked mountains divided by deep fjords, lush green valleys, farms, often in dramatic settings and with a proliferation of birds and flowers.

Trip summary

We journey through the steep sided coastal mountains of the eastern fjords, following faint paths along the fjords and across mountain passes. The coastal scenery is dramatic, and we rarely

meet other walkers. A few short transfers and a boat ride provide some welcome assistance, and most days our luggage is transported by boat or vehicle. On one night we stay in a newly built hiker's refuge in a remote valley equipped with mattresses and cooking facilities so all you will need to carry is a sleeping bag, a few spare clothes and a share of the food. This is quality walking in a beautiful landscape with minimal time lost on travel days.

Walking

We walk 5-8 hours each day in mountain terrain requiring good outdoor clothing and strong boots. The trails usually follow easy contours though some adaptability is required to cope with walking off trail and a few unbridged stream crossings, usually no more than knee deep. There may still be some winter snow on the passes.

Accommodation

Our accommodation includes a family run guesthouse, a restored farmhouse now used as a summerhouse, two hostels, a hiker's refuge and local houses. On some nights you may have twin/double rooms but on others there will be four or more beds per room and in the mountain refuge we all sleep together on mattresses in a communal room. The accommodation, originating from personal contacts we have made, is warm and comfortable, always interesting and is often in exciting locations.

If you wish to overnight in Reykjavik we can make arrangements for you in a friendly hotel 10-15 mins walk from the centre of town and conveniently mid way between town and a big outdoor geothermal swimming complex complete with a range of 'hot pots' of varying temperatures.

Transport

A bus will take us to and from the start of the trek, and in the east fjords we use boat and jeep support.

Luggage

Most days the main luggage will travel by bus, jeep or boat. On the boat there could be some spray so your gear should be in a trek bag or similar with a waterproof liner. While walking, all you need to carry is what you need for the day: waterproofs, fleece, lunch etc apart from on DAYS 8 and 9 when we carry sleeping bags and food - a 40 litre rucksack should be sufficient.

Food

We have a reputation for buying and cooking good, wholesome food with fresh fish and succulent lamb, yoghurts and dairy products being Icelandic specialities. Some help is always appreciated with chores. Alcohol is expensive in Iceland and is only available in government shops which are well spaced out so most people who enjoy an occasional 'tot' arrive well stocked. We can cater for vegetarians or special diets if you let us know beforehand. Gluten free bread/pasta is hard to find in Iceland so if you need this we advise that you bring some with you.

Climate

East Iceland enjoys a pronounced rain shadow effect caused by the central highlands and we can afford to be optimistic about our chances. Occasionally, cold north winds continue right through July, but most years the summer weather is generally dry and settled, and we often walk in shorts. We can look forward to the atmospheric clarity and powerful sky patterns for which Iceland is noted. Good outdoor gear and footwear are vital however, as a dose of depressions can produce wet and windy weather, or even snow on high ground. There can be a considerable range in temperature with differing conditions, from 2° to 24°C.

Maps

You should be able to pick up some locally produced hiking maps in Eskifjordur. For those who wish to obtain maps prior to arrival we recommend either the 1:250,000 touring map 'Northeast and East Iceland' which covers all the areas included in our walking itinerary or 2 x 1:100,000

Atlas Maps, Sheets 113 'Dyrfjoll' and Sheet 114 'Gerpir'. These can be obtained from www.ferdakort.is which gives some of its information in English.

Money

The Icelandic Krona (ISK) is the local currency. Most meals are included but you will need money for meals in transit on DAYS 1 and 11, and for one night in Seydisfjordur, see DAY to DAY itinerary for details. Optional personal expenses might include drinks, swimming, postcards, coffees and gifts. Note that alcoholic drinks are expensive in restaurants. A credit card is a useful backup for the unexpected, such as a coffee table book or Icelandic sweater.

Power

Iceland mostly uses continental style plugs so an adapter is useful if you want to recharge batteries.



East fjords of Iceland. Photo Andy Dennis

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.

This trip is 11 days ex Reykjavik.

DAY 1 Flight to Keflavik International airport and transfer 45km to Reykjavik city and the domestic airport. An early evening flight across Iceland flies over icecaps and volcanoes to land in the main east coast town of Egilsstaðir. A bus ride (45 minutes) takes us over the coastal mountains to our accommodation for the next two nights on the outskirts of Eskifjörður, a classic fjord fishing town. Family run guesthouse/farmhouse. (D)

DAY 2 The trip starts with a bang with a slow-but-steady ascent of Holmatindur (985m) which overlooks our accommodation. As we climb almost from sea level it's an energetic first day so if you would prefer a gentler start, a shorter walk in the hills above the town coupled with a visit to local museum and/or soak in the outdoor hotpots at the swimming pool may be preferable. Holmatindur is 7 hours+. Farmhouse. (B,L,D).

DAY 3 We set off towards our next destination, a restored farmhouse on the Gerpir peninsula. A track wends gently among hills before dropping down to Viðfjörður, a deserted and beautiful fjord with eiders and terns for company. Restored farmhouse. (4-5 hours) (B,L,D)

DAY 4 A day here to savour this remote location. Across the fjord we can reach a col on the coastal ridge with superb views up and down the coast and into a deserted bay where there are often reindeer. (Approx 6 hours). (B,L,D)



DAY 5 Following a little used trail *On the ridge above Vidfjordur.* Photo Andy Dennis around the coast, we traverse two spectacular headlands to reach the fishing town of Neskaupstaður. Mountains built from layered lava flows, lush green valleys and one or two knee-deep river crossings make this a blissful day. From Neskaupstaður we plan to catch the weekly fishing boat cum ferry (1 hour) around the next headland beneath immense cliffs (look out for puffins and whales!) into the tranquil and almost deserted Mjoifjörður. Hostel/schoolhouse. (6-7 hours walking). (B,L,D)

DAY 6 A gradual 830m ascent from our hostel leads to a high col with tremendous views! Crossing the pass, we descend into a valley where snow patches linger well into the summer. Our bus waits by the fjord and a 15 minute drive takes us to the fishing town of Seydisfjörður, renowned for its many beautiful old houses. Hostel. (8 hours). (B,L,D)

DAY 7 The peak dominating the town beckons and from the top of Bjölfur (1085m) we should be able to see all the way to Vatnajökull Icecap if it's clear. We drop back

down towards the fjord past a series of waterfalls. Whimbrel, snipe, and golden plover abound, and wild flowers are prolific. In the evening we'll divide our gear - main luggage which we will see again on DAY 9 and overnight gear for the next two days. Hostel. (7 hours) (B,L)

DAY 8 A walk over the mountains to Loðmundarfjörður (5-6 hours), following a good path up and over the broad mountain ridge dividing Loðmundarfjörður and Seyðisfjörður with great views of both fjords. We stay in a hiker's refuge built by the local walking club in 2009 offering simple but comfortable accommodation. (B,L,D)

DAY 9 We head north up the valley and climb a broad rocky ridge to a tricky three cornered pass at 772m offering stunning views of the east fjord mountains. We drop down easily towards Borgarfjörður, a small fishing town surrounded by colourful rhyolite mountains and stay in local houses. 5-7 hours. In bad weather we may follow an alternative route nearer the coast, which crosses two lower passes. Coastal route takes 7-8 hours. (B,L,D)



Lunch on the pass. Photo Andy Dennis

DAY 10 Borgarfjörður is dominated by the most dramatic mountain in east Iceland, Dyrfjöll (1136m). A gigantic breche hundreds of feet across splits its main ridge and dominates the skyline. The higher parts of the mountain are alpine and too vertical for the walker. We follow a fine ridge round into a glaciated valley beneath the breche. South of the town is a puffin colony and the coastal rhyolite mountains nearby provide alternative walking with spectacular views back across towards Dyrfjöll. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 11 An hour's transfer to Egilsstaðir, a flight back to Reykjavik then transfer to Keflavik International Airport for your flight home. OR spend a night (or two) in Reykjavik. (B)

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