



TOUR INFORMATION FOR ICELAND

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING ICELAND: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport, which is valid for at least three months beyond intended length of stay. A visa is not required. Citizens of other nations should contact the nearest Icelandic consulates for entry requirements.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously, you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

TIME DIFFERENCE: Iceland is 1 hour behind British Summer Time as they remain on Greenwich Mean Time throughout the year.

CURRENCY: Iceland's currency is the Icelandic Krona (ISK). Iceland is incredibly advanced with the use of debit cards and nearly every store/gift shop accepts these, even for small amounts. There may, of course, be a charge from your bank for each transaction. Cash can be obtained against these cards in all banks and ATMs. All major credit cards are widely used in Iceland and accepted by most establishments. As the tour price includes all travel, accommodation, meals and drinks with meals, you will require only enough currency to cover snacks, drinks other than at meal times, or other purchases of a purely personal nature.

LANGUAGE: Icelandic is the national language but English is widely spoken.

CLIMATE: Generally the weather is changeable throughout the year and you should be prepared for the unexpected. Summers are usually cool and cloudy with periods of sunny weather (July average 10.6°C /51°F, maximum 30.0°C /86°F).

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: This is not a strenuous tour but the plentiful hours of daylight can mean long days. With one exception (see below) there is no rough walking on this trip. The day spent on Flatey island is all on foot, but the island is flat and smooth (walking on fields and dirt road) and those who get tired can always rest in the local restaurant. The walk to the great Dettifoss waterfall (no birds) is however a bit rough (large rocky steps). Normally the whole visit takes 40 minutes and even people with walking difficulties can make the trip, with patience. Then again, it is possible to stay in the bus. Sometimes we walk to see Great Skuas, across a flat land, about 2-3 km in total. It's easy walking.

We will return to our hotel in plenty of time to shower before dinner. With so much daylight, on some evenings there will be the option to go out birding again after dinner.

On some days there will be long drives; on one day in particular there will be a 500km (310 mile) drive, but the scenery will be spectacular.

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HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. These include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and your yearly flu jab. It is further recommended that most travellers have protection against Hepatitis A and Typhoid.

Black flies can be a nuisance at Lake Mývatn but are mostly absent in July. The black flies in Iceland are not aggressive biters, but please bring suitable clothing and insect repellent.

If you suffer from motion sickness then appropriate pills/wrist bands/patches are strongly advised for the whale-watching trip.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

For EU citizens: In the unlikely event of you requiring medical attention of any kind while you are away, it is wise to carry a European Health Insurance Certificate (EHIC) with you. The following website gives further details on how to apply for one: <http://www.nhs-e111-ehic.org.uk>

ACCOMMODATION: At the time of writing, all our hotels will have private facilities (toilet, shower, etc.) in the room, and some have swimming pools. However, guaranteeing accommodation in some places may prove difficult and we may find ourselves having to move to accommodation different to that which we had originally planned to use. Should this happen, we may find that some bathroom facilities are shared. If you have difficulty sleeping at night because of the natural light you may want to bring an eye-mask.

LAUNDRY: Laundry facilities are not available at any of our hotels except at Hotel Brekka, which charges approximately £30 for washing and drying, which they do themselves and have ready within 24 hours.

ELECTRICITY: 220V AC 50Hz. Icelandic sockets take two round-pin plugs. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: We will have breakfast at our hotels, lunch will normally be sandwiches bought from roadside cafes. Evening meals will generally be a set menu, consisting of soup followed by a main meal of meat or fish. Vegetarian food is available. Generally the standard is very high.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

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DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay. Note that the minimum drinking age in Iceland is 20 years.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: All our hotels offer Wifi, and mobile phone service is very good around Iceland.

FIELD CLOTHING: Dress is informal throughout the tour. When travelling in the Icelandic countryside you should bring along warm clothing, a good rainproof (weather-proof) coat and sturdy walking shoes. Bringing plenty of layers is ideal and please remember that the temperature will drop considerably when we are at sea. Wellingtons (rubber boots) are not necessary.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: You should bring the following:

Notebook and pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack or day pack	Seasickness medication
Hat, gloves, scarf	Insect repellent
Water canteen	Personal medication

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, swimwear.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following:

Telescope & tripod	Basic First-aid kit
Reference Books	Playback equipment

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust-proof bags as a precaution. This tour offers many opportunities for photography. If you intend to digiscope it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope, will not be available for this activity.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: We will be using a standard minibus throughout the tour driven by the leader. This comprises of two rows of 3 seats in the rear and a passenger seat. The leader will arrange a seating rotation system. Participants must be willing to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Collins Bird Guide. Mullarney, Killian et al.. 2010 HarperCollins. The 2nd edition is the latest, most up-to-date and portable field guide to the birds of Europe. This book has quickly become established as the standard field guide for the region. **Highly recommended.**

Note: An excellent electronic version of this guide is available for digital devices at the Apple and Android "Apps" stores. Search for it under "Collins Bird Guide."

Icelandic Bird Guide. Hilmarsson, Johann Oil. 2nd edition, 2011 Mal Og Menning. An excellent photographic guide to the birds of Iceland. **Recommended.**

A Field Guide to the Mammals of Britain and Europe, D Macdonald and C Barret. 1993. Harper Collins. The latest and best field guide to mammals of the region.

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Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises. M Carwardine and M Camm. 1995 Dorling Kindersley.
The best pocket sized cetacean book available. (ISBN 0 7513 1030 1)

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

Subbuteo Books
Tel: 0870 010 9700
www.wildlifebooks.com

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your air tickets, will be sent to you about three weeks before the start of the tour. Other news will be communicated as necessary. If you have any questions about any aspect of the tour, please contact us.