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Educational tour - Katla Geopark

Opens up a natural wonderland to the visitor



Visit South Iceland

▶ EDUCATIONAL TOUR – KATLA GEOPARK

Groups with a bus and a guide.

Katla Geopark is Iceland's first geopark and it opens up a natural wonderland to the visitor. A top priority of the park is to protect the natural environment, promote local sustainable development, introduce local culture and place a strong emphasis on nature tourism.

Katla Geopark got its name from one of its best known volcanoes, Katla, which is under the glacier Mýrdalsjökull. The geopark is 9542 km² or around 9,3 % of the total area of Iceland, with a population of around 2700.

Katla Geopark is in every sense the land of ice and fire with its towering glaciers and active volcanoes. These forces have been shaping the land for thousands of years and the closest examples of that are the powerful eruptions in Eyjafjallajökull 2010 and Grímsvötn 2011. But the area also covers further amazing landscapes: mountains, lakes, black sandy beaches, green pastures and meadows, powerful glacial rivers, beautiful waterfalls and vast lava fields.

This tour takes you to some of Iceland's most beautiful nature sites with visits to interesting museums and exhibitions about the nature and culture of the area.

DAY 1 ICELANDIC NATURE AND POWER

When you have landed in Keflavík Airport a representative from your car rental will be waiting for you to receive your rental car and welcome you to Iceland. Once you have got your car you will drive to Sagnagarður via Suðurstrandarvegur. At Sagnagarður you experience the history of Icelandic nature and its growth for decades. From there you travel to Gluggafoss waterfall, a hidden treasure. When you have visited the amazing waterfall you drive to Hótel Fljótshlíð for your lunch. After lunch you will drive towards Seljalandsfoss waterfall with a quick stop by Dímon mountain. At Seljalandsfoss waterfall there is a trail that takes you behind the waterfall. After exploring Seljalandsfoss your next stop is at the Þorvaldseyri visitor centre. At Þorvaldseyri visitor centre there is an exhibition of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in



2010. After the exhibition you drive to Gamla fjósið for a coffee break before driving on to Skógar folk museum. Skógar folk museum preserves the cultural heritage of southern Iceland through its collection of tools and equipment, handicrafts, old buildings, books, manuscripts and documents. After a hectic day you will check in at Hótel Skógar. After check-in it is recommended to walk to Skógafoss waterfall which is spectacular. After dinner you can go for a little walk around the area and hopefully see some northern lights, if it is winter and the weather is good.

9:00 The visitor centre Sagnagarður at Landgræðslan

The visitor centre Sagnagarður provides an intelligible and evocatively presented exhibition of the battle to restore the soil and vegetation of Iceland. It is a globally unique story. Visitors to the exhibition will gain a better appreciation of the land as they travel around Iceland.

The effects of volcanic eruptions, huge floods and strong winds, along with public scepticism about trying to reduce the effects of the forces of nature, set the scene for the difficult but necessary task of stabilizing the land and making it productive. The work of the pioneers in land reclamation is highlighted to give the story a really human dimension. The century of soil conservation and land reclamation efforts in Iceland is an inspiring story of technical ingenuity, scientific endeavour and human fortitude. Now, the international reputation of Icelandic work on soil conservation is well established. Visitors can view the effects of this work at the exhibition and in the countryside surrounding the centre. Website: www.sagnagarður.land.is/english/

11:00 Gluggafoss waterfall

Gluggafoss is a beautiful waterfall in the river Merkjá which falls down a cliff that just after the last ice age constituted part of the Icelandic coast. Immediately left of the waterfall you can see a phenomenon called a dike and a remnant of what was once a crack in the earth's crust that was filled with lava. After solidification of the lava a very hard basalt remained that has slowly eroded away. Gluggafoss means „window waterfall“ in direct translation.

12:00 Lunch at Smáratún

*Dinner at Hótel Fljótshlíð
Website: www.smaratun.is*

13:00 Dímon

Great Dímon is the name of a landmark for the districts of East Landeyjar, Fljótshlíð and West Eyjafjöll. Great Dímon has a sister mountain called Litla Dímon or Little Dímon. The name is assumed to derive from Latin, meaning twin mountains or two alike. It has also been said that the word means „haystack“ and it certainly is reminiscent of a haystack surrounded by golden fields. Near the mountain a sign has been erected by the Saga Centre of Hvolsvöllur which tells of battles fought in the area during the time of the settlement of Iceland in the most famous of Icelandic sagas, Njáls saga. The mountain is only 178 metres high and is a fun hike for both adults and children.

14:00 Seljalandsfoss waterfall

Seljalandsfoss is a 65 m high waterfall which cascades over ancient sea cliffs into a pool below. The pool is called Kerið or sometimes Fossker. It is possible to walk behind the falls and come out on the other side – the only one of its kind in Iceland. At night and in winter the falls are illuminated. Just a few hundred metres north of Seljalandsfoss there is another waterfall called Glúfrabúi which is partially obscured behind giant tuff rock formations. It is also possible to climb up the rocks called the 'French Nose' for an impressive view over the falls at close range. Both Seljalandsfoss and Glúfrabúi are protected national sites.





15:00 Eyjafjallajökull eruption at Þorvaldseyri

The Þorvaldseyri visitor centre opened on 14 April 2011, exactly one year after the Eyjafjallajökull eruption started. As a family-run facility, the goal is to give visitors a personal look at what it is like to have a volcano at your back door. Colourful graphics, incredible photos and clear text explain the local volcanic system and the frequency of eruptions in Iceland. For many the highlight of their visit is the dramatic film, which shows the incredible power and scope of the eruption, as well as how we met the challenges of clean-up and recovery.

Website: www.icelandrupts.is

16:00 Gamla fjósið - The old cowhouse

Gamla fjósið is located in an old cowhouse at the farm Hvassafell which lies next to Eyjafjallajökull. The hosts' aim is to let their guests experience real Icelandic farm life and food.

17:00 Skógasafn museum

Situated next to the stunning Skógafoss waterfall in extraordinarily beautiful natural surroundings, the Skógar folk museum preserves the cultural heritage of southern Iceland through its collection of tools and equipment, handicrafts, old buildings, books, manuscripts and documents. A key part of the museum's work has been the reconstruction of several old farmhouses, so visitors can see how the Icelanders lived in the past. In 2002 the museum opened a new Museum of Transport. It not only explores the history of transportation, communication

and technology in Iceland in the 19th and 20th centuries, but also includes a history of Icelandic postal services and electrification. During the summer the Café Skógar, with its delightful selection of Icelandic soups, sandwiches, and home-baked cakes, is a charming place for lunch or just a snack. (In winter the café is available only for group lunches.) The museum shop, located in the Museum of Transport, offers an excellent selection of books and Icelandic memorabilia, all at reasonable prices.

Website: www.skogasafn.is/en

18:00 Check-in at Hótel Skógar

Hótel Skógar is situated at Skógar in South Iceland and from there it is only a 5 minutes walk to the world famous Skógafoss waterfall under the eastern Eyjafjöll mountains. There are many interesting places to visit and trips to be taken in the surrounding area which we are happy to arrange for our guests. There is a museum, an extensive hiking area to explore, horseback riding and snowmobiling on Mýrdalsjökull glacier. There is fantastic bird watching at nearby Dyrhólaey ocean cliffs.

Website: www.hotelskogar.is

19:00 Skógafoss waterfall

The Forest Waterfall, as the word Skógafoss translates, is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Iceland. This classic 62 m high and 15 m wide waterfall is the last and most spectacular in a series of falls that are found in the Skógá river. Over 30 beautiful smaller waterfalls grace the river before it ultimately gushes over the cliffs at Skógar,

after which it gently wends its way over the Skógasandur sand flats and onwards to the Atlantic Ocean. A path leads to the top of the waterfall and from there it is possible to hike into Skógagil ravine, where as many as 30 beautiful smaller waterfalls can be seen along the way.

19:30 Dinner at Hótel Skógar

An open fire welcomes you at Hótel Skógar to our top quality restaurant. Here, after your meal, you can walk outside where you have a fantastic view from the sheltered veranda, take a short walk to Skógafoss waterfall and maybe enjoy the stunning northern lights

above (in the wintertime). Our restaurant is open for breakfast from 08:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Lunch is served from 12:00 p.m. to 15:00 p.m. and dinner from 18:00 p.m. to 22:00 p.m. Our kitchen's emphasis is placed on excellent natural ingredients, resulting in a tasty gourmet cuisine. Here, after your meal, you can walk outside where you have a fantastic view from the sheltered veranda and enjoy the midnight sun – or maybe enjoy the stunning northern lights above at the end of the summer.

23:00 Northern lights hunt

DAY 2

WALKING OUR WAY

After breakfast you drive to Sólheimajökull glacier. There you will have a glacier walk. You can choose the difficulty of your glacier walk. After the glacier tour you will stop at Café Sólheimajökull for lunch. After lunch you drive to Dyrhólaey. Dyrhólaey was formed about one hundred thousand years ago in the warm-up period of the last ice age in an underwater eruption that has its similarities to Surtsey, the famous volcano island southwest of the Westman Islands. From Dyrhólaey you go to Reynisfjara which is located nearby. From there you will head to Vík in Mýrdalur for a little guided hike around Vík. The walk takes about one hour and you see the sights of Vík and its history. At the end of the hike you drive on to check in at Suður Vík and have your dinner at Norður-Vík.



8:00 Breakfast at Hótel Skógar

10:00 Glacier tour by Arcanum

A glacier walk is a great adventure where you can try for yourself how it feels to walk on ice. We walk on Sólheimajökull glacier (a part of the Mýrdalsjökull glacier) on the south coast of Iceland. It is only about 10 minutes walk from the parking area to the glacier. After a lesson in ice walking we will head onto the glacier to experience this unique environment with some amazing terrain with crevasses, sink holes and ice ridges. The glacier walks do not require any special skills, the tour can be enjoyed by people of all levels in good health.

Website: www.arcanum.is/en





12:00 Lunch at Sólheimajökull Café

A friendly restaurant by Sólheimajökull glacier with light meals, hot soup, cakes and sweets, along with hot and cold drinks.

14:00 Dyrhólaey

Dyrhólaey 'Door Hole Island' is a 510 acre promontory south of Mýrdalsjökull and is the southernmost point of the country. The western side, called Háey (High Island), is made of tuff and Lágey (Low Island) on the eastern side is mainly made of basalt. The south side of Dyrhólaey is a narrow strip, 100 m in height, with vertical cliffs that drop abruptly down to the sea on either side. The promontory forms an archway large enough for boats to pass through and is the 'door' from which its name is drawn. Dyrhólaey was formed about one hundred thousand years ago in the warm-up period of the last ice age in an underwater eruption that has its similarities to Surtsey, the famous volcano island southwest of the Westman Islands. Dyrhólaey is an important bird nesting site and the area has been protected since 1978.

15:00 Reynisfjara shore and coffee

Reynisfjara is a black beach outside of the town Vík and features an amazing cliff of regular basalt columns resembling a rocky step pyramid, which is called Garðar. Out in the sea are the spectacularly shaped basalt sea stacks Reynisdrangar. The area has rich birdlife, including puffins, fulmars and guillemots.

16:30 Katla Geopark hike

A guided hike around Vík in Mýrdalur. On about an hour long walk around the village you see the sights and hear the history of Vík. The tour ends at Leirbrot and gler art gallery.

18:00 Check-in at Norður-Vík

Vík hostel is surrounded by extraordinary nature in the southernmost part of Iceland – with the amazing Reynisfjara beach and Dyrhólaey close by. The hostel is located in Vík, a small village with around 300 inhabitants. From the hostel you have a very good view over the village. In the hostel you will find a guest kitchen and a dining room. All services are close by. Dyrhólaey is only 15 km from the hostel. Vík boasts beautiful nature and the area around the hostel is ideal for hiking. Museums and golf courses are close by.

19:00 Dinner at Suður-Vík

Suður-Vík restaurant and café is a new choice of fine restaurants in the beautiful, tiny village of Vík. We offer local meals and really tasty Thai food. The restaurant is located in an old and charming house on the top of a hill with amazing view to the sea and mountains.

23:00 Northern lights hunt

DAY 3

BLACK SAND AND LAVA

You travel further east to Laufskálavörður. After that you stop at Hrífunes for your lunch. This is a cozy little guesthouse where you can relax and enjoy the view. After lunch you drive to Fjaðrárgljúfur canyon. The canyon is amazing and very popular among tourists as well as locals. After Fjaðrárgljúfur you can stop for a quick break at Systrakaffi in Kirkjubæjarklaustur and have a cup of coffee or tea. Just outside of Kirkjubæjarklaustur you find the Church floor which is an expanse of columnar basalt, eroded and moulded by glaciers and waves. When you have seen the Church floor you drive to Hótel Laki for check-in and dinner.

8:00 Breakfast

10:00 Laufskálavörður

Laufskálavörða is a lava ridge, surrounded by stone cairns, between the Hólmsá and Skálmá rivers, close to the road north of Álftaver. All travellers crossing the desert of Mýrdalssandur for the first time were supposed to pile stones up to make a cairn, which would bring them good fortune on their journey.

12:00 Lunch at Hrífunes

The old community house in the Skaftártunga region has been restored and changed into a beautiful guesthouse in a cozy, rustic country style offering accommodation for up to 25 people.



13:30 Fjaðrárgljúfur

Fjaðrárgljúfur or Fjaðrá river canyon is a magnificent natural phenomenon, believed to have been formed during the last ice age, approximately 9000 years ago. The canyon lies west of Kirkjubæjarklaustur by Laki road / Hólts Road. The river falls over the heath into a broad and beautiful gorge made of tuff rock. To get there, drive to the canyon via Laki road / Holt road and then hike up by the canyon where you can see the palagonite formation and the natural sculpture that nature has carved out. It is also possible to walk up through the canyon itself, but some wading is required in places. Fjaðrárgljúfur is a protected natural site.

15:30 Coffee at Systrakaffi

Systrakaffi is a family-owned restaurant in Kirkjubæjarklaustur, in the southern part of Iceland. Our menu offers a wide variety of food: from pizzas and burgers to succulent steaks and fresh fish. Everyone should be able to find something they like, and to leave both full and happy.

16:30 Kirkjugólfíð (The Church floor)

Kirkjugólfíð (The Church floor) is in the field just east of Kirkjubæjarklaustur. It is an approximately 80 m² expanse of columnar basalt, eroded and shaped by glaciers and waves. There has never been a church there but the plane looks as though it is man-made. Columnar basalt is formed when lava flows get cooled and contraction forces

build up. Cracks then form horizontally and the extensive fracture network that develops results in the six-sided formation of the columns. Kirkjugólf is a protected natural monument.

18:00 Check-in at Hótel Laki

At Hótel Laki you can choose between staying at the hotel or in one of our adjacent well-appointed cottages. Experience the magic of nature in the countryside, the bright summer nights or the darkness of the winter with the northern lights. We strive to fulfil all your needs and exceed your expectations by offering you simply the best possible service in the most salubrious of surroundings. Website: www.hotellaki.is

19:00 Dinner at Hótel Laki

20:00 Hlaða or hot tubs

23:00 Northern lights hunt



TOTAL PRICE:

