

Dear parent or guardian,

Abingdon School – Iceland – August 2017

Your son or daughter has the opportunity to take part in an adventurous school trip that we are helping your school to plan.

Adventure travel is exciting. It is a chance to stretch horizons and develop an understanding of cultures and destinations beyond our everyday world. The educational benefits and opportunities for personal development are many indeed.

By its very nature, however, adventure travel is more challenging and demanding than a conventional school trip. The enjoyment, excitement and educational benefit is derived, in part, from the inherent risks and challenges associated with each journey and destination.

Comprehensive risk assessments, expert guides, thorough planning and contingency arrangements all help to reduce risks to an acceptable level, but they cannot remove them all together. Standards of accommodation, transport, service provision, healthcare, hygiene and emergency response are, generally, not as high as in the UK. Flexibility and patience on the part of the traveller is important, so too is your understanding of this as a parent or guardian.

The enclosed information is designed to enable you to make an informed decision as to the itinerary and organisations involved, and whether the trip is right for your child.

Should you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Ferraro
Director



11-15 Dixs Field
Exeter
EX1 1QA

Tel: 01392 660056
info@thestc.co.uk
www.thestc.co.uk

About The STC:

The School Travel Consultancy has been organising adventurous school trips and expeditions since 2006. Over the years we have helped school groups summit 6000m peaks in the Himalaya and visit remote tribes deep in the rainforest clad interior of Venezuela. Not all trips we arrange are as adventurous as these, yet wherever we operate our key goal is to provide an exceptional educational travel experience, one that takes students out of their comfort zones, opening their eyes and stretching their global horizons in a carefully risk-assessed environment.

Objectives:

In line with the requests of the lead teacher, the objectives of this trip are:

- To undertake an adventurous geography trip in Iceland that includes more exciting activities and excursions than the 'usual' school trips.

Trip Overview:

Iceland is a Geographer's paradise. With volcanoes, hot springs, geysers and, not to mention, its dramatic glaciers - it's a country that never ceases to amaze. This dynamic and adventurous geography school trip has been designed to incorporate all the major sites in an active and amazing adventure. It's guaranteed to engage and inspire your students. As well as the well-known highlights including the Þingvellir National Park, geothermal areas and black sand beaches we get off the beaten track by hiking on the Sólheimajökull glacier to witness its features and learn how glaciers impact their natural environment over time. We also have an afternoon of white-water rafting and a day exploring the country in Super-Jeeps.

Planned itinerary

DAY 1: Airport arrival transfer to Reykjavík via the Blue Lagoon. (D)

Welcome to Iceland. On arrival we'll be met by our highly experienced local team and transferred directly to the Blue Lagoon where we can recover from our flight relaxing in the naturally heated warm water. This huge outdoor spa is 5,000 m², holds six million litres of geothermal seawater and is powered entirely by geothermal energy. A visit to the Blue Lagoon is not only a relaxing start to the trip, it's one of the few places on Earth where you can bathe between two continents as the Euro-Asian and American tectonic plates meet here. The distinctive blue colour is down to the high levels of silica and minerals, reported to have great benefits for the skin and general well-being.

After time at the Blue Lagoon we will continue onto Reykjavik. Depending on timings we will head out for an orientation walk to get acquainted with this charming and compact capital city.

Dinner and overnight in at Hotel Cabin



DAY 2: Golden Circle in Super Jeeps (B,L,D)

The Golden Circle route is the most popular sightseeing route in Iceland for a reason. It includes visits to the Þingvellir National Park - a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the most renowned hot spring in the world and probably the most beautiful waterfall in Iceland. In this unique 4x4 Jeep tour you will also take a drive on Iceland's second largest glacier.

After we have been picked up from our hotel, we will drive to the Þingvellir National Park. This UNESCO site is where the oldest existing parliament in the world was formed. It's not only one of the

most historic places in Iceland, but also a natural wonder because of its location literally ON one of only two tectonic rift valleys in the world.

At Thingvellir, you can actually see how the continental plates of America and Europe have drifted apart. Huge canyons are the clearest manifestation of that, one of which (the "Peningagja canyon") is thought to make wishes come true when you throw a coin into it.

From Thingvellir we will continue to the geothermal area around the Geysir hot spring and Gullfoss waterfall (the Golden Waterfall). These attractions are two of the most popular in Iceland.



After lunch, it's time for some action. The jeeps continue towards the Langjokull glacier, Iceland's second largest glacier, where we will try out our super Jeep vehicles off road. The ride will take us across glaciers and highlands, splashing through rivers and rough terrain. This drive is only available for monster jeeps and you will be experiencing something absolutely unique. After the off-road ride and with time permitting, we will visit Faxi, a small but beautiful waterfall and then head to the amazing Kerid crater before driving back to Reykjavik.

Dinner and overnight in at Hotel Cabin

DAY 3: National Museum – Power Plant - Hveragerði village – White water rafting in Hvítá River (B,L,D).

Morning visit to either the Árbæjarsafn Open Air Museum or the National Museum, cultural visit to the Hveragerdi Geothermal Park & Helliheið Geothermal Power plant

Árbæjarsafn is the historical museum of the city of Reykjavík. Its purpose is to give the public an insight into the living conditions, work and recreational activities of the people of Reykjavík in earlier times. Quaint old buildings have been uprooted from their original sites and rebuilt here, 2.5 miles from the city centre. Alongside the 19th century homes are a turf-roofed church, various stables, smithies, barns and a boathouse. This is a popular place for students as history comes to life.

We then journey on stopping to see the in Helliheið Geothermal Power plant. The area surrounding the power plant is a wild and barren landscape. As we drive up to the plant we will see the huge vents where the steam is stored with miles of pipes stretching into the distance. The tour is an insightful introduction to renewable energy plants.

We continue on to Hveragerði where we will have an opportunity to study how a community develops around, and adapts to, its often harsh environment. This geo-park is unique - nowhere else in the world is there a populated region so close to an active high-temperature geothermal area. It was a draw to early settlers as inhabitants learnt that the natural hot water could be used for heating, cooking, and baking. We will have an in-depth tour of the area, learning how the locals make use of these boiling hot springs that erupt in their gardens. We will boil eggs in the hot springs and those who wish can have a mud foot-bath.



We will then have an amazing opportunity to try our hand at white water rafting. The Hvita flows from the glacier Langjökull towards the south and creates the majestic waterfall Gullfoss; it is a beautiful and fun river for rafting. The river has a perfectly balanced mix of serene canyons and adrenaline pumping waves and rapids. No-one should leave Iceland without embracing a river rafting adventure and experiencing the true power of nature in its rawest form! Along the journey, we raft through the scenic Bruarhlod canyon and in that stunning setting participants have the option of jumping from a cliff into the river.

Our destination this evening will be Hellishólar, a 10 minute drive from Hvolsvöllur and about an hour's drive from Reykjavík. On site is a restaurant, common area, hot tub, laundry access, golf, fishing and cycling.

Dinner and overnight at Hellishólar Cottages.



DAY 4: South Shore – Glacier Hiking on Sólheimajökull Glacier & Eyjafjallajökull volcano view (B,L,D).

We will start by walking through the dramatic glacier valley and black sand flood plains and once we are at the edge of the ice we will put on our crampons. Next we will explore the crevasse riddled outlet glacier with its amazing ice formations, sinkholes and jagged ridges. We will also discuss and witness first-hand the effects global warming is having on the glaciers and Iceland as a whole. All the tools needed, ice axes, crampons and safety lines will be provided.

The South Shore region is an excellent way to discover more about how volcanic activity shaped the Land of Fire and Ice. We will then head over the scenic mountain pass Hellisheiði for a magnificent view of the wide southern plains formed by glacial rivers. Head through small villages and farmlands. You will have frequent views of mountains, including snow-shrouded Hekla and the towering, ice-capped strato-

volcano Eyjafjallajökull. Continue through the region that is the setting for the Viking-age epic, Burnt Njáll's Saga. Take time to visit two spectacular waterfalls, Seljalandsfoss and Skógarfoss. Each has its own unique shape and story.

Drive past Dyrhólaey, a magnificent keyhole-shaped headland with sheer cliffs. Take a walk on the sea shore, which is flanked by steep bird cliffs rising above the black, wave-pounded sands.

Learning Discoveries: How volcanic eruptions created much of South Iceland • Why Iceland is growing larger • The importance of Sagas • What Icelandic landscape and trolls have in common
Dinner and overnight at Hellishólar Cottages.

DAY 5: Departure transfer (B) (no guide)

Your private coach will pick you up from your hotel approx. 5 hours before your departing flight and drive you directly to Keflavik International airport.

END OF SERVICES

*Please note: It is important to realise that the itinerary needs to be flexible. While every effort will be made to follow the above schedule, in the event of political problems, airline schedule changes, **we will do our best to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, but it is important to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED and be prepared to accept some slight changes. Relax and have faith in your guides – he or she will want you to see their country in a good light.***

Grading:

We grade all our trips so teachers, school leaders and parents can gauge whether it is appropriate to their requirements and objectives. We have given this Iceland expedition the following grading:

Physical: 2

Some low level physical activities included in your trip, including walking on uneven terrain, maybe a morning/afternoon trek of two to four hours. That said, no physical preparation is required to make the most of the tour. High humidity and temperatures can occur at certain times of the year.

Cultural: 1

Culturally, this is the least challenging of the STC's trip grades. English is the native language. Students are likely to find the food, customs and access to services similar to the UK.

Minimum age:

We recommend a minimum age of 13 years for this trip.

Accommodation:

Accommodation on the trip includes:

- En-suite hotel rooms (twin / triple shared)
- Guest house accommodation

Transport:

Transport on the trip will be by:

- Private coach or minibus
- 4x4 Jeep vehicles

Travel Insurance:

The school will be providing travel insurance for the group. Details of cover will be available through the school prior to departure.

Iceland: Country Information

Full Country Name: The Republic of Iceland

Area: 102 775 sq km

Population: 332 529 (2016 estimate)

Capital City: Reykjavik

People: Icelandic (92.6%), Polish (3.4%), Other (4%)

Religions: Church of Iceland (71.6%), Other Christian Denominations (11.6%), Other and Not Specified (9%), Unaffiliated (5.8%), Non-Christian Denomination (1.7%), Icelandic Ethical Humanist Association (0.4%)

Time: GMT + 0hr. Flight time from London to Reykjavik approximately 3 hours.

Country Overview

Often cited as one of the most peaceful and happiest countries on the planet, the island of Iceland is ready to welcome any visitor. Icelandic heritage is founded upon the nation's Scandinavian heritage and is rich in ancient sagas and the odd pickled fish. Nature lovers will bask in the scenery which biologists and geographers alike can experience the many wonders Iceland has to offer, from glaciers and geysers to renewable energy and beautiful wildlife.

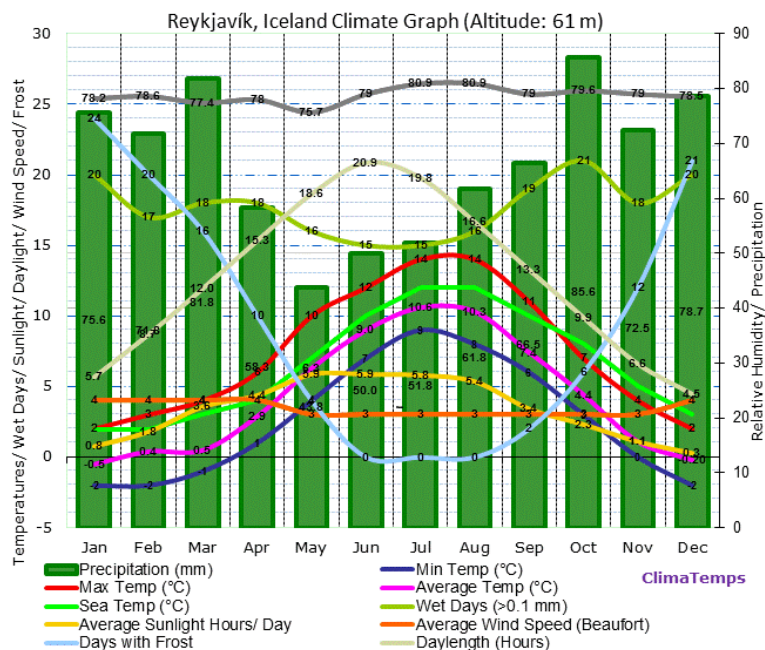
Geography

Iceland's fascinating geography is caused by its location across both the Eurasian and North American Plates meaning that the island was created by rifting and accretion through volcanism along the ridge. There are thirty minor islands which are also a part of Iceland and between them and the main island, 62.7% of the country is tundra, 14.3% lake and glaciers while only 23% is vegetated. Many fjords punctuate the coastline, where most of Iceland's population may be found, whilst the virtually uninhabitable interior is a combination of sand, mountains and lava fields.

Climate

The warm North Atlantic Current generally ensures a higher annual temperature than in most places of a similar latitude in the world to Iceland. Despite its proximity to the Arctic, the coast often remains ice-free throughout the winter. The climate varies across the island and the south tends to be warmer, wetter and windier than the north while the coldest region is the Central Highlands.

Reykjavik Climate Chart



Cultural Considerations

Iceland is one of the most developed countries in the world according to the UN Human Development Index; it also ranks incredibly highly with regards to equality, happiness and peacefulness. As such you should expect to act in a respectful and courteous manner just as you would travelling around in the UK. It is common for Icelanders to remove their shoes when entering someone's house but perhaps most important is a respect for nature. Icelandic people are proud of their island's beautiful scenery and as a visitor you must treat nature with the respect it deserves. For more information see www.guide.culturecrossing.net

Regulations & Red Tape

If you have a UK passport endorsed British Citizen, British National Overseas or British Overseas Territory Citizen you do not need a visa for stays of up to 3 months. Other types of British national will need a valid Schengen visa to enter Iceland. It is good practice to ensure at least six months' validity of your passport from your departure date of the country which you are visiting.

Those with non-British passports should contact the Icelandic Embassy.

Foreign Office Advice

You should familiarise yourself with up to date Foreign Office advice for travel to India. This is available on their website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iceland> and contains useful information regarding safety and security, health and entry requirements.

Health Information

The information on this page has been provided by 'fitfortravel' (www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) - a public access website provided by the NHS (Scotland). It gives travel health information for people travelling abroad from the UK. Remember that you should always discuss your particular needs with your own doctor or nurse.

Advice for All Destinations

The risks to health whilst travelling will vary between individuals and many issues need to be taken into account, e.g. activities abroad, length of stay and general health of the traveller. It is recommended that you consult with your General Practitioner or Practice Nurse who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and /or antimalarial tablets. This is also a good opportunity to discuss important travel health issues including safe food and water, accidents, sun exposure and insect bites. Many of the problems experienced by travellers cannot be prevented by vaccinations and other preventive measures need to be taken.

Ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including repatriation. The 'T7' leaflet (from Post Offices) gives details of health care agreements between countries and is accompanied by an application form for the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The completed form must be submitted about 6 weeks before you plan to leave to allow the card to reach you on time. The EHIC entitles travellers to reduced-cost, sometimes free, medical treatment in most European countries

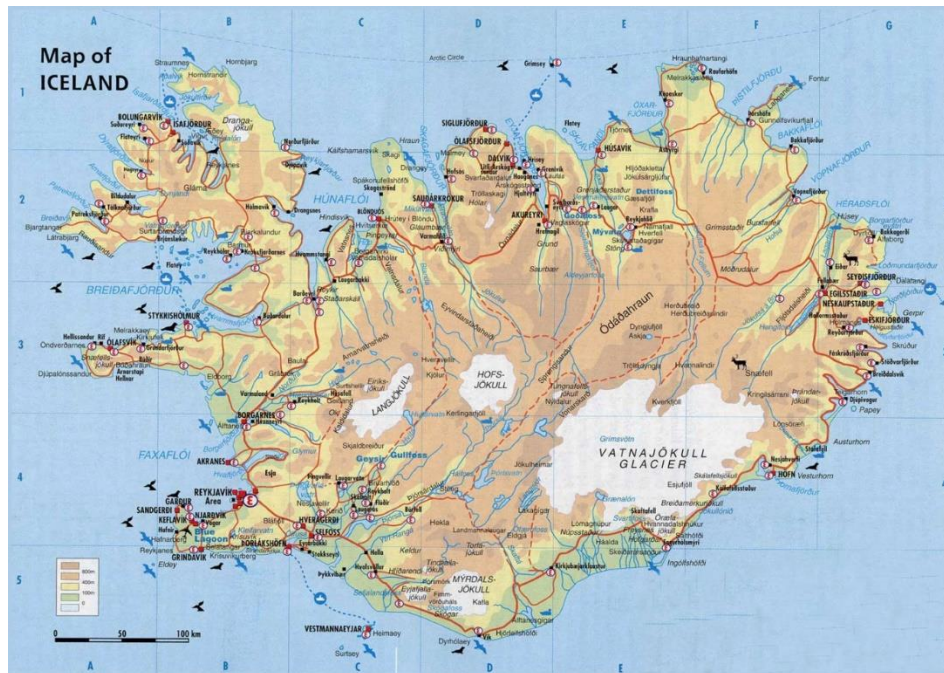
Health Advice for Iceland:

Confirm primary courses and boosters are up to date as recommended for life in Britain - including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions.

Courses or boosters usually advised: None

Other vaccines to consider: Tetanus

Map of region:



Venture Provider

The School Travel Consultancy is the venture provider for this trip, holding overall responsibility for safety and operations.

Leader Team:

The Leader team for this expedition will be made up of:

- **STC leader** - An experienced expedition leader will accompany the group when in country. By using leaders from your destination, we ensure our clients get the best possible in-country experience. Students and teachers regularly tell us that our leaders are a vital part of the success of our trips, providing an invaluable insight into local customs, history, flora, fauna, geography, politics and much more. They also have detailed knowledge of the local environmental and safety issues that groups could potentially incur and are thoroughly trained by us in their responsibilities and emergency procedures. The STC leader has overall responsibility for directing the logistics of the trip and ensuring the safety of each and every person participating.
- **School leader team** – This is made up of a minimum of two teachers, one of each gender (if a mixed group). The school leader team are responsible for all pastoral care issues of participants and the implementation of school policies and appropriate guidelines.

Booking process:

To confirm your place on the trip, we need to have the following:

- A completed and signed booking form. This collects personal contact details, next of kin, passport and medical information. If under 18 years of age, this form **MUST** be signed by a parent or guardian **AND** the student travelling.
- A deposit – please refer to the letter from school for details of this. Deposits should be payable to the school please, **NOT** to The STC.
- A copy of the photo ID page of your passport.

Pre-departure information and preparation:

In the build up to your trip, we will be providing detailed information and training sessions to enable participants to plan and prepare as thoroughly as possible for this trip. This information will include advice on:

- Confirmed travel arrangements
- Health & Hygiene advice
- A comprehensive kit list
- Culture & history of your destination
- Sources of further information about your destination
- Passport and Visa requirements
- Trip specific vaccination and medical advice from Travel Health Consultancy Ltd.
- Money matters including, if appropriate to your trip, fundraising ideas and entrepreneurial schemes
- Language – basic phrases
- Expected fitness requirements
- Roles, responsibilities and expectations of participants
- Responsible tourism advice and suggestions
- Code of conduct
- What to do in an emergency and emergency contact information

Pre-travel preparation sessions

Three to six months prior to travel, we will arrange for a parent and student information evening to be held at the school. This is a chance for us to prepare the students for the trip and ensure that everyone is happy, with questions answered and minds put at ease. At this evening we cover the following elements:

- Passports and Visas
- Safety approach and attitude
- Being open about problems
- Health & Hygiene
- Personal safety
- Specific Hazards related to your itinerary e.g:
 - Sun and dehydration
 - Cold weather
 - Altitude
 - Wild animals
- How to travel more responsibly
- Money management
- Packing and Kit
- Responsible Tourism

Depending on the size of the group and the objectives of the trip, we may split this training into one or more sessions.

Safety Management and attitude to risk

Safety is our number priority and we take the welfare of our clients and those who work on our trips extremely seriously. We have comprehensive safety management systems in place, including areas detailed below. If you would like to know more, please ask for a copy of our Safety Management System.

Trip selection:

Each journey and expedition has been tailor-made and researched with school groups in mind.

Leaders:

Each trip is accompanied by a full time professional leader, trained in first aid, critical incident management and the complex art of managing logistics.

Risk Assessment:

Country and itinerary specific risk assessments are provided prior to departure. In addition, your leader has the training to dynamically risk assess your journey when on the road. Group management risk assessments are provided to assist lead teachers. Copies of risk assessments are available to view should you wish to see them.

Crisis response:

24 hour emergency back-up and critical incident support is on hand in the unlikely event of an incident whilst overseas.

Evacuation:

We have an emergency evacuation plan in place for each day of the trip, detailing the nearest medical facilities and places of assistance. Whilst helicopter evacuation is theoretically possible in Iceland, in reality it is often quicker to evacuate casualties by minibuss or ambulance. As such, typical time to medical help (other than first aid) can be in the region of one to three hours on a trip such as this. If you would like to see a copy of our emergency evacuation plan then please get in touch.

Communication:

Each group carries satellite, radio and/or mobile communications as your itinerary and terrain demands, ensuring communication is possible in all situations.

Accommodation & transport

All accommodation and transport are risk assessed and checked by local operations teams. Minimum requirements for vehicle standards and driver hours are enforced through contractual agreements with our in-country partners.

Insurance:

£5,000,000 public liability insurance is in place and personal travel insurance is compulsory for all those travelling.

Pre-travel screening

All travellers are medically screened to ensure they are fit and healthy to undertake your chosen journey.

Foreign Office Advice:

All tours and expeditions are run within Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice. FCO advice is monitored daily and tour operators have the resources to react quickly should that advice change.

Pre-trip training

Students and staff are given the necessary training and skills to safely undertake each journey. Some of this training is provided by us, some by external companies as necessary.

Declaration of Risk

Ventures that include adventurous activities involve exposure to accepted elements of risk, challenge and adventure greater than those normally encountered in everyday life. Whilst such activities provided by The School Travel Consultancy are subject to exacting safety management processes, it cannot be guaranteed that all possibility of resultant injury to participants, or others, is eliminated.

Booking conditions

By booking a place on the trip, you confirm that you accept our booking conditions which can be found on our website at the following address: <https://www.thestc.co.uk/assets/uploads/general/The-STC-Group-terms-and-conditions.pdf>

Relationship with the school and parents

When we run an overseas trip for a school we contract with the school for the delivery of the travel arrangements and any pre-trip programme. We also contract directly with the parents/guardians through our terms and conditions which govern responsibilities of both parties, cancellation policies, changes and liability. Therefore, in terms of health and safety, we work in partnership with the school's Senior

Management and/or Head Teacher. This means that we also work with the school's Operating Authority, (if applicable) meaning the trip is signed off by an external body.

How to contact us

The School Travel Consultancy
11-15 Dixs Field
Exeter
EX1 1QA

T: 01392 660056 E: schools@thestc.co.uk W: www.thestc.co.uk