

FMC Travel Club

A subsidiary of Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (Inc.)
www.fmc.org.nz

Club Convenor : John Dobbs

Travel Smart Napier, Civic Court, Dickens Street, Napier 4140

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6th to 25th July 2015. 20 days ex Reykjavik \$7595pp
Trip Leader : Andy Dennis

Any payments by visa or mastercard attracts a surcharge of \$200 per person

Iceland has been described as “other worldly” and “the land of fire and ice”. This North Atlantic island of colliding tectonic plates is a fusion of mountains, fiords, volcanoes, Europe’s largest glacial icecap, rivers, huge waterfalls, barren lava deserts and geothermal activity. There is lush summer greenery, when there is a proliferation of flowers and also many birds. The small population enjoys high living standards and are mostly dispersed around the coastline, and Iceland’s fascinating human history spans over 1000 years. We major on vividly contrasting areas in the east and north and include the stunning [Laugavegur](#) trail in the south. Andy has been guiding trips to Iceland for years and is very experienced in the country, its language and people. A terrific trip and a fantastic overview.

PRICE INCLUDES :

- All accommodation – guesthouse, schools, farms, community centers and mountain huts
- All transport – boat, jeep, bus and two internal flights, airport transfers to/from Reykjavik
- Most meals
- The services of an experienced and knowledgeable New Zealand leader, plus Icelandic mountain guides on the [Laugavegur](#) trail section
- Full support throughout the itinerary

PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE :

- Flights to and from Iceland
- Activities [outside](#) the core trip e.g. swimming or horse riding
- Meals not itemized in the day to day itinerary (B.L.D.)
- Travel insurance (mandatory)
- Items of a personal nature such as internet, laundry, souvenirs etc

Trip Leader

Andy Dennis lived and studied in Iceland for many years and speaks fluent Icelandic. In a past life, Andy added his skills to the FMC executive and in 2011 he was awarded Forest and Bird's prestigious 'Old Blue' award for sharing his knowledge and passion for New Zealand's wild places on land and at sea. A Nelson resident, he spends most northern hemisphere summers in Iceland, is on very familiar territory there and is looking forward to sharing this trip with you. I'm delighted that Andy is available to lead this trip.

Andy will not accompany you on the Laugavegur Trail in the south of Iceland which is operated by the reliable '**Arctic Adventures**' and will be led by two of their experienced Icelandic guides.

Trip Organisation

High Places provides the itinerary and services for this trip ex Reykjavik, and are referred to as **HP**.

HP are an independently run mountain travel company [with an office in Mapua near Nelson and close links with their sister company in UK](#). They have been successfully providing small group trips and expeditions throughout the world since 1988. Small, friendly, with a focus on being environmentally aware with some of the best and most experienced leaders available. HP have been chosen to provide this particular itinerary for the travel club and Andy Dennis as trip leader has been involved with HP leading various of their Iceland trips for some time. [HP have evolved a variety of wonderful trips to Iceland over 20 years](#) and they can be relied upon to provide the finest possible experience of its type.

Trip Summary

Start in the steep sided coastal mountains of the **eastern fiords**, following the fiords and [walking across mountain passes to stay in a variety of accommodations from remote farmhouses to small settlements](#). The coastal scenery is dramatic and we rarely meet other walkers.

Leaving the east coast, we drive across the flat lunar surface of Iceland's interior to walk across a caldera at **Askja** in the active volcanic zone. We then follow a vast canyon past columnar basalt in strange formations and peer over powerful waterfalls. A visit to **Lake Myvatn**, with its geothermal wonderland of steaming fissures and bubbling mud and huge birdlife will be a highlight. We can swim in geothermal pools, walk around a crater rim and explore an area on top of the **Mid Atlantic Ridge**, still cooling from an eruption in the 1980's. A flight takes us back across the interior of Iceland to **Reykjavik**.

The final section enters a very different landscape and follows **Laugavegur**, the 'hot spring route' perhaps the best known trek in Iceland and considered one of the world's greatest walks. Our route heads south from **Landmannalaugar** towards **Eyafjallajokull**, the glacier containing the volcano which erupted with an abundance of volcanic ash in 2010 and finishes in **Thorsmork Valley**. We bathe in steaming hot pools at Landmannalaugar and cross the third biggest geothermal zone in the world through rainbow rhyolite mountains, black obsidian ridges, lava deserts, great canyons and green valleys.

All the walking, including Laugavegur, is **fully supported** so you only need to carry a day pack. You will need good outdoor gear and a sleeping bag. A full gear list will be supplied.

Walking

We walk 4 – 8 hours on most days on a variety of terrain requiring good boots and outdoor clothing. Much walking is in hilly terrain but the trails follow easy contours. Some walking is off trail with a few river crossings to handle.

Accommodation

Outside of Reykjavik, there are very few hotels in Iceland. During the short summer holiday season, guesthouses, hostels, schools, colleges, farms and community centres offer what is termed 'sleeping bag accommodation' to meet the temporary demand. On some nights you will have twin/double rooms but on others there will be four or more beds to a

room. In the highlands, we sleep together on mattresses in a communal room. The accommodation is warm and comfortable, always interesting and is often in exciting locations.

*On the Laugavegur section we camp in two person tents with a dining tent for meals and access to (coin operated) hot showers on most nights. Tents are provided and **camping mattresses and sleeping bags can be hired if ordered at time of booking. Please note that you do need to supply a sleeping bag anyway for indoor use on the first 14 days of the trip before the Laugavegur section.***

The price for hiring a sleeping bag for the Laugavegur section of the trip is NZ\$100 and an inflatable sleeping mat is NZ\$75.

Transport

In the east fiords we use boat and jeep support. Once we head for the highlands we have our own bus. A flight takes us from Akureyri (Iceland's 2nd largest town and the unofficial 'capital' of the north) back to Reykjavik. We travel to Landmannalaugar and back from [Thorsmork by bus](#).

Luggage

The main luggage will travel by bus, jeep or boat. A trek bag (cargo bag) or full size tramping pack would be ideal for this. The roads in the highlands of Iceland are not sealed can be very dusty and the vehicles have to cross a few rivers so your luggage should be waterproof and dust proof. Surplus luggage can be safely left at the Reykjavik accommodation. While walking, you just need a day pack with what you need for the day.

Food

Expect good, wholesome food - fresh fish, lamb, yoghurts and dairy products are Icelandic specialities. Some help with chores [will be expected](#). Alcohol is quite expensive in Iceland and is only available in government shops which are well spaced out. Most people who enjoy a 'tot' arrive well stocked. We can cater for vegetarians or special diets if you let us know beforehand.

Climate

Northeast Iceland enjoys a pronounced rain shadow effect caused by the central highlands and we can afford to be optimistic about our chances. Occasionally, 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.

We will encounter a different weather pattern during the Laugavegur section when winds from the north will be appreciated as they usually bring fine weather to the south.

Good outdoor gear and footwear are vital as a dose of depressions can produce wet and windy weather, or even snow on the high ground. Expect a wide range of daytime temperatures with differing conditions, from 2C to 24C.

Group Size

The group size is [6 to 12 participants](#) and your early registration is appreciated to determine viability. For the Laugavegur section, the max group size will be 14.

Options

You may like to spend some extra time in Reykjavik before or after your trip - there are many things to see and do in and around the world's most northern capital city. Reykjavik is colourful and quirky, with interesting architecture, museums and a great range of restaurants and bars.

If you spend extra nights in Reykjavik there are some wonderful places to visit: the great waterfall of Gullfoss, the spouting hot springs at Geysir, the warm, sapphire-blue waters of the Blue Lagoon and Thingvellir National Park. This World Heritage listed site includes the place where the world's first parliament met in AD930 and is located in a huge rift valley. A day trip could easily combine Gullfoss, Geysir and Thingvellir together in a 'Golden Circle' bus tour or self drive adventure in a rental car.

A follow on trip in Greenland with High Places is also worth considering.

The "Iceberg Trail" dates follow on directly. See these at www.highplaces.co.nz

Maps and reading

Iceland has very good topographical and touring maps and these are available in tourist shops, petrol stations, etc. Some maps also have information in English. www.ferdakort.is has a good selection of maps relevant to this itinerary.

A Lonely Planet guidebook to Iceland is highly recommended. There are various books about Iceland's scenery in libraries, and for something a little different, books that deal with the ancient Icelandic Sagas are worth the effort to read them. Andy will have a selection of field guides with him on the trip.

Money

The Icelandic Krona (ISK) is the local currency. This can be bought on arrival at Keflavik International Airport and there are ATM's readily available in Reykjavik and major towns. You will need money for a few meals and personal expenses, Reykjavik activities, swimming pools, gifts and coffees. Note that alcoholic drinks are quite expensive at restaurants. A credit card is useful backup for the unexpected, such as a coffee table book or Icelandic sweater.

NZ\$100 buys approx' 9,560 Krona as at October 2014 so work on the basis of \$1 to 100 Krona.

International Flights

It is likely you will consider this trip as part of a wider Europe or/and UK based holiday. If you would like us to help with your international flights just let us know. We can also provide travel insurance with a special FMC discount.

Itinerary

This itinerary has some flexibility so should be used as a guide. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. Time and distances are approximate. Included meals shown as : B.L.D.

Day 1. Mon 6th July. Arrive in Iceland

Flights to Keflavik. Transfer to Reykjavik to stay overnight in a comfortable [hostel style hotel](#).

Day 2. Tue 7th July. Fly to east Iceland

A day in Reykjavik before catching an early evening flight across Iceland to Egilsstadir, followed by a 45 minute bus ride over the coastal mountains to our accommodation for the next two nights on the outskirts of Eskifjordur, a classic fiord fishing town. Farmhouse/hostel. B.D.

Day 3. Wed 8th July. Eskifjordur

Settle in and get a feel for the fiord country of eastern Iceland. A walk in the hills above the town will stretch our legs and there should be time to visit the local museum and soak in an outdoor hotpot. Farmhouse/hostel B.L.D.

Day 4. Thu 9th July. Gerpír Peninsula

We set off to walk to our next destination, a remote farmhouse on the Gerpír peninsula. As the track winds among hills we may be lucky enough to see reindeer before dropping down into a deserted and beautiful fiord with eiders and terns for company. Restored farmhouse. B.L.D.

Day 5. Fri 10th July. Eastern fiords

Following a little used trail around [the coast](#), we traverse two spectacular headlands to reach the town of Neskaupstaður (17kms). Mountains built from layered lava flows, lush green valleys and one or two knee-deep river crossings make this a lovely day. From Neskaupstaður we travel by fishing boat for an hour around the next headland beneath immense cliffs (look out for puffins and whales) into the tranquil and almost deserted Mjóifjörður. [Hostel](#) or schoolhouse. 6 – 7 hours walking. B.L.D.

Day 6. Sat 11th July. Eastern fiords

A gradual 830m ascent from our accommodation leads to a high col with tremendous views. Crossing the pass, we descend into a valley where snow lingers well into the summer, and in August, wild blueberries abound. Our bus waits by the fiord and a 15 minute drive takes us to the pretty fishing town of Seydisfjörður, renowned for its many beautiful old houses. [Hostel](#). 8 hours walking. B.L.D.

Day 7. Sun 12th July. Eastern fiords

We contour around a shapely mountain then drop gently down towards the fiord past a series of waterfalls. Whimbrel, snipe and golden plover abound and wild flowers are prolific. Late afternoon stroll around town or perhaps a beer by the harbor? [Hostel](#). 6 hours walking. B.L.D.

Day 8. Mon 13th July. Eastern highlands

By bus we head inland towards the highlands - much of the journey resembles the moon! Apart from pockets of vegetation, it is a stark wasteland of lava fields, contorted volcanic ridges and big glacial rivers. We head over sand and lava to a mountain refuge set in a fertile green oasis of luxuriant vegetation, flowers, ferns and dwarf willows. Ducks and waders breed here in early summer including pink footed geese and harlequin ducks. We are close to the foot of Herdubreid, at 1682m it is considered Iceland's 'Queen of Mountains' for its perfectly equal from all sides 'jelly mould' shape, and was created by subglacial volcanic eruptions. Mountain Refuge. B.D.

Day 9. Tue 14th July. Askja Caldera

A drive of 1 ¼ hours through a landscape of black lava and light coloured wind-blown pumice brings us towards Askja, an enormous volcanic caldera. A track leads up onto the eastern rim of the caldera from which there is a magnificent view of Askja's crater lake. It is possible to swim in the smaller adjacent explosion crater called Viti ('Hell') formed during an eruption in 1875, so be prepared! Ponder the immensity of the forces of nature that produced this bleak and terrible yet compelling landscape. Walk across the crater basin to reach the bus and return to the mountain refuge. Approx 6 hours walking. B.L.D.

Day 10. Wed 15th July. Canyons and Waterfalls

The day begins with a 1.5 hour walk following the "Lava of Evil Deeds" – (5000 sq kms!) above a sparkling spring fed stream. We meet our bus and drive across lava fields and black sand to reach Dettifoss, the most powerful waterfall in Europe, where the vast [Jökulsá](#) River which drains off Vatnajökull Icecap, drops into a deep and dramatic canyon. Our stunning walk here takes us close enough to feel the spray as we stand on the brink of Dettifoss and two other spectacular large waterfalls, Hafragilsfoss and Selfoss.

We then drive northwards to the green coastal lowlands, stock up with fresh provisions and head for our hostel situated near a gentle meandering trout filled river. Walking time 5 to 5.5 hours. Driving time 3.5 hours. [Hostel](#). B.L.D.

Day 11. Thu 16th July. A day in the [Jökulsá](#) Canyon

[Jökulsá](#) Canyon is a fantastic 25km long canyon gouged out in the recent geological past by flash floods draining from the Vatnajökull Icecap associated with cataclysmic sub-glacial volcanic activity. The canyon is approx' 1 km wide and 100 m deep and has sliced through a lava desert. In its depth however, are accessible places with rich green woodlands and an incredible range of plants and flowers near the spring-fed streams and pools. It is also home to the rare gyrfalcon and

pink-footed goose. Throughout the canyon there are vast columnar basalt formations with exposed volcanic cores, now free-standing pillars up to 50 m high! A network of paths traverses the canyon at its base or else along its rim. The walking is mostly easy on good paths despite the daunting appearance of much of this terrain. Approx 6 – 7 hours walking. Hostel. B.L.D.

Day 12. Fri 17th July. Lake Myvatn area

Krafla volcano is situated on top of the Mid Atlantic Ridge, and we can walk through lava still steaming from eruptions in the 1980's. With a magnificent variety of landforms, outstanding birdlife and geothermal pools, a final day in Myvatn makes a wonderful climax to our travels through the wilds of Iceland and if anyone is keen, it may be possible to fit in a horse ride today. A full day's activity with a variety of walks and points of interest providing up to 4.5 hours walking. Schoolhouse or chalets. B.L.D.

Day 13. Sat 18th July. Lake Myvatn

Lake Myvatn is the greatest duck breeding area in Europe and is ringed by a bizarre landscape of sulphur springs, volcanic craters and strange rock formations, epitomizing both the tranquility and drama of so many of the landscapes of Iceland. Krafla volcano is situated on top of the Mid Atlantic Ridge, and we walk through lava still steaming from eruptions in the 1980's. With a magnificent variety of landforms, outstanding birdlife and geothermal pools, Myvatn makes a wonderful climax to our travels through the wilds of Iceland. Approx 3 – 4 hours walking. Schoolhouse. B.L.D.

Day 14. Sun 19th July. Reykjavik

A morning bus transfer to Akureyri, the main town in northern Iceland, is followed by a dramatic 1 hour flight across the centre of the island back to Reykjavik for an afternoon's respite before the next section begins. Hostel/hotel. B.

Day 15. Mon 20th July. Landmannalaugar

After an early pick up from our Reykjavik accommodation and a quick briefing we head out of town with our Arctic Adventures group. We drive towards the highlands, passing Mt. Hekla (also known as 'the gateway to hell'), the most active volcano in Iceland which last erupted in 2000. A stop at Ljótipollur Crater offers great views over the highlands – in clear weather we can pick out Iceland's biggest glaciers. We will stop for lunch en route, and arrive in Landmannalaugar (600m above sea level) in plenty of time to explore the area and relax in the naturally warm river that runs beside the campsite. So make sure you bring your swim wear! (B,L,D)

Day 16. Tue 21st July. Trek to Álftavatn

This is the longest day but by now you will already be fit! After an early start we walk through the rough lava field of Laugahraun then climb through a colourful yellow streaked landscape to reach a high plateau, often with snow patches in summer which we will cross. We reach the mountain hut at Hrafninnusker in time for lunch. There is a lot of obsidian scattered around which gives the place mystical appearance and there is a wonderful view from the hut. Above 1000m the landscape is sparse, with bare rocks and the immense Icelandic highland desert. We follow the hills of Reykjafjöll, often crossing stream filled gullies until the landscape changes and ahead are dark tuff mountains and glaciers including Eyjafjallajökull which caused extensive travel delays worldwide when it erupted in 2010. We descend final steep slopes to reach a welcome green oasis, then easy walking leads to our campsite on the northern shores of Lake Álftavatn (Swan Lake). 24km. 8-9 hours. (B,L,D)

Day 17. Wed 22nd July. Trek to Emstrur (Botnar)

An easier day today with several river crossings. We cross Brattháls Hill and head east for Hvanngil Gorge. After crossing a couple of unbridged and one bridged river, we head between two sandy hills and soon can see the hut and campsite at Emstrur. Option of an evening walk after dinner to the 200m deep Markarfljótsgljúfur Canyon with the powerful Markarfljót River flowing through it. 16km. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)

Day 18. Thu 23rd July. Trek to Þórsmörk

The day starts with a winding path down to Syðri Emstruá River which we cross on a tenuous bridge. We then head south to an area called Almenningar where the landscape starts to change once again with mountain streams lined with dwarf birch and arctic flowers appearing. A refreshing river crossing follows before we enter Þórsmörk valley. From here it's a 40 min walk to Langidalur Hut in Þórsmörk and from there on to Básar Camp where we spend the night. This part is

wonderful as vegetation has spread over the area and Þórsmörk is undeniably one of the pearls of Icelandic natural landscape. 15km. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)

Day 19. Fri 24th July. Morning in Þórsmörk, bus to Reykjavik.

We spend the morning in this beautiful valley, named after Thor, the Norse God of Thunder, with a walk up Valahnúkur (500m) for a breathtaking view of the whole area and its outlying glaciers, and a visit to Songhellir (Song Cave). We will head back to Reykjavík around noon, arriving at our Reykjavik accommodation around dinner time. Hostel/hotel. (B,L)

Day 20. Sat 25th July. Depart Iceland

Stay on for R & R in Reykjavik, join the High Places Greenland tour or transfer to Keflavik International Airport for your onward flight. Visit www.highplaces.co.nz for further details of this 'add-on' tour in East Greenland.

Booking Conditions :

1. The FMC Travel Club (FMC) offers this small group trip in conjunction with Travel Smart Napier (TSN) and High Places (HP). All travel arrangements are made through TSN. Participants agree to all terms and conditions by signing the Registration Form. A separate HP Booking form must also be signed.
2. FMC, TSN and HP are not responsible for any injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may arise from weather, defect in any vehicle, vessel or aircraft, or through the acts or default of any person or company engaged in carrying out the arrangements of the trip.
3. We reserve the right to cancel the trip if minimum numbers don't eventuate. If such an event, all monies paid by participants will be fully refunded. A modified or alternative trip may be offered in lieu.
4. The advertised price includes a payment to FMC and the apportioned cost of the trip leader's travel. **Final pricing depends on factors such as currency fluctuations. Therefore the final price cannot be guaranteed until full payment has been received.** Final trip payment is due by 31st March 2015.
5. Registrations are accepted in good faith on a first comers basis on receipt of the Registration Form and deposit of \$1000. All payments may be made by cash, EFTPOS, cheque (payable to Travel Smart Napier) or internet banking to : 010685 0151601 00 at ANZ Napier. Heerlen Ltd T/A Napier Travel (our preferred method). Any payments by visa or mastercard attract a surcharge of \$200 per person to the final invoice.
6. Cancellations. If you need to cancel for any reason prior to departure, you must advise TSN immediately. Any verbal cancellations must be supported e.g. by an email. Fees apply as follows:
 - Cancellations received up to 31st March 2015 incur a fee of \$500 per person
 - Cancellations from 1st April to 31st May 2015 incur a fee of \$5000 per person
 - Cancellations from 1st June 2015 onwards incur a fee of 100% of trip costs per person
 - The above cancellation fees over-ride those of HP
 - If YOU find a suitable replacement person, the above fees MAY be waived or reduced
7. **Travel Insurance is mandatory.** You should take out trip cancellation cover when you register. When we confirm the trip is viable, full cover should be effected. We recommend QBE Travel Insurance for this trip and can email the application form and brochure and provide a special FMC discount quote at any time. You may buy travel insurance elsewhere, but note that it is essential to ensure you have full repatriation back to NZ including rescue by helicopter and air ambulance. You must provide policy details for any cover taken out independently.
8. Please provide a scan or photocopy of your passport when you register, unless TSN already holds a copy of your current passport.

Registration Form for Iceland 2015 :

Complete this form and send to Travel Smart Napier with passport copy and deposit of \$1000 per person. We need 6 participants to be viable. Maximum numbers also apply. **Please register early so we can ascertain trip viability and be fair to others. We prefer to close registrations by 31st December 2014 if possible, but registrations after this may still be possible.**

I am/we are registering for Iceland only.....for Iceland + the Greenland extension.....(circle which)

My / Our names as per passport/s (circle preferred 1st name).....

Snail mail address.....

Day phone.....Night phone.....Cellphone.....

Email.....Date(s) of birth.....

Tramping club affiliation, if any.....

Summarise recent tramping experiences (continue overleaf if needed).....

Any dietary requirements, allergies, medical conditions should we be aware of?.....

Contact person in NZ for any emergency (name, address, phone numbers, email, nature of your relationship e.g. daughter, spouse, neighbour. In the event of any emergency, this is the sole person you are permitting us to liaise with.

I / We have read the full trip dossier and I / We accept the booking conditions of this trip. I / We enclose My / Our registration deposit of \$1000 per person, and I / We agree to pay the remainder of trip costs by due dates as advised by invoice. I/ We understand that the final trip price cannot guaranteed until final trip payment has been made.

.....signed and dated by each person registering

Send registration to : John Dobbs, FMC Travel Club Convenor, Travel Smart Napier, Civic Court, Dickens Street, Napier 4110. P : 06 8352222 F : 06 8354211 E : john@tsnapier.co.nz

