

# Earlham

COLLEGE



## Icelandic Field Studies

### 2026 Alumni Trip

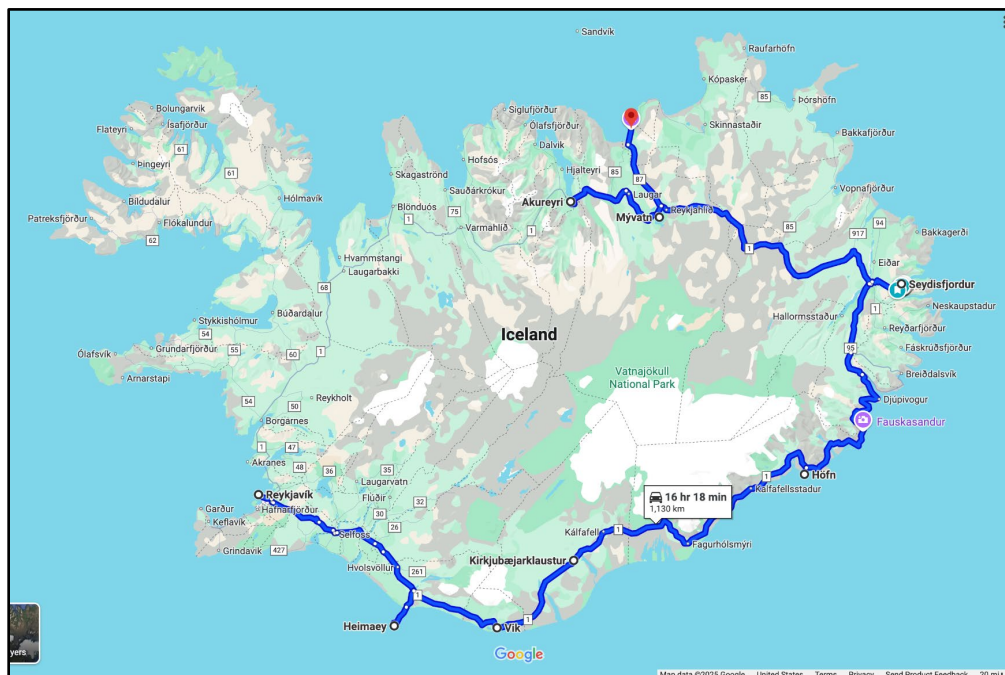
July 11 - July 19

Optional extension to July 22

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Interested? Let us know! Link to [interest survey](#)

Link to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (includes travel and hotel information)



# Trip Overview

Spend 9 days exploring the South and East Coasts of Iceland. Experience majestic glaciers, stunning beaches, unique geology, and otherworldly landscapes. Follow in the footsteps of the Epic Advantage Icelandic Field Studies Program (IFS), a multidisciplinary student-faculty research experience that has been collecting data in Iceland since 2014. Meet the 2026 IFS students at the Skálanes Nature and Heritage Reserve. There is an optional 3-day extension to the trip that will take us to the North Coast with a chance for a whale watch tour and exploration of Lake Mývatn, a birding hotspot.

## Trip Cost (subject to change)

We **estimate** the following trip costs (we will know more when we begin booking):

- Sharing a double room for 8 days (Saturday - Sunday): **\$5000**
- Having your own room for 8 days (Saturday - Sunday): **\$6500**
- Sharing a double room for 12 days (Saturday - Wednesday): **\$6500**
- Having your own room for 12 days (Saturday - Wednesday): **\$7500**

This estimate does not include air travel, but does include **most** meals, hotel reservations, entrance tickets, and in-country car travel.

## Trip Highlights

**We will visit:** Þingvellir, the site of the oldest democracy and the boundary of two tectonic plates; the island of Heimaey, the site of a recent volcanic eruption; Sólheimajökull glacier; a black sand beach with impressive columnar basalt; the picturesque town of Seyðisfjörður; and our student research post with great puffin viewing - Skálanes Nature and Heritage Reserve. The trip extension adds on visits to Lake Mývatn; Akureyri, the largest population center outside Reykjavík; and Húsavík, center for whale watching in Iceland.

**We will experience:** The Midnight Sun, a cool subArctic summer, interactions with locals, and Icelandic food and culture.

**We will see:** Many birds including: Puffin-Arctic tern-Oystercatcher-Arctic Skua-Eider ducks-Godwit-Whimbrel-Cormorant-Harlequin duck-Golden Plover-Rock Ptarmigan AND MORE, seals and possibly whales. If we're lucky we will spot reindeer! Bring your binoculars!



*Puffins on the island of Grímsey. Photo by Seth Hopper.*

## Trip Leaders

### **Dr. Emmett Smith, Associate Professor of Biology (they/he)**

Emmett has been teaching Biology at Earlham College since 2015. They have been co-leading the Icelandic Field Studies program since 2017. Emmett's research focuses on monitoring the effects of climate change and human activity on the biodiversity of populations using environmental DNA (eDNA). Emmett is excited to share Iceland, and their research, with Earlham alums!



*Emmett watching puffins on Grímsey. Photo by Seth Hopper.*

### **Gail Connerley, Assistant Vice President of Development (she/her)**

Gail first joined the Earlham community in 2002 as assistant director of alumni relations, later serving as senior director of alumni relations and senior director of annual giving. In 2021, Gail became assistant vice president of development, leading the development officer team and assisting with short- and long-term visioning and strategy to help the College meet its top fundraising priorities and goals. During her tenure, Gail has led multiple Earlham wilderness trips and helped with the logistics and leadership components to create the Icelandic Field Studies program, which she has officially co-led twice.

## Air Travel

You will be responsible for your domestic and international travel tickets. This gives you flexibility to stay longer in Iceland, hop over to Europe, or otherwise flex your travels. Please plan to arrive in Iceland no later than Saturday June 11th.

To get from Keflavík International Airport to downtown Reykjavík, we recommend booking tickets on the [FlyBus](#).

## COVID-19, Volcanoes and Travel Insurance

Iceland is currently open to all travelers and does not require a negative COVID test or proof of vaccination to travel. You will need to obtain your own travel insurance and submit proof of purchase to Earlham College before trip departure. Please see the waiver for additional information.

Since 2021 there have been an ongoing series of eruptions on the Reykanjies peninsula. Volcanoes are normal in Iceland, but unpredictable in nature. So far, the eruptions have been small and no one has been harmed, though the town of Grindavík is under siege from the lava traveling to the sea, and the Blue Lagoon has been closed and evacuated multiple times. We will spend most of our trip a safe distance from the eruption zone, and don't anticipate problems. However, we may need to adjust our schedule accordingly.



*One of the eruptions in 2022 - photo by Emmett*

## Trip Details (subject to change)

## Day 1 - Saturday July 11

\*NOTE: We have hotel rooms reserved in Reykjavík beginning on Friday July 10th if you want to arrive a day early. Please inform us ASAP if this is your plan so we can inform the hotel, arrange early check-in, and keep the correct number of rooms.

Arrival day! Keflavík International Airport is ~45 minutes away from Reykjavík by [bus](#). Once you arrive in Reykjavík, you can stash your luggage at the hotel and explore the city. We recommend the following options:

- [National Museum of Iceland](#)
- [Saga Museum](#)
- [World in Words \(Icelandic manuscripts\)](#)
- [Laugardalslaug Pool](#)
- [Nauthólsvík Geothermal Beach](#)

There are many other activities to choose from depending on your interests! You may also spend your time walking about downtown, poking into interesting shops and cafes, and admiring the many street murals and sculptures.

We will meet up together for dinner, place and location TBD.

## Day 2 - Sunday July 12

We will experience the Golden Circle, a popular tourist loop. We will stop at Þingvellir National Park, the location of the North American/European Plate Rift and of the Alþingi. We will see Gullfoss, an immense and spectacular waterfall. We will tour the geothermal power plant Hellisheiði and learn how Iceland produces clean energy. Lunch will be on the road in the form of sandwiches and skyr out of the cooler. We will dine together in Reykjavík and sleep in a hotel.



*This Icelandic flag is located on the Speakers Rock at Þingvellir. Photo by Emmett.*

### Itinerary:

- **Depart Center Hotel Skjaldbreið at XX am** - Gail and Emmett will pick you up with the vans. Bring your day pack with any gear you may want.
- 30 min drive to the Geothermal Energy Exhibition at Hellisheiði Power Station
- Guided Tour of Power Station at XX am
- **Lunch** from cooler (sandwiches and skyr)



- Gullfoss (~1 hour drive, ~1 hour at the site to walk around and visit the gift shop)
- Thingvellir National Park (~1 hour drive and ~1 hour to walk around)
- 45 min drive back to Reykjavik, arrive around XX pm
- Check in and down time in hotel rooms
- **Dinner TBD**

## Day 3 - Monday July 13

Breakfast will be in our hotel and we'll have an early departure to catch the ferry to the delightful island of Heimaey. You'll visit the insightful museum Eldheimar and learn about the 1973 eruption of Eldfell on the island. You'll have free time to explore the two volcanic peaks, wander through the lava flow, stroll through town and have lunch on your own. You can spot puffins on the seaside cliffs. We'll eat dinner together on the island before heading back to the mainland where we'll stay in Vík.



*View from the top of the volcano Eldfell, looking over the lava flow that covered part of the town of Heimaey. Photo by Emmett.*

### Itinerary:

- **Depart Center Hotel Skjaldbreið at XX am - be sure you are checked out!**
- ~2 hour drive to the ferry port, need to arrive at XX am
- **Lunch** from cooler either on the boat or while waiting (sandwiches and skyr)
- XX - ferry depart for Heimaey, ~45 minute boat ride - only bring your day pack on the ferry
- Visit [Eldheimar Museum](#) (about a 20 minute moderate walk from the ferry port)
- Free time on Heimaey - choose your own adventure! Some highlights:
  - [Beluga Whale Sanctuary](#)
  - [Puffin Watching](#) (note, the Puffin Viewhouse is at the southern tip of the island, we recommend a car service to get there unless you're a very fit cyclist!)
  - [Hiking](#)
  - Eydís Ísbúð (Ice cream): Vesturvegur 5, 900 Vestmannaeyjabær, Iceland
- **Dinner** reservations at XX pm at [Gott](#) (Bárustígur 11, 900 Vestmannaeyjabær, Iceland)
- **Ferry departs for the mainland at XX pm!**
- Drive to Puffin Hotel in Vík (~1 hour)

## Day 4 - Tuesday July 14

We will explore Sólheimajökull, getting the chance to walk on the glacier with our excellent guides Gummi and Oddur. We'll visit the Black Sand Beach and see incredible columnar basalt. Breakfast will be in our hotel, lunch will come from coolers as we work at the glacier, and dinner will be in town.

*A view of Sólheimajökull. The black ash is from the 2010 eruption of Eyjafjallajökull. Photo by Emmett.*



### Itinerary:

- **Breakfast** in Puffin Hotel
- 10 am depart for grocery shopping, get items for lunch today
- 10:45 depart for the glacier
- 11:30 arrive at glacier, prepare lunches to stow in your day pack, receive instruction on glacier hike from Gummi and Oddur
- Glacier hike ~1 hour, if the weather is nice we will eat **lunch** on the glacier! *NOTE: THERE ARE NO RESTROOMS ONCE WE LEAVE THE PARKING LOT*
- ~2 pm depart from Solo, drive to Black Sand Beach (30 mins)
- 4:30 (or earlier) depart from Black Sand Beach, drive to Vik and our hotel, down time until dinner
- **Dinner** at XX pm, reservations at [Smidjan](#), a local brewpub.

## Day 5 - Wednesday July 15

After breakfast in the hotel, we'll drive to Klauster for a morning of hiking and sightseeing. If you read the book "Island on Fire," you'll recognize the lava in the surrounding landscape. Then we'll drive past the southern tip of the vast Vantajökull Ice Sheet on our way to Höfn. We'll stop at the Glacier Lagoon to stretch our legs, marvel at the ice, and maybe spot a seal!

*Glacier Lagoon, Photo by Emmett.*

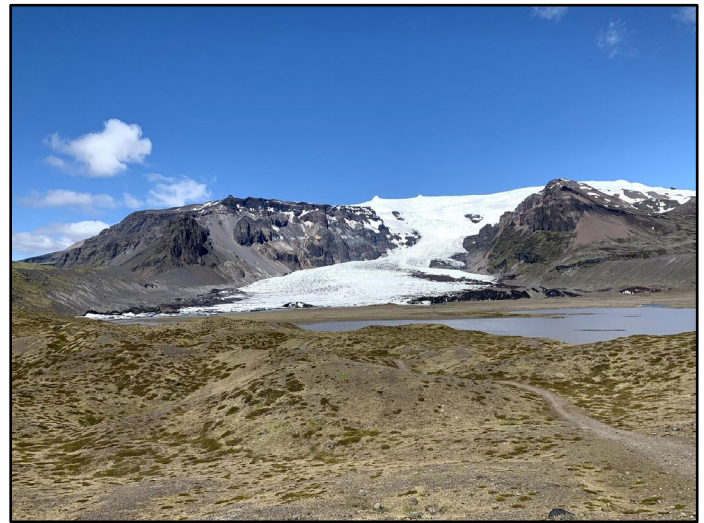


## Itinerary:

- **Depart Puffin Hotel at XX am** - pack all luggage in the vans
- Coffee detour to Skool Beans Coffee Bus
- Drive ~1 hour to Klauster, arrive XX am
- Free time in Klauster until a late lunch - suggest the local museum (small), hikes and find the “church floor!”
- **Lunch** at [Systrakaffi](#) at XX pm: Klausturvegi 13, 880 Kirkjubæjarklaustur, Iceland
- Drive to Hofn, about 2.5 hours, with a stop at the Glacier Lagoon
- Check in to guest houses
- **Dinner** at [Pakkhús](#) (they don't take reservations)

## Day 6 - Thursday July 16

Today we will travel slowly along the East Coast of Iceland, passing multiple glaciers and driving around fjords as we make our way to Seyðisfjörður, a town the Lonely Planet guidebook calls “obscenely picturesque.” During the drive we’ll stop often to see the beauty of Iceland, including a stint at some geothermal baths. We’ll spend the next few days with Seyðisfjörður as our home base. The town has numerous waterfalls and many hikes surrounding the town. Look for whales in the fjord!



*The foreland of the glacier Kviárjökull. Photo by Emmett.*

## Itinerary:

- **Depart guesthouses at 9 am** - pack all luggage in the vans
- Drive to Egilsstaðir, which will take about 4 hours. We will stop about half way in Djupivogur for a rest break and option to get a snack/cafeine at the local cafe
- **Lunch** at [Salt](#) when we arrive in Egilsstaðir, around 1 pm
- [Vok Baths](#) - XX pm entry time (6 minute drive from downtown), stay ~2 hours
- XX pm depart baths, drive over the mountain to Seydisfjordur (1 hour drive)
- Get situated in lodgings
- **Dinner ON YOUR OWN**



## Days 7-8 - Friday-Saturday July 17-18

We will visit the [Skálanes Nature and Heritage Reserve](#) on both of these days. We will drive part way in and hike ~45 minutes to get the house, fending off protective Arctic terns as we pass through their nesting grounds. There we will engage with Earlham students and pitch in with their work however we can! In addition, there are beautiful hikes here, sea cliffs with puffins, kittiwakes and fulmars, and a beautiful patio where you can enjoy a cup of coffee or tea and enjoy the Eider ducks cooing on the nearby pond. We'll also spend time in downtown Seyðisfjörður, a great place to purchase a locally-made Icelandic sweater. We will likely be able to see a local archaeology site being excavated by our Icelandic collaborators.



*Home base at Skálanes. Photo by Emmett.*

**Itinerary: TBD**

## Day 9 - Sunday July 19

Departure day! For folks heading home, we will take you to the Egilsstaðir airport to catch a domestic flight back to Reykjavík, from where you can grab the FlyBus and head to Keflavík and your international flight. Alternatively, you can continue your exploration of the island with us as we head north to Akureyri.

*A hot pot in Hverir. Photo by Emmett.*



### Itinerary:

- **Depart Seyðisfjörður at 8 am** - pack all luggage in the vans
- Drive over the mountain to Egilsstaðir - 1 hour, arrive at the airport by 9 am, drop off those heading back to Reykjavík
- Quick stop at the Bonus to grab food for lunch on the road for today and Tuesday.
- Drive over some desolate highlands on Route 1 en route to Akureyri
- Stop at that one canyon??
- Stop at [Hverir](#), (~2 hours drive) a geothermal spot with bubbling mud pools and steaming fumaroles. Have **lunch** from the cooler.
- Continue to Akureyri (~1.5 hours drive), check in to the hotel, rest and wander about.
- **Dinner** TBD

## Day 10 - Monday July 20

Free Day in Akureyri! There's a lot to see and do in Akureyri. We will also take people over the mountain to nearby Húsavík, center of Whale Watching tours, if people want to book their own tour or just see the town (1 hour drive).

### Some Things To Do in Akureyri/Húsavík:

- [Official Travel Guide to Akureyri](#)
- [Akureyri Walking and Hiking Tours](#)
- [Visit Grimsey Island](#) (a possibly very rough ferry crossing, worth it if you want to get north of the Arctic circle and see thousands of Puffins, not worth it if you get seasick)
- [Visit Húsavík](#)

- [Húsavík Whale Watching](#)

You will be on your own for lunch and dinner today!

## Day 11 - Tuesday July 21

Travel to [Lake Mývatn](#) for beauty and birds. More details to come.

*Mývatn. Photo by Emmett*

### Itinerary:

- **Depart** Akureyri at XX am, travel to Mývatn (~1 hour)
- Visit [Sigurgeir's Bird Museum](#)
- Picnic lunch from the coolers!
- Optional: Hike the Hverfjall crater rim
- Optional: Visit Grjótagjá
- Optional: Visit Goðafoss
- Daddy's Pizza dinner



## Day 12 - Wednesday July 22

Final departure day. Catch a flight to Reykjavík from the local airport.

NOTE: The only food included in the trip cost today is breakfast!

**Itinerary: TBD**

# Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What will the weather be like?***

July in Iceland should be rather mild. The weather will be above freezing and may get into the 70s F on a nice sunny day. However, you should expect cooler temps, in the 50s and 60s F. In one day you may see sunshine, wind, rain, and then sun again. It is unlikely but not impossible for us to see snow. Expect weather conditions similar to November or March in Indiana, but with stronger winds.

### ***What will the housing situation be?***

We will be staying in hotels for most of the trip. Rooms will mostly be doubles with two twin beds, so be prepared to make a friend! In Höfn and Seyðisfjörður the housing will be a bit more jumbled, with some triple rooms. We ask that you have a good mental attitude about sharing rooms and being flexible around housing, because we get what we get. (Lodging is difficult to come by outside of Reykjavik.) We hope to offer single rooms if possible for an added cost.

Name and Location of Lodging	Dates	Set-up
Center Hotels Skjaldbreið, Reykjavik	Friday July 10 - Monday July 13	Single and Double rooms, breakfast included
Puffin Hotel, Vík	Monday July 13 - Wednesday July 15	Single and Double rooms, breakfast included
Guesthouse Hvammur, Höfn	Wednesday July 15 - Thursday July 16	Single and Double rooms, shared bathrooms, breakfast included??
Hótel Aldan, Seyðisfjörður	Thursday July 16 - Sunday July 19	Single and Double rooms, breakfast included
Hotel Akureyri, Akureyri	Sunday July 19 - Wednesday July 22	Single and Double rooms, breakfast included

***How many people will be coming on the trip?***

We are planning to have 10-12 people including the trip leaders.

***What food will be included in the trip?***

Almost all meals are included in the cost. You will have a buffet-style breakfast in the hotels in the morning. Many lunches will be packed and eaten on the road, and most dinners will be pre-booked at restaurants. There will be a few times when you're left to your own devices for lunch or dinner. There will always be a vegetarian option. (We note that eating Icelandic lamb or locally caught fish is much better for the environment than eating most other food, since it is shipped across the ocean!)

***How will we be traveling throughout Iceland?***

We have two large vans rented for in-country travel. You will not need to worry about driving - simply enjoy being a passenger and seeing the sights! On some days there will be long drives, but we will break them up by stopping frequently at parks, small towns and iconic landmarks.

***How can I get home from Iceland?***

We will end our trip in the beautiful town of Seyðisfjörður, which is over the mountain pass from Route 1 and the larger town of Egilsstaðir. There is an airport in Egilsstaðir (EGS → RKV - Icelandair) that will connect you to Reykjavík via a domestic flight. To get to the international airport, you'll need to take the Flybus from Reykjavík to Keflavik (~45 minute trip). Other options include renting a car in Egilsstaðir and driving around the island. If you chose to stay on, there is a domestic airport in Akureyri.

***What type of physical activities will we be doing?***

On this trip, we use the mentality of "challenge by choice." For example, if you'd like to hike to the top of a dormant volcano on Heimaey, the path is smooth gravel - but uphill! It's easy to turn around at any point and head back into town. For most locations, the site-seeing is an easy walk from the parking area.



### ***Are we going to the Blue Lagoon?***

This trip does not include the Blue Lagoon in our itinerary. However, the Lagoon is located between the international airport and Reykjavík. The Blue Lagoon sells packages that include travel to/from the international airport and Reykjavík with a few hours of luxuriating in the Lagoon. Feel free to book this experience on your own, though be aware that recent volcanic eruptions have caused the Blue Lagoon to close suddenly.

We will visit the Vök Baths near Seyðisfjörður - geothermally heated hot tubs situated in a long lake with beautiful views!

### ***Do I need to exchange dollars for Icelandic kroner?***

Only if you want some Icelandic money - credit cards are accepted all over the island.

### ***Do I need to learn any Icelandic?***

Nope! Everyone in Iceland speaks at least a bit of English, and most folks are perfectly fluent.

### ***What should I pack?***

Be sure to pack for all types of weather. We recommend layers! Even if it's not cold, it is likely to be very windy, so a scarf, hat and mittens are recommended. Bring good hiking boots with ankle support. We recommend good rain gear (pants and coat - waterproof if possible). Wool is a great material for Iceland - if you have good wool gear bring that. You'll need a small day pack (like a backpack) and at least one water bottle. We also recommend sunglasses and sunscreen. Bring a swimsuit as well! All towns have public pools and we may have time to experience a natural hot spring. Be sure you have necessary medications and a bit extra if possible.

*Chargers/adapters:* You'll need a C/F adapter (mainland Europe)

### ***How much luggage can I bring?***

Please limit your luggage to one carry on and one backpack. We don't have much room in our vans for large checked bags. We don't have luggage porters either, so you'll need to be able to carry and move your luggage! The good news is, you won't be too sweaty and wearing the same clothes more than once is completely acceptable.

### ***What are the payment dates?***

We are asking for an initial non-refundable deposit of \$2000 on or before December 31, 2025. This will ensure your spot on the trip! The remainder will be due on or before May 5, 2026.

### ***What if a volcano erupts?***

If there is an eruption that is safe to view we will do our best to go and see it! If a major eruption occurs, or if we are unable to travel to Iceland due to country closure (COVID, other acts of God), we will follow the protocol outlined in the waiver.

### ***Do I need a visa to enter Iceland?***

If you are a US Citizen you do not need a visa to enter Iceland. Your US passport will do! If you are not a US Citizen please see entry laws and, if needed, arrange your own visa.

### ***What guide books or background material might I want?***

- Lonely Planet Iceland
- Living Earth: Outline of the Geology of Iceland by Ari Trausti Gudmundsson

- Icelandic Bird Guide by Johann Oli Hilmarsson
- Island on Fire by Alexandra Witze and Jeff Kanipe
- Writings by Andri Snær Magnason (Notably, “On Time and Water” and “Dreamland: A Self-Help Manual for a Frightened Nation” which was made into a documentary)
- The Icelandic Sagas
- Writings by Halldór Laxness (“Independent People” won the 1955 Nobel Prize in Literature)
- [The Reykjavík Grapevine](#) - an English-language news publication