



Arctic Iceland: Seabirds & Waders

Photographic tour with tour leader Mark Sisson

16th - 24th June 2027

Trip Overview

Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 6 guests.

Cost includes:

Accommodation, all meals, guiding, boat and land transfers.

Cost excludes:

International and recommended domestic flights to Akureyi, alcohol, sundry items and personal travel insurance.

Accommodation:

Accommodation is in typical Icelandic hotels when in Akureyi/ Keflavik and a clean rustic hostel for the heart of the trip. Single supplements may be available on request.

Level of fitness:

The weather can be unpredictable in Iceland during the summer months: it can be particularly cold especially along the coast. You don't have to be super fit for this trip, but you there will be some walks to get to the seabird colonies some of which may involve some longer and more challenging slopes.

LEVEL 3 - 4

Trip Overview

We've been running trips to Iceland since we began organising wildlife photography holidays so it's a destination we know well. During that time, it's a country that's been in the headlines with collapsing banks and erupting volcanoes, but it's also an amazing place for both landscape and wildlife photography and this trip allows for the perfect blend of seabirds and summer breeding waders in some very dramatic settings. We'll be based on the island of Grimsey, situated on the line of the Arctic Circle and where dramatic sea cliffs are home to array of seabirds. At the heart of these will be the iconic and incredibly photogenic Atlantic Puffin and our base is close to one of the best cliff colonies on the island, but other species which are either more challenging or only occasional visitors to the UK will offer a diverse array of subjects to work with including Black and Brunnich's Guillemot, Razorbill and some incredibly picturesque Kittiwake colonies too. There are surprisingly approachable breeding waders here as well including Golden Plover (usually just outside the door of where we stay) along with Dunlin, Phalarope, Snipe and more besides. With Arctic Tern and Snow Bunting on our doorstep the diversity to work with is superb, although Puffins will never be far from our focus. The long days at this time of year (the quality of light the midnight sun offers can be stunning and it is possible to photograph pretty much 24 hours a day) will offer up plenty to work with on this northern summer island.



Itinerary

Day 1: We all travel to Keflavik airport in Iceland. We will then transfer to the domestic airport at Reykjavik for our flights to Akureyri. We will then look to transfer to a local hotel in Akureyri for the night and over dinner we can discuss our plans for the days ahead.

Day 2: After breakfast we will be transferred to the harbour at Dalvik for the morning ferry (it's a journey of about 40 km) to Grimsey Island where we will be based for our trip. We should be able to get out for an initial explore with our cameras this afternoon before settling into our house after dinner at the local restaurant.

Days 3 – 7: These days will be spent photographing our primary subject the Atlantic puffin as well as several other seabird species, including: common guillemot, Brunnich's guillemot, black guillemot, razorbill, kittiwake, fulmar and arctic tern. It is estimated that there are over a million birds on Grimsey's cliffs during the breeding season. There will also be opportunities to photograph several wader species, including snipe, red-necked phalarope and redshank. Our accommodation is close to one of the best cliffs for puffin photography, but we will also walk to other areas of the 5 square km island to make the most of wind direction for flight photos and the midnight sun: we have so many options to choose from!



Itinerary

Day 8: After a final morning of photography, we board the ferry back to Dalvík and on to Akureyri. We will either then transfer to the airport for our flight back to Reykjavik for an overnight stop and then or remain in Akureyri - the flight schedules available when it is time to book will determine which but either will be comfortable and allow us time to reflect on our adventures over a final dinner.

Day 9: After breakfast we will begin our final journey home to the airport at Keflavik for our return international flights.



Things to bring

Our guesthouse is clean and comfortable and typically Icelandic in that the rooms are private and there are a number of communal bathrooms. We plan to have the property to ourselves as a group. Although we will eat out for our main meal of dinner, we will self-cater for lunches and so please let us know of any special dietary requirements you may have. In terms of clothing, you'll obviously need plenty of warm and waterproof clothing. Most of your time will involve spending time in the field and the weather is so unpredictable in Iceland and Grimsey Island straddles the Arctic Circle. It could be warm and sunny, or cold, windy and wet - all in one day. A good pair of strong waterproof hiking boots with good tread are recommended for walking around the island and working on cliff tops. For the bottom half good waterproof over-trousers, normal trousers and some thermal leggings. For the top half it's very much a question of having several layers – like a t-shirt or thermal vest, jumper, thick fleece and or a lightweight insulated vest or jacket then a waterproof coat. Standard cold weather layering is ideal. Wool or synthetic base layers, fleece, mid-layers. You will know your own cold thresholds, but it really is a question of building it up in layers. A good hat is essential, and gloves can be useful when it's cold. Also, sunscreen and sunglasses. Light shoes or slippers best option for when we are in the house.



Camera equipment

In terms of camera kit, you'll need a long lens (500mm or 300 + convertor would be our recommendation/choice) and then some supplementary lenses for other opportunities such as a 24-70mm for groups of birds and land/seascapes. An intermediate zoom (70-200 or 100-400) is useful as the birds will be at various distances and even close-up flight shots can be in the 200-300mm range. A sturdy tripod could be useful, particularly for static birds or video. Bring plenty of memory cards with you as well because you will take a lot of images. Please make sure your batteries are good and hold their charge well because they can quickly fail. If in doubt buy a couple of new ones. Rain covers are essential for bags and equipment and bring lens cloths for sea spray and rain.

During any breaks we have (or days when the weather forces us indoors) we will have a chance to critique and look at individuals work if you so wish so, please feel free to bring anything you'd like to share on either a laptop or iPad.



Useful Contact Information

My contact number for the build up to and for the duration of the trip is:

Mark: +44 (0) 7905 569685



Please don't hesitate to contact me even if you think it is a minor question, I'm here to help.



Address

4 Deer Park Drive, Newport, Shropshire TF10 7HB

Tel: 01952 411436

Email: mark@natures-images.co.uk

Web: www.natures-images.co.uk

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