

# ICELAND & GREENLAND EXPEDITION

**September 5-17, 2016**

## **Day 1&2 September 5,6- Flight from USA to Iceland/Greenland**

We will take our international flight from the USA to Reykjavik, Iceland. We will then connect on a flight to Kulusuk, Greenland. Shortly after arrival in Kulusuk we will either go by boat or helicopter to Tasiilaq – the main town on the East coast of Greenland with about 2,000 inhabitants.

Either way, it will be a beautiful experience flying above or sailing in between spectacular icebergs to the neighboring island. You will be taken to your guesthouse where you will be staying the next 4 nights and later there in the day there will be an information meeting and dinner with our group. If the weather allows it, the chef will prepare a lovely barbeque on the terrace.

## **Day 3- September 7 – Boat Excursion to the Knud Rasmussen Glacier**

The excursion starts at the harbor of Tasiilaq, heading towards northwest into the broad Ammassalik Fjord. After an hour sailing we will turn into narrow and steep fjords with breathtaking mountain peaks.

We will make a stop at Ikateq and look at some remnants of World War 2. It was here the Americans ran an airfield from 1942 -47, in wartime code-names called “Blue East Two”. It was built in order to facilitate transatlantic air traffic, navigation, search-and-rescue operations and weather forecast. You can still see the airfield, and rusted fuel drums, vehicles and ruins.

We will continue our journey and arrive in Sermiligaaq Fjord, which means “The Beautiful Glacier Fjord”. The name will not disappoint you. At some point you will be able to have the view of two calving glaciers simultaneously, Karale Glacier on your left side, and Knud Rasmussen Glacier right ahead of you. We will sail as close as the situation allows to Knud Rasmussen Glacier, go ashore and enjoy lunch here. After about 1-2 hours, we will head back to Tasiilaq. Note: Bring some warm clothes with you, but in case you are freezing, we will have a down cover for you.

## **Day 4 – September 8 – Boat Excursion to Johann Pedersens Fjord**

We start in the harbor in Tasiilaq and sail around the southern part of Ammassalik Island, before we will enter Sermilik Fjord. The name of the fjord means “Icefjord”; as it announces we will sail among huge icebergs that will make you feel small and humble. After about an hour we will make a stop at an

abandoned settlement called Ikkatteq. You can visit the old church and school, and enjoy the beautiful view from the hillside.

We will continue our journey into Johann Pedersen Fjord. You will be surrounded by a magical landscape: Big ice sculptures are floating in the water, and steep outlet glaciers dive down from the eternal Greenland Ice Sheet calving into the fjord. We will sail to one of the calving glaciers. Going ashore at the Hann Glacier we will enjoy lunch overlooking the front of the glacier. There will be time to hike to the ice and have a look around. After about 2 hours, we will sail back to Tasiilaq.

### **Day 5 – September 9 – City Walk and Flower Valley**

The city walk will take us to a workshop where local artists make beautiful and renowned handicraft. Then towards the harbor and visit the museum, which is the old church built in 1903. The museum has many historical treasures, and you can learn about the life and history of East Greenland.

The walk continues along the shore to the Hospital and up to the new church. Above the church, you will enjoy a beautiful view over the town. In this area, you will be able to see the oldest houses of the town where the first colony manager Johann Pedersen or the polar explorer Ejnar Mikkelsen lived.

Before heading to the Flower Valley, you can visit the tourist office Skaeven where it is possible to buy handicraft of all kinds, maps, etc. As the name of the valley indicates, you will be able to see many different flowers, such as arctic thyme, arctic bluebell, arctic dandelion, the national flower broad-leafed will herb, and many more.

We continue the small curved path along the river for a few kilometers, until we reach a small waterfall. Here we will spend some time to enjoy the beautiful landscape and peacefulness, before heading back to Tasiilaq.

Note: It is an easy walk through town, but we recommend sturdy shoes for the walk in the Flower Valley. We recommend you bring some refreshments with you.

### **Day 6 – September 10 - Goodbye to East Greenland flight to Reykjavik**

Today is a traveling day. In the morning we will take the helicopter or the boat back to Kulusuk where our flight to Reykjavik will be waiting for us. Upon arrival in Reykjavik we will be transferred to our Guest house for overnight and dinner.

## **Day 7 – September 11- Reykjavík-Snæfellsnes Peninsula**

Departure from Reykjavík in the morning, as we set course to west Iceland and Snæfellsnes, a volcanic peninsula that stretches out from the Icelandic west coast and is divided by a chain of mountains that lies from east to west. Before heading to the Snæfellsjökull NP we will take a walk to the crater Eldborg, a beautiful explosive crater that rises 60m up from the surrounding lava. Stops at Arnarstapi and Hellnar before we head to Dritvík and Djúpalónssandur beach. At Djúpalónssandur the lava formations run all the way to the sea creating a unique landscape. There we also find 4 big lifting stones that in the old times fishermen use to measure their strength, and to see if men were fit for a space on a fishing boat! Night in a guest house in twin rooms with shared facilities. Meals: Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

## **Day 8 - September 12 - Snæfellsnes-Borgarfjörður-Pingvellir**

Turning back east we head to the beautiful Borgarfjörður region. This is the home of Deildartunguhver, the most powerful hot spring in Iceland (and even in Europe) and the lush waterfalls of Hraunfossar a row of waterfalls that emerge from underneath the lava field, and Barnafoss. This is also the home of many lava tubes and tunnels, some of Iceland's biggest and most impressive, and we will stick our noses into one of these to get a glimpse of the Icelandic underworld! Our next stop is Pingvellir N.P. the site of the old Parliament and the birthplace of democracy in Iceland. The park is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. In addition to the historical importance, the location is wonderful, a beautiful lake skirted by a small canyon that in fact is a part of the Mid-Atlantic rift. We spend the rest of our day here. Night in a hostel in the Laugarvatn area. Accommodations in twin rooms with shared facilities. Meals: breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

## **Day 9 - September 13 - Gullfoss-Geysir -Þórsmörk Glacier Valley**

The day begins with a visit to the famous waterfall Gullfoss and Geysir, the namesake of all sprouting hot springs! We then head to Þórsmörk, a magnificent glacier valley hidden behind the glaciers of the south coast. Going into Þórsmörk is an adventure on its own since we have to ford numerous rivers to get there. The road also takes us right around the glacier covered volcano Eyjafjallajökull (1167m) that so famously erupted in April 2010 sending an enormous quantity of ash into the atmosphere, blocking air traffic in large parts of Europe for days. The afternoon is spent exploring this remarkable location with its many possibilities for hiking, from a walk up to Valahnúkur giving us a view of the whole valley to the gorges of Stakkholtsgjá, with strange rock formations and caves. Night in mountain hut. Sleeping bag accommodations. Meals: breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

## **Day 10 - September 14 - Þórsmörk-Seljalandsfoss -Skógarfoss-Vík-Skaftafell**

From Þórsmörk we return to the main road and continue east. Stop at the waterfalls Seljalandsfoss (where it is possible to walk behind the waterfall if it is not too icy) and the magnificent Skógarfoss. Optional, a stop at the new Eruption Center at Þorvaldseyri farm, right under the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, for a short documentary on the 2010 eruption (price approx 5€). A walk on the black beaches of Vík, admiring the power and beauty of the Atlantic Ocean will be refreshing before the last part of road east. The high cliffs dominate the black beach below and just off the coast pillars of rock rise up from the Ocean's surface. Legend says that these are trolls that turned into stone after staying up past sunrise... After a drive over the vast sand desert of the south and the lava field of Eldhraun, one of the biggest lava flows coming from one single eruption, we arrive at Skaftafell N.P right under Iceland's highest peaks, Hvannadalshnúkur (2110) in the late afternoon. Night in guest house in twin rooms with shared facilities. Meals: breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

## **Day 11 - September 15 - Skaftafell NP-Jökulsárlón Glacier Lake**

Today we take our vehicle east to reach the Jökulsárlón Glacier lake, one of the marvelous features of this region, a lake scattered with icebergs that break off from the great Breiðamerkurjökull glacier. A boat ride on the lake among the icebergs is optional. In the early afternoon we come back to Skaftafell to further explore the hiking trails of this magnificent park at the foot of the mighty Vatnajökull glacier, the largest glacier in Europe. It is a green oasis covered with arctic birch, and colorful valleys, rivers, waterfalls and flowers decorate the landscape, in contrast with the mountains surrounding it on one side and looking over sandy plains of Skeiðarársandur where in 1996 an impressive flood caused by a volcanic eruption under the Vatnajökull glacier took place. A Glacier walk on Svínafellsjökull outlet glacier is optional. Return to the guesthouse for the night. Meals: breakfast, packed lunch and dinner

## **Day 12 – September 16 - Skaftafell-Hot Spring Hike-Reykjavík**

Even though we have some route to cover back to Reykjavík we will make a few interesting stops along the way and do some hiking. Our first stop is at the Systrafoss waterfall and the village of Kirkjubæjarklaustur followed by a short walk at the gorgeous Fjarðarargljúfur Canyon. We pass through the villages of the south coast and just off the geothermal village of Hveragerði we go for a hike among the numerous hot springs and boiling mud pools in Reykjadalur valley. A magical place. Arrival in Reykjavík in the afternoon. Overnight at guest house in Reykjavík. Meals: breakfast and packed lunch, dinner

## **Day 13 – September 17 – Transfer to airport for flight back to USA.**