

## **SOUTH EAST ICELAND - INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

Dominated by the Vatnajökull ice cap, this is a region of spectacular scenery, stretching from Hvalnes in the east, west to Lómagnúpur. Its landscapes are among Iceland's most impressive and memorable. Wildlife, museums, cultural and historic sites and a good range of outdoor activities ensure a variety of further attractions to engage and detain visitors.

### **Scenery:**

- Europe's largest ice cap
- Many valley glaciers and interesting and easily accessible glacial features such as moraines, kettle holes.
- Jökulsárlón, the best place in Iceland to see big icebergs
- Alpine mountains, including Iceland's highest summit
- Glaciated mountains, Gabbro and Granophyre intrusions around Höfn, Rhyolite mountains in Morsárdalur and Lónsöræfi.
- Vast expanses of volcanic sand and surf-pounded beaches
- Volcanic features such as basalt columns e.g. Svartifoss
- Other natural features such as Lómagnúpur
- The Skaftafell National Park
- Wilderness hiking areas such as Lónsöræfi and Núpstaðaskógur
- Waterfalls: Svartifoss

### **Wildlife:**

- Seals at Stokksnes and Jökulsárlón
- Sea bird colonies at Jökulsárlón and Ingólfshöfði, wetland birds in Hornafjörður and migrant birds in spring along the coast.
- Reindeer in Hornafjörður in spring

### **Places of cultural and historic interest:**

- Höfn – Vatnajökull exhibition and local history museum
- Þórbergssetur – cultural museum
- Ingólfshöfði – landing place of Ingólfur Árnarson
- Hof – turf church
- Stafafell – turf church
- Núpsstaður – turf church
- Njál's saga sites: Lómagnúpur and Svínafell
- Skaftafell National Park Visitor Centre exhibition
- Papós – former trading post with connections to Irish monks

### **Outdoor recreation and activities:**

- Quad bikes and boat trips at Höfn
- Guided walks, ice climbing and glacier excursions at Skaftafell

- Sightseeing flights at Skaftafell
- Tractor trips at Ingólfshöfði
- Snowmobiling & glacier jeep trips from Skálafellsjökull
- Boat trips at Jökulsárlón
- Sightseeing trips to Lónsöræfi

### **Communications within the region**

In 1974, with the completion of the ‘ring road’ and bridge over Skeiðará, the south east of Iceland became accessible both from the north and from the west. A new section of road is planned just west of Höfn, which will shorten the distance between it and the capital.

The region is currently linked to the capital by air from Höfn and by bus to the capital and to Egilsstaðir. Summer bus services also run between Höfn and Lónsöræfi, Höfn and Skálafellsjökull.

Road 1 links the region with the neighbouring South of Iceland and East Fjords. Four wheel drive tracks allow access to Skálafellsjökull, Lónsöræfi and Núpstaðaskógur (the last two involve potentially hazardous river crossings). Short sections of dirt track, passable to most vehicles with care, allow access to Hoffellsjökull, Fláajökull, Svínafellsjökull and Fjallsárlón.

### **Issues facing tourism in the region**

- **Distance from international gateway**

Historically the region has always faced isolation from the rest of the country. Today the roads are good but Höfn lies a day’s drive from the capital. The high cost of internal flights and one-way car rentals makes it less attractive to sell on short packages.

Jökulsárlón has recently started to feature on tour companies’ day trips from Reykjavík.

- **Not enough ‘out of season’ business**

Currently visitor numbers are split 87% (summer) to 13% (winter). The region has not benefited from the overall increase in visitor numbers that Iceland as a whole has seen. To get more out of season business there has to be a reason for people to visit at that time of year, rather than in high summer. Aside from the aurora borealis, migrant bird arrivals, hunting season, Christmas & New Year, there aren’t frankly a lot of reasons why people should visit out of season unless the prices are so attractive that they can’t refuse or unless their work or life style prevents them from traveling in high summer. But, it’s interesting to note that 20 years ago tourism was uniquely June, July & August. Many businesses are finding that traffic in May and September is lengthening the season to almost half the year.

- **Progressive decrease in length of stay in Iceland**

Improving road conditions in Iceland encourage more visitors to visit, and more to opt for self-drive tours. Traditionally, one of the best-selling coach tours has been the standard circular tour of the island. On the face of it though the circular tour looks a good idea, in practice it is often an inferior product. Competition for business is such that tour operators are squeezing this product into an ever tighter schedule – from a 10-day to two-week tour 20 years ago to a 5-6 day tour today. New regulations for bus drivers will aggravate the problem.

- **Communications**

The road structure within the region means that most visitors pass through on a linear route. The region does not easily lend itself to being a centre from which day trips can be taken to explore, without considerable backtracking. The main sightseeing drives within the region (Núpstaðaskógur, Skálafellsjökull and Lónsöræfi) are for four wheel drive vehicles. Those without four wheel drive may be reluctant to waste a day's car hire and pay additional money to use these services. Those traveling by public transport may have chosen to do so because car hire is expensive and may not feel they can afford the extra cost of the sightseeing drives.

- **Visitors don't stay long in the region**

South-east Iceland is visited as part of the circular tour around the island and people seldom stop longer than one or two nights at most. Most of the tour groups on a 5 or 6 night circular tour of the island stop only one night. Tour group itineraries don't allow time for extra stops for optional activities unless these are done in the evening. Typical stops in the south and south east would be Skógar Museum, Skaftafell and Jökulsárlón.

- **The weather**

Some tourist literature emphasizes that the south of Iceland is wetter than the north. Summer weather patterns in recent years would suggest this is not always the case.

- **Concentration of visitors at 'big name' sites**

Most tour group and fly drive itineraries only include stops at Skaftafell and Jökulsárlón, suggesting that these are the only worthwhile places to visit. This creates bottlenecks and pressure on vulnerable and sensitive sites. Tour groups are often obliged to stop here because this is where toilets and meals are available. Now that Skaftafell National Park has been extended to include two-thirds of Vatnajökull, it is hoped that interest and infrastructure will develop at other sites along the accessible southern fringe of the ice cap.

- **Lack of accommodation at key sites**

Many accommodation establishments in Iceland are built around existing infrastructures, e.g. farms, country schools and towns and villages. But there isn't necessarily anything to see or do there in the evenings. Pressures on tour group schedules mean that tours race through the day trying to fit in an impossible number of stops with the guide constantly pushing people and watching the clock so as to arrive by 5 or 6 in the evening.

Elsewhere in the world most tourist accommodation is built on the site of places of interest. Because of the lack of accommodation at for example Skaftafell and Jökulsárlón, stops at these places must be made during the day, which then allows less time to see other places of interest.

- **Turn back at the iceberg lagoon**

Many tour itineraries don't go further east than the iceberg lagoon, unless they are doing the full circle. This applies equally to fly drive and coach tour itineraries. To capture this traffic, there needs to be something at or near Höfn that is so unique, so amazing that people just have to go there because it isn't anywhere else in Iceland – for example the **Glacier Spa, Ice Park or Igloo Hotel**

## **The Plus Points**

- **A region of superlatives**

Europe's largest glacier, Iceland's highest mountain, longest beaches, largest icebergs, biggest recent eruptions

- **The region and many places of interest are accessible year round**

The road from Reykjavík to Höfn is open year round and it is rare to be closed by snow. Many places of interest lie beside or very close to road 1.

- **Combines well with the south-west and south of Iceland**

By combining with the south and south-west of Iceland, visitors will also get the waterfalls, volcanic landscapes and geothermal areas.

- **Fits into the circle tour of Iceland**

Almost all circle tours of Iceland spend one night in the region

- **A spa for the future?**

If plans go ahead to develop the hot water boreholes by Hoffellsjökull to build a spa, this would perfectly complement the existing attractions of the region and would doubtless add hugely to the appeal of the region as a whole. It would also provide a focal point for winter trips, in particular those offering aurora viewing.

## **Höfn**

A fishing town and centre for the South-East of Iceland, Höfn is the only significant centre of population between Djúpvogur to the north and Kirkjubæjarklaustur to the west. Situated at the end of a marshy peninsula, topped by rocky outcrops, the town grew in response to the need for a harbour capable of taking large motorized vessels, around 100 years ago. It has the region's airport, with scheduled flights from the capital, a good 3 star hotel, two guesthouses, youth hostel and camping site with cabins as well as tent and camper van sites. There is a swimming pool, a local history museum, glacier museum and quad bike and boat rental operator. In summer excursions run from the town to Skálafellsjökull and Vatnajökull ice cap, to Jökulsárlón and to Lónsöræfi.

There are easy walks around the coast in the surrounds of the town, where a range of sea and wetland birds can be observed.

## **Places to visit around Höfn**

While there's no shortage of beautiful scenery around Höfn, places of interest are not necessarily easily accessible or well-advertised. To get people to stay longer in the region there need to be a number of 'must see' places or 'must do' activities, along the lines of Skaftafell, Skálafellsjökull and Jökulsárlón. Lónsöræfi, because of the relatively demanding hike involved in getting there, does not fall into this bracket.

- **Stokksnes**

Seals, eider ducks, black guillemots, arctic terns can be observed at this site, a 20 minute drive from the town. A scenic hiking trail leads around the coast from here to the next bay to the north. This site is not well-advertised and though tour groups often head there, I'm not aware of any signs. There is a great interest in seals – especially among visitors from southern Europe. I'm not sure if there are landowner issues here but why not set up an observation hide, with binoculars and information about seals and the bird life?

With a little more publicity the following places could perhaps be pushed more (subject to the landowners' agreement, where applicable).

- **Hoffellsjökull**

The closest glacier tongue to the town is accessed along a dirt track, which is not always passable for normal cars. Those who don't want to drive can leave their vehicle and walk the last couple of km. A lagoon is forming as the glacier snout recedes. From here a rough jeep track continues up the slope of the mountain and is suggested as a hiking route. Experimental boreholes suggest that there may be sufficient hot water in the area to exploit. The landowner is looking at the feasibility of a 'spa'. It would be good to upgrade the road so that access is easier and to have a clearly marked path to a viewpoint over the glacier from the end of the road. An interpretive board explaining features of the glacier would also be of interest to visitors.

- **Fláajökull**

This tongue of glacier is accessible via a 6km long dirt road off route 1, just west of Brunnhóll. Walking trails and interpretive panels (and in due course a cold shelter and toilet) are in place to encourage people to visit. This project been initiated by the local area to encourage visitors to stay longer. The information panels focus on attempts in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to divert the river flow away from farming land. This area is sited on the moraines overlooking the glacier tongue, where is no actual access to the glacier itself as a river flows between, but there are good views. A dirt track continues from there east to the other end of the glacier tongue, where it is possible to approach closer.

- **Other things to do in the area**

- **Bird Watching**

There are tidal wetlands around the town of Höfn and there is some good bird watching in the area. Birds are also abundant on the floodplain of Hornafjarðarfljót on the ponds to either side of the road, and at Stokksnes. There is already a leaflet, which indicates good spots to see birds – perhaps more could be made of this by putting up observation hides at key areas.

- **Hiking**

A series of 3 hiking maps of the region have been published. The maps are detailed and the route descriptions are well-written in English. It could be useful to grade the trails according to difficulty and indicate suitable places where people can leave their vehicle.

- **Excursions and activities on offer**

- Excursions by coach and jeep are offered to Skálafellsjökull and Vatnajökull ice cap, to Jökulsárlón and to Lónsöræfi.
- With its three museums, swimming pool and local walks there is enough to detain visitors for a day in Höfn. The Glacier Museum is the star attraction but the local history museum will also draw visitors, especially as there is no charge to get in. A new operator is starting quad bike and boat trips in 2007, which will go part way to addressing the lack of organized activities on offer in the town.

**Stay longer in Höfn and surrounds – getting the message across**

**Accommodation, attraction and excursion providers need to get the message across on their web sites that this is an area to base yourself for several nights, and not just a one-night stop. The town's own tourism web site also needs 'livening up'. Here are a few suggestions for the English version:**

'We're proud of our lively town, the regional centre for the South East of Iceland. Our history goes back over a century and visitors will find a warm welcome at any time of year and plenty to see and do, whatever the weather'.

- Visit Iceland's famous Glacier Exhibition – a fascinating multi-media experience, complete with walk-through ice cave and crevasse, exploring the world of Vatnajökull, Iceland's largest ice cap.
- Go back in time at the local history museum and discover how people lived when this corner of Iceland was isolated from the rest of the island by swollen glacial rivers.
- The name of our town means 'harbour'. Wander around the port, today known for its important lobster fishery and if you're lucky see the boats lined up along the quayside unloading their catch. Visit the historic Pakkhúsið, a maritime museum and cosy café overlooking the harbour.
- Take a stroll along the shore or around Ósland nature reserve and watch the lively Arctic terns and other sea birds, nesting in the area.
- Enjoy the thrills of a cruise by zodiac boat or a quad bike ride on our 100 km long black sand beach.
- Relax and meet some of the locals in our hot tubs and outdoor swimming pool
- Or just soak up the amazing mountain and glacier views that make Höfn one of the most photographed locations in Iceland.

'Höfn is an ideal base for exploring the Vatnajökull icecap and Iceland's largest National Park. Thrilling landscapes and experiences are on the doorstep and with a choice of self-drive or organized excursions you can be as flexible as you like.'

- The glaciers – one after another, Vatnajökull's great glacier tongues appear along the road from Höfn to Skaftafell, on what is arguably Iceland's most scenic drive. With care you can approach these 'rivers of ice' by car and on foot.
- Vatnajökull tours – by jeep or specially equipped bus, a spectacular mountain drive brings you to the edge of the ice cap, where at almost 1000m above sea level, you can set off by snowmobile to explore its natural wonders.
- Jökulsárlón, the iceberg lagoon – undisputedly one of Iceland's top five natural attractions. Take a cruise among the icebergs or stroll along the shore.
- Lónsöræfi – by specially equipped bus, set off on an adventurous ride into the wilderness east of the icecap. Hike among deep gorges and colourful rhyolite mountains.
- Ingólfshöfði – at the foot of Iceland's highest peak, a tractor cart ride brings you to soaring coastal cliffs, where thousands of sea birds nest, among them puffins.
- Skaftafell – The National Park Visitor Centre, wonderful glacier views and a choice of walking trails make this a popular destination.
- Þórbergissetur – A cultural centre, which delves into the world of one of Iceland's best-loved writers, whose unique relationship with nature is vividly portrayed in an engaging exhibition.

## **The Glacier Trail**

Points of interest in the region are already marked by the logo of the Glacier Exhibition to indicate that there is a feature of interest. This is a good idea that could be developed further to enhance the appeal of the region and get people to stop and look at things and spend longer there. It consists of a self-drive route (Glacier Trail) in which features of the landscape are marked and explained by interpretive boards. The theme would be glaciers, their effect on the landscape past and present and their effect on man and his activities. The idea would be to get people off the ring road, exploring side roads and thereby spending longer in the region. A brochure would need to be published in several languages, with a map to mark the different stages along with all the other visitor services along the way.

## **New products and ideas for the South East Region as a whole**

### **Ice, Ice and more Ice**

It doesn't take too many grey cells to work out that the South East region is sitting on one of the island's greatest natural assets to tourism – ice. Given Iceland's name, there can't be many visitors that come without the expectation of seeing a glacier. To see Europe's largest icecap – (some will argue that the largest is in fact on Nordaustlandet on Spitsbergen, but not by much and the ice is probably thicker on Vatnajökull) – and perhaps even touch it, makes it even more impressive.

I feel there is further scope for developing the ice concept bearing in mind the following:

- people want to touch the ice, which they can do at Jökulsárlón
- people want to stand on the ice – to do this they have to either take silly risks or pay quite a lot of money for a trip to Skálafellsjökull or a guided glacier walk
- people want to even sleep in the ice.

The iceberg lagoon is a totally renewable source. I don't know about the land ownership rights and any rules about exploiting the ice but some ideas occur to me.

- **Ice and a theme for the town**

I know that the town has already adopted the lobster as its logo and emblem, which I think is perfect for the Icelandic market. For foreigners, well lobsters are pretty special but they are not the first thing you think of when Iceland springs to mind. Ice is a more appropriate theme. There could be a nice big iceberg outside the Glacier Exhibition. People have to guess how many days it will take for it to melt. It's a competition but in order to enter you have to visit the museum pay the entrance fee.

You can use blocks of ice as a decoration inside the hotel or to serve a starter or dessert on in the restaurant – just a bit of fun, but always reinforcing the theme of ice.

- **Ice Gallery and igloos in Höfn**

Has anyone been to the Icehotel in Kiruna, Sweden? This for many people is the ultimate 'Ice Experience'. Everything in the hotel is made of ice, even the beds and furniture. Even the glasses in the bar... The place is full of wonderful ice sculptures and it gets thousands of visitors every week. There are many 'ice hotels' in Finland, Norway and Canada. In Svolvær, Lofoten in Norway, there's an ice gallery with sculptures in an old fish processing plant. What about an ice art gallery for Höfn? Are there any former freezing plants or factories that could be used? You can even take it a step further and think about creating some indoor ice rooms or igloos that people can sleep in, like at the Icehotel in Sweden.

- **Ice sculpting classes**

These could be offered as part of a long weekend break that would also include a visit to the iceberg lagoon.

- **Ice Park**

Find a nice big empty space of black sand, near road 1. Bring some icebergs from the lagoon, big ones and small ones. Charge people money to visit the park, touch the icebergs, get photographed by them, climb on them .... Whatever. It's totally sustainable tourism, no impact on the environment except for the fuel to transport them. How to get them out of the lagoon and transported to the site is another question.

### **A range of themed souvenirs**

Icehotel in Kiruna has some fantastic ice themed souvenirs in its shop. Get a team of designers to come up with some ranges of clothing items, hats, scarves, gloves, tea towels, paper napkins, candle holders, hair accessories, Christmas decorations etc. Invent a branding for the range, e.g. Jökull or whatever .....

### **All you need is South**

Getting the message across that the south of Iceland is a stand-alone destination is important. After all tour operators have been selling the south-west as a base, the west and north, the north on its own, so why not the south. It lends itself perfectly to a 7-10 day trip taking in some or all of the following:

- Gullfoss/Geysir/Thingvellir
- Eyrarbakki/Stokkseyri
- Fjallabak / Landmannalaugar
- Skaftafell / Jökulsárlón
- Höfn
- Kirkjubæjarklaustur / Laki
- Mýrdalsjökull / Skógar / Dýrhólaey
- Vestmannaeyjar

### **Open all year**

Increasingly people are willing to come and visit Iceland at times of year that 20 years ago people would have laughed at them. The south and south east are the perfect choice for out of season travel. The roads are mostly flat and at sea level so there is less likely to be

snow. The sun is shining from the south so if there is a clear day, the sun will be on the landscape. There is more light in the south.

### **Northern Lights**

This is a really hard thing to package as it is so weather dependent but increasing interest in this phenomenon, especially among the Japanese, is worth noting. The next few years, I understand, will be especially good for Northern Lights, according to forecasts. To offer the northern lights credibly requires a proper place to see them as well as a clear night.

In Lapland, special heated glass dome igloos are on offer and people can rent one of these to sleep in. They have beds and a toilet. Maybe this is something Iceland could look at offering – perhaps not necessarily for sleeping, but at least for viewing the northern lights. It could be fitted out with comfortable chairs and be sited away from sources of light. No one in Iceland is offering this sort of experience yet as far as I know.

Any accommodation establishment hosting northern lights groups should prepare some interpretive information boards or sheets about the northern lights to have on display and also to prepare an illustrated talk on the phenomenon. An information sheet on how to photograph the aurora, together with use of a tripod, would also be useful. It's really important to keep a record and photograph any sightings you get as this can be used on a web site to encourage people to come.

### **Icelandic Fish Cuisine**

Höfn's accommodation establishments could consider offering Icelandic cookery courses or cookery events out of season particularly fish cuisine. These could be short breaks out of season.

### **The Wildlife**

The bird watching in this region is varied and interesting. It is superb in May, when there are both passage migrants and birds arriving to breed. They gather on the shore, by river estuaries, in the fields and on the cliffs and can be seen in huge numbers. Höfn has a very active local bird group [www.fuglar.is](http://www.fuglar.is) and there are many good birding spots in the area, which combined with Skaftafell, Jökulsárlón, Ingolfshöfði and a number of places in the south would offer a credible bird watching itinerary.

Seals can often be observed at Jökulsárlón, Stokksnes and on the beach at Höfn. Visitors from southern European countries get very enthusiastic about seeing seals.

### **Weekend Breaks**

Because of the high cost of domestic flights it's harder to tempt foreign visitors to take a short weekend break which involves lots of flights. Flying from abroad is becoming increasingly stressful with extra airport security and regulations. As a result, the short break is losing some of its appeal, especially if it also involves domestic flights on top of international flights.

Höfn is probably not really feasible as a weekend destination overland from Reykjavik but as Icelanders obtain more disposable income and leisure time, the market for weekends away

using domestic flights may open up. This has traditionally been fulfilled by the ‘summerhouse’ concept. There is the potential for out of season ‘themed’ weekends based around specific activities or relaxation therapies. It is also worth targeting businesses, clubs and associations with special winter break offers.

If there were the possibility to charter flights from Europe, it could be an idea to offer day trips to the glacier and iceberg lagoon. But it is risky with the weather – what if the plane couldn’t land?

I feel that short breaks will be hard to sell as long as the domestic flight prices continue to be so high.

## Tour Ideas

This is a selection of tour ideas which include the South and South East regions as part of the holiday. They are mostly intended as Fly Drive itineraries but some would also work as escorted tours.

### Ice Sculpting winter break

**Ice is a most versatile of materials, both fun and rewarding to work with. This weekend break in the far north gives the chance for a small group of participants to master the techniques of ice sculpting, under the tuition of a local artist. You don’t need any special skills or experience and all the materials are provided – just bring along plenty of imagination and creativity.**

**Part of each day is assigned to working on your sculpture but there’ll also be time to explore the beautiful mountain, glacier and coastal landscapes of the south east of Iceland. At the foot of Europe’s largest icecap Vatnajökull, you’ll discover the truly amazing iceberg lagoon, Jökulsárlón. Calved from the surrounding glacier, nature has done an impressive job of creating its own sculpture gallery. Both sun and water erode the huge blocks of ice, breaking them into smaller icebergs, which take on weird and wonderful shapes.**

Outline Itinerary:

Day 1: fly to Keflavík and transfer to Reykjavík. Rest of the day and overnight in the capital.

Day 2: fly to Höfn in the east. Transfer to the hotel. Guided tour of the Glacier Exhibition and fishing town, which looks out over a bay to five glacier tongues. Introduction to ice sculpting and tuition from local artist.

Day 3: excursion to the glaciers and stunning ice-studded lagoon of Jökulsárlón to see the icebergs from which the ice you are working with is harvested. Continue working on your ice sculpture.

Day 4: excursion to the snout of a glacier and a stroll along its moraines. Put the final touches to your sculpture and prepare for the exhibition of the group's work.

Day 5: return flight to Reykjavík and a bathe in the Blue Lagoon before the onward flight home.

## Focus on South Iceland – a tour for Photographers

Accessible all year round, Iceland's south coast is a photographer's dream. Its landscapes are striking and dramatic, some would say harsh and unforgiving. The light ranges from intense to mellow and moody, and there is often an astonishing clarity of air. Whether it's geysers or waterfalls, glaciers, icebergs or brooding volcanoes, this is a place that has more than its fair share of scenery. Perhaps you'll also find inspiration in the moss-clad lava flows, surf-pounded black sand beaches and strangely-eroded rock formations.

This itinerary has been designed by a photographer, who knows what you need to be shutter-happy. It's just as important to be at the right place at the right time so the overnight accommodation has been picked with this in mind, weather of course permitting.

**Day 1:** pick up your rental car. Visit the volcanic landscapes of Þingvellir National park, the waterfall Gullfoss and Geysir geothermal area, with its geysers and hot springs. Overnight at Hotel Gullfoss.

**Day 2:** drive to Eyrarbakki, a coastal village of traditional timber houses. Catch the afternoon sun on Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss falls. Two nights at Hotel Anna.

**Day 3:** fly to the offshore Westman Islands by air taxi and spend the day exploring the craters and lava from the 1973 eruptions that partly destroyed the fishing town. Many seabirds, especially puffins, breed on the island cliffs.

**Day 4:** Start the day with the bird cliffs and natural rock arches at Dyrhólaey and basalt columns, sea stacks and black sand beach of Reynisfjara. Then cross the mossy lava of Eldhraun to Kirkjubæjarklaustur, where striking cliffs, basalt columns, waterfalls and many thousands of hillocks form an unusual showcase of landscapes. Overnight at Hotel Laki or Hotel Geirland.

**Day 5:** Núpsstaður's tiny turf chapel is very photogenic with its backdrop of rocky cliffs. It marks the start of a vast sandy plain cut through by many swift glacial rivers, formed of melt water from Vatnajökull. With their many braided channels they are an interesting subject for photography. Spend the day exploring the glacier snouts and moraines around Iceland's highest peak, 2110m Öräfajökull and Skaftafell National Park. 2 nights at Hali guesthouse, close to the Jökulsárlón iceberg lagoon.

**Day 6:** you'll probably appreciate having a whole day to photograph the iceberg lagoon in its many moods. The nearby Fjallsárlón lagoon and its glacier front are also likely to impress. Birds, seals and an immense volcanic sand beach are further attractions of the area.

**Day 7:** continue past the last of the glaciers to the town of Höfn, set among dramatic colourful mountains. North of here are beautiful fjord landscapes, if you feel like exploring further. Overnight in the town.

**Day 8:** drop off your car at the airport and fly to Reykjavík.

## Cooking with Fish

**This is an enjoyable short break offering a course in seafood cookery amidst some of the most spectacular scenery in Iceland.**

**Icelanders have been enjoying the luxury of fresh fish since their ancestors first settled the island over 1100 years ago. Understandably they keep the best of it for themselves and Reykjavík is teeming with first class fish restaurants. After a night in the capital, you'll be whisked off to the fishing town of Höfn – the name means harbour - where the catch comes in. You'll stay for three nights at the very comfortable Hotel Höfn, which looks across the bay to the glaciers. During the day you'll visit some of the amazing natural sights for which this part of Iceland is famous – the magical iceberg lagoon, the glaciers of Europe's largest ice cap, Vatnajökull and sweeping volcanic sand beaches. Then, under the guidance of an expert chef, it's time to get to work in the kitchen, discovering the secrets of successful seafood cookery, and trying out a number of recipes. Of course it all depends what the day's catch brings in but the town is best known for its lobsters. Each day includes four hour's of tuition with the chef. After dinner, it's time to go and look for the Aurora Borealis – no guarantees of course, but a clear sky makes it easier to see this amazing natural light show.**

Outline Itinerary:

Day 1: fly to Keflavík and transfer to hotel in Reykjavík. Rest of the day free to explore the capital.

Day 2: early morning flight east to Höfn. Check into the hotel. Sightseeing tour of the fishing harbour, the town and its surrounds. Four hour course on 'Introduction to Seafood Cookery'.

Day 3: morning excursion to the iceberg lagoon and glaciers. Four hour course on 'Fantasy with Fish'. After dinner, weather permitting, take an evening drive out of town to search for the Northern Lights.

Day 4: choice of quad bike excursion along the beach or an exhilarating zodiac cruise. Visit the Glacier Exhibition and relax at the swimming pool, which has hot tubs and a sauna. Four hour course on 'How to prepare a Seafood Feast'.

Day 5: return flight to Reykjavík. Relax at the Blue Lagoon spa before your flight home.

## Bird Watching

**This is a tour aimed at bird watchers and anyone interested in nature. You'll have the chance to visit key bird watching locations and look for seals along the coast. Of course no one would want to miss out on all the amazing scenery, so there is plenty of time built in to see the wealth of volcanic sights, waterfalls, geothermal areas and places of historic interest. With your own rental car, you can be as flexible as you like but knowing that a comfortable room awaits at the end of each day.**

Outline Itinerary:

**Day 1:** fly to Keflavik, collect rental car and drive to Selfoss for a 2 night stay.

**Day 2:** visit the Geysir geothermal area, Gullfoss Falls and Þingvellir National Park. Lake Þingvellir hosts many waterfowl, among them great northern divers and red-breasted mergansers.

**Day 3:** spring sees the arrival of large flocks of migrant birds, especially waders, on the south coast. Visit key birding sites along the shore and on the lagoons around Stokkseyri. Optional kayaking on the lagoons – a chance to enjoy the birds from another perspective. Eyrarbakki is a beautiful village with many fine old houses and there are several interesting museums in the area. Then head east to two stunning waterfalls Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss. Two nights at Hotel Anna.

**Day 4:** fly to the offshore Westman Islands by air taxi and spend the day exploring the craters and lava from the 1973 eruptions that partly destroyed the fishing town. Many seabirds, especially puffins and guillemots, breed on the island cliffs.

**Day 5:** Start the day with the bird cliffs and natural rock arches at Dyrhólaey (no access during the breeding season) and basalt columns, sea stacks and black sand beach of Reynisfjara. Then cross the mossy lava of Eldhraun to Kirkjubæjarklaustur, where striking cliffs, basalt columns, waterfalls and many thousands of hillocks form an unusual showcase of landscapes. Overnight at Hotel Laki or Hotel Geirland.

**Day 6:** Núpsstaður's tiny turf chapel is very photogenic with its backdrop of rocky cliffs. It marks the start of a vast sandy plain cut through by many swift glacial rivers, formed of melt water from Vatnajökull. Spend the day exploring the glacier snouts and moraines around Iceland's highest peak, 2110m Öräfajökull and Skaftafell National Park, where wrens and redwings are abundant in the birch woodland. 2 nights at Hali guesthouse, close to the Jökulsárlón iceberg lagoon.

**Day 7:** Enjoy time at the iceberg lagoon, in its many moods. Great and arctic skuas, red-throated divers and a colony of breeding arctic terns are readily seen in the area, along with seals. The nearby Fjallsárlón lagoon and its glacier front are also likely to impress. Ingólfshöfði nature reserve and bird sanctuary can be visited on an optional tour by tractor cart.

**Day 8:** Continue past the last of the glaciers and many roadside ponds, where you may spot red-necked phalaropes and ducks, and if you are lucky reindeer. Whooper swans and geese gather on farmland in early spring and you may come across large flocks en route to the fishing town of Höfn, set among dramatic colourful mountains. Bird life is abundant on the mud flats surrounding the town, while at nearby Stokksnes, seals, eider ducks and black guillemots are found. A visit to the Glacier Exhibition is highly recommended. Two nights stay in the town.

**Day 9:** north of Höfn are steep-sided mountains, hosting colonies of fulmars, beautiful fjord landscapes and a dramatic coastline, with chances to spot a variety of bird life.

**Day 10:** drop off your car at the airport and fly to Reykjavík. Stop at the Blue Lagoon en route to Keflavík airport for your onward flight.

## Iceland Active

**This is a self-drive itinerary that offers the option to indulge in a range of adventurous activities, while experiencing the outstanding scenery that Iceland is famous for: geothermal areas with hot springs and geysers, eerie volcanic scenes with craters and lava flows, deeply crevassed glaciers and icebergs and powerful coastal landscapes. For full flexibility, the activities are all optional and you book them locally as you go along.**

Outline Itinerary:

**Day 1:** fly to Keflavík and collect your rental car. Take a bathe in the Blue Lagoon en route to Reykjavík. Overnight in the city.

**Day 2:** optional whale watch tour or sightseeing in the city. Drive to Eyrarbakki, an attractive village of traditional timber houses. Optional kayaking along the coast or on the inland lagoons at Stokkseyri. Visit the Ghost Centre or Icelandic Wonders, two innovative new museums in the village, focusing on folklore and superstition. Two nights in the Selfoss/Gullfoss/Geysir area.

**Day 3:** spend the day exploring some of Iceland's best known sights: the waterfall Gullfoss, the Geysir geothermal area with its spouting geyser and hot springs and Þingvellir National Park, with option to go scuba diving in the gin-clear waters of Iceland's largest natural lake.

**Day 4:** take the air taxi to the offshore Westman Islands and spend the day exploring the site of the 1973 eruptions, which destroyed part of the fishing town. Thousands of puffins and other seabirds nest on the island's cliffs. Back on the mainland stop at Seljalandsfoss waterfall – you can walk behind the falls and make a wish. Overnight at Hotel Anna.

**Day 5:** See the impressive 60m high Skógafoss Falls before heading for the edge of Mýrdalsjökull icecap. Optional exhilarating snowmobile ride over the ice. In clear weather, the views are far-reaching. Continue past Dyrhólaey bird sanctuary with its distinctive rock arch and the vast Eldhraun lava flow to Kirkjubæjarklaustur. Overnight at Hotel Laki or Hotel Geirland.

**Day 6:** Take a walk in Skaftafell National Park among many spectacular glaciers. Continue to the Jökulsárlón iceberg lagoon for an optional boat trip among the icebergs. Stroll along the shore of the lagoon, where seals are often spotted. Continue to Brunnhóll guesthouse for your overnight stay.

**Day 7:** take a last look at the glaciers before driving to the fishing town of Höfn. Visit the glacier exhibition and take an optional quad bike trip on a sweeping volcanic sand beach. Two nights in the town.

**Day 8:** drive north through the eastern fjords along a dramatic coastline. Take an optional adventurous guided trip and hike into the Lónsöræfi wilderness, where colourful rhyolite mountains are cut through by glacier torrents creating splendid rugged gorges.

**Day 9:** drop off your rental car at the airport and fly to Reykjavík. Continue on your onward journey home.

## Focus on Culture

**From the settlement period to the saga age Iceland's early history and literature were meticulously documented in manuscripts, forming the core of the island's cultural heritage. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emerging from centuries of deprivation and natural disasters, the nation fought for its independence. The last one hundred years have seen a remarkable surge forward in the cultural development of this highly individual country.**

**On this trip you'll delve into Iceland's rich history, literature, culture and folklore, as you travel around the island enjoying its beautiful and varied landscapes. There is a huge amount to see and do but you'll have the flexibility to pick and choose, making your trip as active or as relaxed as you like. With your own vehicle you have the freedom to explore, but a comfortable bed at the end of each day.**

Outline Itinerary:

**Day 1:** fly to Keflavík and collect rental car. Drive north to Borgarnes and visit the Settlement Museum, which recounts the story of the island's first inhabitants. Continue to the lovely Hraunfossar falls and historic Reykholt, home to 13<sup>th</sup> century writer and historian Snorri Sturluson. Overnight at Hotel Reykholt, which is themed on Norse mythology.

**Day 2:** head north to Skagafjörður, a fertile valley that was home to chieftains during the saga age. Visit the turf church at Víðimýri and 19<sup>th</sup> century traditional turf parsonage of Glaumbær, now a fascinating local history museum. Continue through dramatic glaciated mountains to the town of Akureyri. Visit the modern church, known for its stained glass windows. Overnight in the town.

**Day 3:** travel to the waterfall Goðafoss en route to Lake Mývatn. Spend the day exploring the wealth of weird and wonderful volcanic features, for which the lake and its surrounds are famous: Dimmuborgir, with its spooky lava pillars; Skútustaðir's cluster of moon-like pseudo-craters; Námaskarð and its bubbling mud pools, hot springs and steam vents and the Krafla area, site of numerous eruptions in the 1970s and 1980s, where steam still rises from rifts and fissures in the lava. End the day with a relaxing soak in the Nature Baths. Two nights in the area.

**Day 4:** Head for the Jökulsá Canyon National Park and take a stroll among the eroded volcanic plugs of Hljóðaklettur, whose jumble of basalt columns are like works of art. See the gaping gorge of Ásbyrgi and Dettifoss, Iceland's most powerful waterfall.

**Day 5:** Cross the uninhabited central highlands to Egilsstaðir, and continue through the east fjords to Djúpvogur, a fishing village in a dramatic setting. Optional visit to the maritime museum, housed in an historic warehouse.

**Day 6:** Optional boat trip to the offshore island of Papey, where Irish monks are believed to have lived before the arrival of the Norsemen in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Many seabirds, among them puffins, can be seen on the island during the breeding season. Drive south through the fjords to Höfn for a chance to visit the Glacier Exhibition and local history museum, which portrays the trials of life in the region, when it was virtually cut off from the rest of Iceland. Overnight at Arnanes, a delightful guesthouse and gallery of a local artist.

**Day 7:** make your way along the base of Iceland's largest icecap Vatnajökull to Hali, where the Cultural Heritage Centre Þórbergssetur gives a sympathetic portrayal of one of the island's best loved writers, who grew up here. Continue to Jökulsárlón for an optional boat trip on the iceberg lagoon in a spectacular setting between the ocean and the glaciers. Seals are often spotted here. A choice of short walks brings you up close to the glaciers of Skaftafell National Park. Continue to Kirkjubæjarklaustur for your overnight stay.

**Day 8:** Drive to Vík, where a cluster of sea stacks look like trolls guarding the village. At nearby Reynisfjara, you can stroll on a beautiful black sand beach backed by basalt columns. At Skógar you'll find the splendid Skógafoss Falls and one of the most comprehensive collections of local memorabilia in the folk museum. Continue to Hotel Anna, which has connections with a popular writer of the 1950s.

**Day 9:** Start the day with a visit to Seljalandsfoss, a beautiful waterfall you can walk behind. The Njál's Saga Museum in Hvolsvöllur is dedicated to one of Iceland's most famous family sagas, that took place in the area. Visit some of the saga sites or explore the Þjórsá Valley and Stöng, where excavations have revealed a 12<sup>th</sup> century farm, hidden for centuries under volcanic ash. Nearby is a fascinating reconstruction of the farm, now a museum. Two nights at Dalbær Guesthouse, whose proprietor works as a glass artist.

**Day 10:** today takes in several of Iceland's best known sights: the waterfall Gullfoss, the Geysir geothermal area with its spouting geysers, the former bishopric of Skálholt and Þingvellir National Park, site of the Althing assembly.

**Day 11:** head for the south coast village of Eyrarbakki, where many fine old timber houses have been restored. Nearby at Stokkseyri are two of Iceland's most original museums: the Ghost Centre, and Icelandic Wonders, which explores the world of trolls and elves and the phenomenon of the Northern Lights. A short drive brings you to Reykjavík, where a visit the National Museum is recommended. Overnight in the capital.

**Day 12:** drop off your vehicle at the airport and depart.

## Aurora Express

(A guided small group tour for October or late February)

**An eminent 19<sup>th</sup> century Icelandic entrepreneur once offered the northern lights for sale and apparently got quite a response from a potential British buyer! Today, Icelanders are a little more honest about this amazing phenomenon, which of course can't be guaranteed, though a clear night is essential. But when it does happen, the sky lights up in a blaze of shimmering streaks and rippling curtains that will leave you dazzled.**

**On this journey, you'll travel in a small group through the spectacular south of Iceland, where we've specially selected comfortable country hotels away from artificial light, so as to maximize your chances of seeing the aurora. Each day is packed with beautiful scenery and your driver/guide will ensure that you get to see and do as much as possible, whilst during the evenings we'll be on watch for the northern lights. The exact programme has to be flexible as it depends on weather and road conditions, but this is all part of the fun of out of season travel in Iceland.**

### Outline Itinerary:

Day 1: fly to Iceland. Visit the Blue Lagoon for a bathe in its natural geothermal water. Continue to Eyrarbakki for a guided visit around the Icelandic Wonders Museum, with its aurora borealis display. (Overnight at Hotel Rangá or Efsti Dalur)

Day 2: visit some of Iceland's best known sights: Þingvellir National Park, the waterfall Gullfoss and Geysir geothermal area. (Overnight at Hotel Rangá or Efsti Dalur)

Day 3: we start the day with Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss, two spectacular waterfalls, which may be partly frozen at this time of year. After a stroll on Reynisfjara beach, lined with basalt columns we continue to the troll-like sea stacks at Vík. We then cross the moss-covered Eldhraun lava to Kirkjubæjrklaustur. (Overnight at Hotel Laki or Hotel Geirland)

Day 4: after crossing the great sandy outwash plains we reach Skaftafell National Park, where we can approach one of the glaciers at the foot of Iceland's highest mountain. At

Jökulsárlón, we'll walk along the shore of the beautiful iceberg lagoon. (Overnight at Hali or Brunnholl)

Day 5: a last chance to view the glaciers before heading for the fishing town of Höfn, where there is time at leisure to take an optional quad bike or boat trip, or visit the Glacier Exhibition. (choice of accommodation)

Day 6: fly to Reykjavík. Free time in the capital and overnight here.

Day 7: return flight home.

## School Group programme

**This is a typical schools' programme that takes in the principal geographical features that make Iceland such an appealing destination for an educational visit. There are many other study topics that can be included, such as impacts of tourism, development of tourist facilities, economic interests.**

Day 1: fly from UK to Iceland. Transfer via the Blue Lagoon to the Selfoss/Gullfoss area, where you are based for 3 nights.

Day 2: spend the day exploring the tectonic rifts and volcanic features of Thingvellir, visit the crater Kerið and Nesjavellir geothermal power project.

Day 3: see the waterfall Gullfoss and the geothermal area at Geysir, with its spouting geysers and hot springs. Visit Geysisstofa geological exhibition.

Day 4: travel along the south coast, past the waterfalls Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss. Take a snowcat trip on the icecap Mýrdalsjökull and stroll on the cliffs and black sand beaches of Dyrhólaey and Reynisfjara. See basalt columns at Kirkjubæjarklaustur, where you stay overnight.

Day 5: cross the black sands flooded during the eruptions under the icecap and see the damage caused to the bridges. Approach the snout of a glacier in Skaftafell National Park. Continue to the iceberg lagoon, formed over the last 70 years as a glacier has retreated. Overnight at Hali or Brunnholl.

Day 6: a last look at the glaciers before heading a little north along the coast to view gabbro and granophyre intrusions. Arriving in Höfn, visit the Glacier Exhibition. Overnight in the town.

Day 7: return drive (or flight) to Reykjavík.

Day 8: return flight to the UK

## **SOME GENERAL POINTS FOR ALL ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS**

### **How to get people to stay longer AND come back again**

Know your local area and make sure your staff (especially if they are foreign) also know it. Have something for people to do in the immediate area to encourage them to stay longer and get out and about to explore their surroundings. Have information on the wall in reception about things to see and do, with photos or brochures. You can also put this information on the wall in the guest rooms or the corridors. You can also produce a folder to put in the rooms but not everyone bothers to open and read a folder. Talk to your guests and ask them what they like about their stay, or don't like. They are sometimes your best judge of what you are doing right or wrong.

### **Don't spoil the view**

Your view is your best asset.... Well maybe, but not if you let the buses park right in front of the view from the dining room or bedrooms. Don't put a sheep shed in the view either.

### **Hot tub?**

If you're putting up a hot tub, try and have it somewhere with a view, but sheltered from the wind too. Don't charge people money to use the hot tub – it should be included in the price of your guests' stay and it looks mean if they have to pay extra. Offer to serve them drinks in the hot tub – people love that and it gets them to buy those expensive beers.

### **Be a host**

Travellers sometimes say that they come for the scenery but go home with the people in their memory. Travellers are curious – encourage them to ask questions about your area and life and also find out what they like doing – you can better serve your guests that way and perhaps make them stay longer or come back.

### **Relax, relax, relax**

Does your accommodation have a lounge area for your guests to sit and relax over coffee or a drink, read a book about the local area or chat to their fellow travellers or host?

### **Do something different**

Offer free coffee, sing for your guests, tell them a folk tale – they'll love you!

### **Support your local area**

Display works or products by local artists, craftsmen and women and offer them for sale. Tell your guests about them – you can hand them a sheet of paper when they check in which gives the information.

### **Television**

If you have a TV in the dining room it may be fun for Icelanders to watch it but it's just a noise to your foreign guests – better to have a separate TV lounge.

### **Internet Access**

If you are going to provide it, don't charge for it. It looks mean.

### **The Breakfast Buffet.....**

As you travel around it does tend to be the case that one breakfast is much like another with the same muesli, cornflakes, surmjolk, cheese and ham slices and packet sliced bread coming up all over Iceland. Try and vary your breakfast buffet – slices of fresh fruit and home-baked bread are always welcome. Try making your own muesli and adding some different things to it – you could even make it from organic ingredients. Offer some different types of cheese. Try porridge (the British like it anyway!) or pancakes.

### **The Environment**

If you're doing special things about protecting the environment, let people know. But avoid that annoying sign telling people to save water by keeping their towels – no one falls for that in Iceland where there isn't exactly a water shortage!

### **Walking Trails**

Care should be taken to ensure that the walks are:

- a) scenic and interesting** – the original routes that linked the farms in the old days are not necessarily the most interesting or scenic routes at least from the foreign visitor's perspective.
- b) circular** – walks that go from A to B returning by the same route are often less rewarding than circular routes
- c) way marked** – cairns or posts are important especially where the trail may be indistinct
- d) marked accurately on a map** - the best walking maps give times and distances of walks, GPS points and also point out and give information on places of interest along the way. It is also important to grade the walks so that people know how difficult they can be and to give an idea of the gradient difference, i.e. ascent and descent.
- e) safe** - are there any hazards on the walk, like steep cliffs? Tell people to be careful. Also make sure your clients are properly equipped for the walks, with footwear, clothing etc and if it's a long walk that they have food and drink with them.

- Offer and advertise a transport service to and from the start or end of walks.
- Provide a map of the local area and the walking routes and places of interest to see marked on it. This should be displayed in the reception area. It helps visitors see immediately that there is plenty to do in the area, so encouraging them to stay longer! It also provides them with a more rewarding and memorable experience. The information should be at least in English and preferably in French and German as well.

### **For Bird Watchers**

- Put up a sign reminding visitors to take especial care not to disturb birds during the breeding season when they go out walking.
- Put up a hide with binoculars and a bird poster down by the shore, lake, river or wetland, so visitors can enjoy and identify the birds without disturbing them.

## **A theme to your guesthouse / hotel**

### **Be special, be noticed, be remembered**

- Inside the guesthouse or hotel find ways to link the décor with the natural surroundings or the history of the area. The key rings or candle holders could be made out of pieces of driftwood. If your area is one of Iceland's top birding destinations – why not use the theme of birds in the rooms – Each room could be themed on a particular bird, with pictures, information, folk tales or local superstition about the bird: For example: *ARCTIC TERN – in Icelandic this bird is called 'Kria' which refers to the screeching sound it makes, especially when predators are near. These birds only spend the summer in Iceland, where they come to breed, arriving each year between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> May. They make their nest on the bare ground in colonies. They are very defensive of their nest and chicks, once they have hatched. They are very good at making intruders feel unwelcome, swooping down from the sky and pecking at their scalp. If you're out walking near a tern colony, it's a good idea to take a stick. Carry this above your shoulder and the terns will peck at it instead of your head! Once the breeding season is over, they depart for an incredible journey to the South Atlantic and beyond, where they feed in the rich southern seas.*

Other themes could include: ice, horses, art, nature, the sea shore, aurora borealis, history, farming, seals, cows, sheep, boats, folklore

### **Use local food:**

- Serve local specialities and tell your guests about them. The French and Italians in particular are very interested in food. Try and obtain as much of your food from the local area as possible and tell your guests that you do this. You get extra marks for this!!
- Even if you only serve one dish of the day on your menu, make a nicely designed menu for it so that people can see what they are getting. If it's salted cod, then write a little about the tradition of saltfish in Iceland. Make it special!!

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BROCHURES & WEB SITES**

Your web site should be easy to use. Remember that the text and photographs that you use for your Icelandic market may not be appropriate for foreign visitors. Don't make the mistake of translating directly. Think instead of the kind of information and photographs that will appeal to foreigners.

Both brochure and web site need to be clear, easy to use and the right balance of information and photographs. It's essential to have at least your web site in other languages, especially English, French and German. Get the foreign languages checked by a native speaker – don't spend money on a web page or on printing a brochure that is going to make people laugh because the language is strange.

## Getting hits on your web site

To get hits on your web site from the search engines you need to imagine the kind of searches that people would make. For example:

*Accommodation South East Iceland*  
*Guesthouse Hofn*  
*Hotels Skaftafell National Park*  
*Glacier excursions*  
*Snowmobile trips*

The more of these 'keywords' or 'keyword phrases' you include, the greater your chances of getting hits.

Remember to include words like *glacier, icecap, iceberg, Vatnajokull, Jokulsarlon, Skaftafell, Hofn, activities, excursions, accommodation, travel, adventure, trip, museum, exhibition, culture, heritage, history*

Remember too that people can spell words differently, e.g. *guesthouse and guest house, icecap and ice cap*. Include both spellings in your website to maximize hits.

Remember that some things have more than one name – e.g. *quad bike, four wheeler, ATV Snowmobile, snowcat, snow cat, skidoo* – you need to have all those words on your website.

## Essential information to be included:

- 1) the services on offer**, e.g. the accommodation, camp site, restaurant, café, museum, activity. What sort of food is served? When are you open? How long is the activity? What are the facilities in the rooms?
- 2) the atmosphere of the place** – why come here? What's special or unique about it? What sort of people come here? What is the experience of being here?
- 3) what is there to see and do in the surrounds**, e.g. places to see – how far away are they? how do you get there? Excursions or other services on offer, e.g walking routes, bird watching, history.
- 4) How do you get there?** By car, by public bus? How far are you from the town? From road 1? Good to include a little map.
- 5) The hosts** – write a little about yourselves, about the history of the place you live (but only if it is of interest to foreigners) and include information about any famous people or events that took place there. Avoid telling the whole family history or the history of the buildings on your property – this may be of interest to Icelanders but it is inappropriate for foreigners. The important thing for foreign visitors to know is that you enjoy their company and like telling them about the local area.
- 6) the prices and details of any special offers**
- 7) any special conditions** i.e. if it is an activity do you need any experience to do it? Are there any age limits? Is any special equipment provided?
- 8) what people say** e.g. comments from your guestbook – you should ask permission to print these, especially if you are including someone's name.

This information needs to be clear, concise and supported by a few really good photographs. The photographs need to emphasise the good points and hide the not so good points and they

should ideally give an idea of the atmosphere of the place. Have a look at other people's web sites and see what works for them.

Include a good choice of photos, but not too many – one good shot is better than 3 bad ones.

- \* bedroom
- \* dining room with people enjoying a meal
- \* special features of the décor
- \* an outside shot, emphasizing the view if it is a good one and the situation of the building in relation to the view.
- \* if the building isn't a particularly attractive one then don't focus on it - try and show the view instead, or the inside decor
- \* a winter picture as well as a summer one
- \* birds if birdwatching is available in the area
- \* people walking, birdwatching, horse riding, boat trips or whatever else is on offer in the area around
- \* people relaxing and enjoying themselves
- \* family barbeque in the campsite if camping is offered
- \* typical meal, cakes
- \* pictures of famous or beautiful sites nearby, e.g. a waterfall, mountain, village, fjord
- \* if you are providing an excursion the photos should show people enjoying themselves but show an appropriate range of ages

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