



NOLS ALUMNI TRIP

HIKING ICELAND'S LAUGAVEGUR TREK

JULY 13-20, 2017

Features of This Trip

- Approx. 96 km, trailed route through the stunning Icelandic highlands
- 6 nights in the field, sleeping in communal huts
- Vehicle-supported, and meals prepared by local outfitter: Icelandic Mountain Guides
- 7 challenging moving days and daily options for supplemental day hikes
- Eating and sleeping indoors, and vehicle support, keeps pack weights down
- One night (paired lodging) on each end of the trip in a Reykjavik hotel
- Cultural interaction
- Group size: up to 12 participants and 2 instructors

Cost: \$2,750

Minimum Age: 18

Trip Description:

Join a small group of NOLS grads, friends, and instructors for some challenging and spectacular hiking in southeastern Iceland as we hike between huts during Iceland's summer months. This route, the Laugavegur (or Laugavegurinn), "The Hot Spring Route," is one of the most popular, well-travelled trails in Iceland. Some highlights include the dramatically colored mountains, Lake Alftavatn, great glaciers and ice caps leading into big glacial rivers, midnight sun, and hot springs.

We will meet in Reykjavik, and travel together by bus to the start of the trail in Landmannalaugar. We'll spend the next 7 days traveling and exploring the Icelandic wilderness, hiking from hut to hut. Unlike standard NOLS expeditions, we won't carry much cook gear or any heavy tents - we will carry our own sleeping bags, personal clothing, and personal incidentals such as minimal toiletries and snacks/water on the daily, full-day hikes. A local outfitter, Icelandic Mountain Guides, will provide support from hut to hut as well as prepared breakfast and dinner each day in the huts. We will hike on trails over varied, steep terrain, mountain passes, and across rivers with our lightened backpacks. From our end point in Skogar, we will bus back to Reykjavik.

This trip will re-acquaint you with NOLS backpacking techniques in a friendly, relaxing, and visually stunning environment. Instruction is geared towards your interests with some possibilities including optional walk-up peaks, Icelandic "word(s) of the day," time for journal writing, photography, and more. Although we will not use Whisper-Lites to cook our food, we will have access to modern, communal kitchen facilities in the huts as well as all utensils and cookware. Lunches will be similar to typical NOLS field options including nuts, crackers, cheese, meats, and dried fruit.

The route offers a challenging level of hiking, with trails that can be steep, difficult, and exposed, and several river crossings. Each travel day, we will cover between 7-10 miles to our next hut. Connecting our string of huts gives us the chance to explore the spectacular Icelandic country while mixing with other travelers in a dorm-style setting. Sleeping in the huts allows us to

considerably lighten our packs for our daily hikes among the beautiful mountains, valleys, and rivers of southeastern Iceland.

The Environment:

Iceland's climate is much milder than its name implies, although quick changes in weather and big storms are common. While the variable weather is somewhat more mild mannered in the summer months, it is still possible to experience intense rain or even snow storms, heavy fog, and strong winds at any time in Iceland. The unpredictable weather definitely adds to the wild nature of traveling through Iceland. The expected temperatures in mid-July range from average lows in the mid-40's to average highs in the mid-50's, although temps could get up to the 70's.

Iceland is located on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, making it both a volcanically and tectonically active area. These natural forces have created spectacular scenery including many-colored rhyolite mountains with ice caps and glaciers that melt into wild rivers running into broad gravel floodplains. Hot springs and thermal vents are common (Laugavegur translates to 'The Hot Spring Route'), although they should only be entered in areas known to be safe. There are few to no trees in Iceland; the country's open expanse is covered in grasses, bright mosses, gravel, sand, and ice.

Iceland is also located just south of the Arctic Circle, meaning that summer sees the sun stay above the horizon for most of the day. This trip will experience nearly 19 hours of daylight!

The Huts:

The huts are bunk-style with communal kitchens and kitchen supplies. The huts do not provide pillows, blankets, or bed linens, so we will bring our own sleeping bags, and be prepared to use an individual bunk or group sleeping platform. The huts have running water, and most have hot water and shower possibilities (bring your own towel), except for the Hrafninnuskur hut, which has no shower and a pit toilet. Where offered, showers are an extra 500 ISK (about \$4 USD). With a few exceptions, the huts do not provide or sell any food, so our outfitter will be carrying sufficient food for our entire time in the field. Do not plan to be able to charge any electronic devices in any of the huts (although a few may offer this option for 1000 ISK (about \$10 USD)).

This trail is one of the most popular in Iceland, and the huts accommodate from 30 to 100 people. We will encounter many other people from around the world on our trip, both on the trail and at the huts. Although different from the remote wilderness experience on standard NOLS expeditions, the opportunity to meet people from many different cultures is an exciting part of this experience. Be prepared for close quarters, a lack of privacy, elbow-to-elbow seating arrangements around hut eating tables, the need to practice patience while waiting for a bathroom, shower, or stove burner, and potentially loud sleeping areas (we recommend bringing both ear plugs and sleeping masks). While the huts can feel busy, congested, and even chaotic at times, we consider this a wonderful glimpse into the culture of European trekking and "hut hopping." Most everyone at the huts, regardless of group or country of origin, embrace these realities and take advantage of intermixing with new people in a spectacular, dynamic, and engaging setting.

Curriculum:

This trip focuses on many traditional NOLS activities, including map reading, hiking, cooking, and group travel. The instructors will present information necessary for the group to comfortably travel and can present optional topics desired by the participants— including natural history, NOLS' leadership topics and relevant local human history. Formal "classes" are few and mostly optional. Anticipate a required base level of group management, expedition behavior and

cohesion— this is a mountain expedition through wild, Arctic country. Your instructors and outfitters may ask for a hand with meal prep every now and then.

Alumni trips, though more relaxed than a typical NOLS course, are not full-on vacations or guided trips. They are self-reliant trips through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the trip, you will travel outdoors and care for yourself. The expedition format emphasizes hands-on learning and application of skills in a variety of situations. Participants have the freedom to bring equipment that is necessary for their comfort and enjoyment of the trip and are expected to take responsibility for this aspect of the trip.

All participants will complete and submit application materials, including a medical history form/exam either reviewed by a medical professional or self-reported. These forms highlight the intersection of your trip's anticipated physical rigor and your current health and fitness status. Your forthright and timely completion and submission of the forms sets you and your trip up for success in the outdoors.

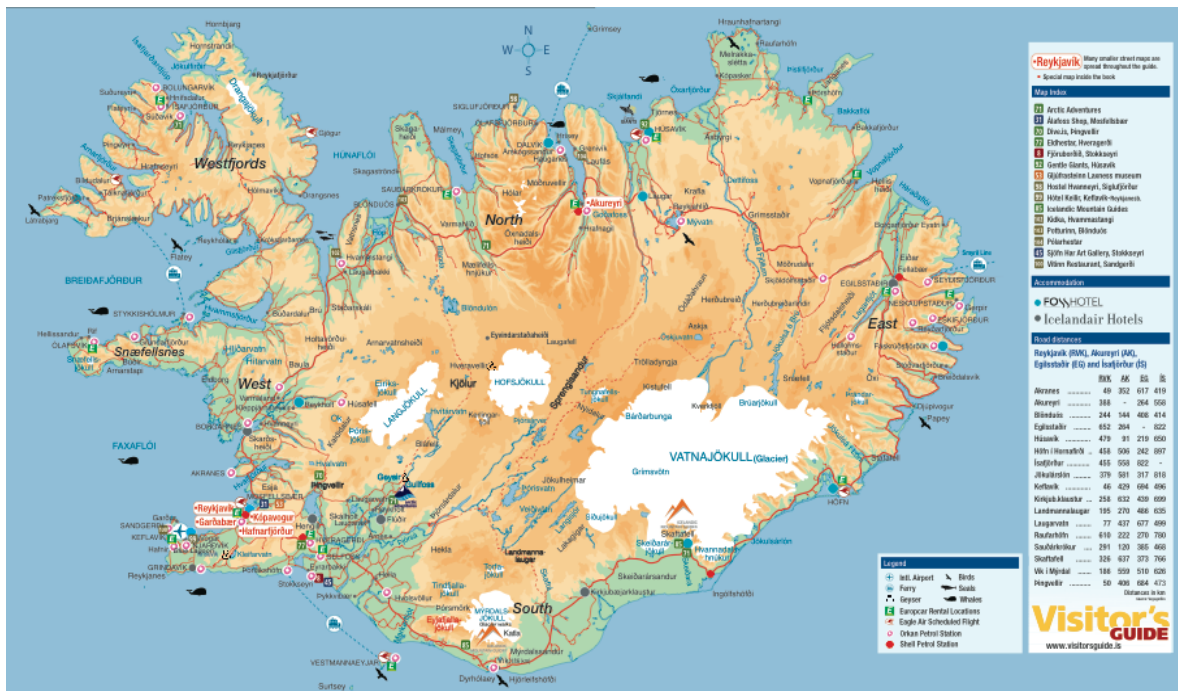
Trip Logistics:

The trip starts and ends in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital city (population of ~ 120,000). Participants should plan on flying into the Reykjavik airport (airport code KEF). We encourage you to consider arriving in Reykjavik on or before July 13 to allow for jet lag recovery, possible baggage delays, and some optional activities and sightseeing. If you choose to arrive before July 13, you are responsible for making your own lodging reservations.

The course begins the evening of **July 13** with a 6 pm course orientation at Reykjavik's Kex Hostel. On July 14, the group takes a ~4-hour bus ride from Reykjavik to the start of the trail in Landmannalaugar where our hike begins. We spend the afternoon of July 14 exploring the surrounding area, and will stay in our first hut that night. For the remainder of the trip, we will move to a different hut each night. We reach the end of the trail in Skogar, on July 20, and board a bus to Reykjavik. That bus ride is ~3 hours. Our trip ends that evening in Reykjavik. **Please schedule your departure travel for July 21 or later.**

Reykjavik Map:





Currency:

You will need cash in the form of Icelandic Krona (ISK) for miscellaneous purchases and showers (showers are ISK 500 each at most huts) throughout the trip. You will receive the best exchange rate at your local bank, but money exchange kiosks are handy in most airports. Debit and credit cards are commonly used, even for small charges, and cash can be obtained at banks and ATMs. US, chip-enabled credit cards will work in most locations, but it's often a good idea to give your credit card company a heads up that you're traveling internationally.

Air Travel:

Our trip starts and ends in Reykjavik (airport code KEF). You don't need a visa to enter Iceland, but you do need your passport and a return ticket. Delta, WowAir, and Icelandair are the major airlines serving Iceland.

You must arrange for your own transport into Reykjavik (and back to the airport when you depart Iceland). We recommend Gray Line: grayline.is/airport-transfer/

Travel in Iceland

Iceland has an excellent bus system, which we will use to get to and from the trailhead. A round-trip drop-off and pickup bus ticket (to and from the roadheads) will be arranged for everyone ahead of time, and the cost is included in course tuition.

Accommodations:

The trip tuition includes paired lodging (similar to tenting in the field, we'll pair you in single gender rooms in town). If you'd prefer to share a room with a specific person, please let us know. We will stay at Kex Hostel, a trendy hostel in downtown Reykjavik, on both ends of the hike, July 13 and July 20. From July 14-19, we will be staying in the huts along the Laugavegur Trail.

If you want to stay in the area before or after the trip, there are many lodging options in Reykjavik, from guesthouses to posh hotels. **You are responsible for booking your own accommodations prior to the night of July 13 and after the night of July 20.**

Personal baggage that does not go into the mountains with you can be stored at the Kex Hostel. This is reasonably secure storage, but NOLS assumes no responsibility for your stored baggage.

Hostel information: Kex Hostel, Skulagata 28, 101 Reykjavik, Iceland. info@kexhostel.is +354 561 6060, or see <www.kexhostel.is>.

Suggested Readings:

- Lonely Planet, Iceland. Lonely Planet Publications 2015. Paperback: 383 pages.
- Zimmer, Brian W. *The Laugavegur Trail: A Hiking Companion to Iceland's Famous Trek*. 2015. Paperback: 74 pages.
- Krakauer, Jon & David Roberts. *Iceland: Land of the Sagas*. 1998. Paperback: 160 pages.

The Map: (if you're interested - NOT required to bring)

- Serkort #4 (Landmannalaugar Fjallabak) 1:100,000 topo

Interesting Websites and Articles:

- A personal account of the trail:
<http://www.roughguides.com/article/hiking-in-iceland-the-laugavegur-trail/>
- National Geographic Dream Trip, Jennifer Pharr Davis:
<http://adventure.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/trips/bucket-list/2013/hike-laugavegurinn-trail-iceland/>
- Search and rescue in Iceland:
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/11/09/life-is-rescues>

Contact Information:

The NOLS Alumni Office is located in Lander, Wyoming. We can be reached at (800) 332-4280. Email is also an option: alumni@nols.edu. If you have any **problems on arrival** day, please leave a message for us at 800-332-4280.

Registration and Payment:

To reserve a space on this trip, please submit a non-refundable deposit of \$200 per person to the NOLS Alumni Department. Mastercard or Visa works via phone (800.332.4280), or mail a check to: NOLS Alumni Department, 284 Lincoln St. Lander, WY 82520. The remainder of the tuition and all application forms are due by **May 12th, 2017**.

Equipment:

Even though we will be in Iceland during the summer months, the weather is always unpredictable, and we should be prepared for anything. You will need a hiking shirt, three insulation layers, plus a wind proof and a rain proof layer - all must fit comfortably over each other so they can be worn at the same time. If you tend to get cold easily, add a fleece vest, or another insulating jacket. For your legs, plan 1-2 insulating layers that fit under your rain pants. Do not bring any cotton on the field section of the trip, as Icelandic weather can be extreme, even in summer months.

NOLS will not have any personal gear to offer for either rental or sale. If there are items you would rather acquire in Iceland, or find you need after arriving, Reykjavik has some excellent gear stores with gear for both purchase and rental.

See the gear list below and call us (800.332.4280) with questions.

Itinerary 2017:

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| July 12 | We encourage you to arrive in Reykjavik this day, allowing for jet lag recovery, possible baggage delays, and some optional activities on 7/13. | Participants are responsible for their own lodging and meals. |
| July 13 | Most participants will leave home and arrive in Reykjavik the same day. Optional, loosely organized exploration of Reykjavik and surrounding areas this day. The trip starts with an orientation at 6 pm at Kex Hostel. | Lodging at Kex Hostel in Reykjavik provided by NOLS (we'll double up same gender pairs - let us know if you're a couple!). Airport transport and dinner on your own. |
| July 14 | Pack up. Store in-town luggage. Bus to Landmannalaugar in the morning. Check into hut and explore area. | Transport to trailhead included. Lodging: Landmannalaugar hut. Breakfast/lunch/dinner provided. |
| July 15 | Hike ~12 km/ 7.5 mile, gain 470 m/1542' | Lodging: Hrafninnusker hut |
| July 16 | Hike ~12 km/ 7.5 miles, lose 490 m/1608' | Lodging: Alftavatn hut |
| July 17 | Hike ~15 km/ 9.3 miles, lose 40 m/131' | Lodging: Emstrur (Botnar) hut |
| July 18 | Hike ~15 km/ 9.3 miles, lose 300 m/984' | Lodging: Þorsmork - Langidalur hut |
| July 19 | Hike ~15 km/ 9.3 mile, gain 936 m/3070' up Fimmvorduhals Pass. | Lodging: Baldvinskali hut |
| July 20 | Hike ~14 km/ 9 mile, lose 1036 m/3398' into Skogar. Take bus from Skogar to Reykjavik. | Transport to Reykjavik included. Lodging provided by NOLS at the Kex Hostel (same gender paired rooms) in Reykjavik. Dinner on your own. |
| July 21 | Depart Reykjavik, or continue to explore Iceland on your own. | Airport transport and all meals on your own. |

Equipment List:

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| NOLS provides: | Maps, First Aid Kits, Emergency Communications, Emergency Shelter, Food (Breakfast, Trail Food, and Dinner) |
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| Bring these items with you: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hiking shirt - short or long sleeve shirt • light or medium weight long underwear top - synthetic or wool • insulating jacket (puffy style) • rain jacket with hood • light or medium weight insulating bottoms - synthetic or wool • hiking pants • rain pants • underwear (1-2) • hiking socks (2-4 pair) • liner gloves (1 pr) • warm hat - synthetic or wool • gloves (1pr) • sun hat • light hiking boots or hiking shoes • sneakers/slippers for wear in the huts • gaiters, short or tall are ok • sleeping bag - lightweight and warm (~30 degree); ear plugs; sleeping mask • sunglasses • water bottles or hydration system (2 L carrying capacity) • headlamp and batteries • personal toiletries • sunscreen & lip balm • medium-sized backpack 35-45L- large enough to fit your personal gear, water and snacks for hiking days, and incidentals • pack cover or heavy weight can-sized and smaller plastic bags - all for waterproofing your pack and contents |
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| Nice touches: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • camera with a waterproof bag • small towel or sarong for optional hut showers • ear plugs, sleeping mask (summer in the high Northern hemisphere!) • neoprene socks (nice for river crossings) • extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lenses • personal reading book • hiking poles (collapsible) - takes hiking stress off the knees • light weight umbrella |
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| Notes: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your US cell phone may or may not work in Iceland. Check with your carrier for details.• Depending on the exact items you bring, packs are likely to be in the 25 - 30 pound range. Consider a pack that is ~45 liters. Slightly larger is better than slightly smaller.• Boot fit is key. You can use fairly light boots because of the light packs and trail travel. Contact us with questions. |
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