

ICELAND AWAKES!

"An Awesome Iceland Spring Birding Tour!"

Dates

Monday 15th June to Tuesday 23rd June 2020 – 9 days, 8 nights
(Best arrival date Reykjavik, 14th June)



Description

May comes, and Iceland awakes from a long, cold winter.

Suddenly, **breeding birds** are engaged in frenetic activity, trying to make the most of the short summer to raise their young.

And that's when we turn up, to catch a glimpse of some of that activity, at one of the world's **classic summer birding destinations**.

Iceland - an **awesome birding experience** set in a stunning volcanic landscape. With friendly, relaxed people, and good food and hospitality.



There are some very good reasons for going on this tour:

- Barrow's Goldeneye and Harlequin Duck at their only breeding grounds in Europe
- White-tailed Eagles and Gyrfalcons
- Seething seabird colonies with Atlantic Puffins, Thick-billed Murre (Brünnich's Guillemot), Black Guillemots and more
- Roadside Rock Ptarmigans, Common Loons (Great Northern Diver) and Horned (Slavonian) Grebes
- Spinning Red-necked Phalaropes and Grey Phalaropes, Snow Buntings, geese and swans.
- And there are mammals too - whales and seals – as well as the very photogenic Icelandic horses.

Rough Itinerary



Day 1, 15th June 2020

The tour starts with a morning transfer to **Reykjavik domestic airport** from Reykjavik centre for a **45-minute flight to Akureyri**.

A first visit to the surroundings of Akureyri, the **Godafoss waterfall**, and along the route to Húsavik.

Common birds include: Common Snipe, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Eurasian Whimbrel, European Golden Plover, Common Redshank, Arctic Tern, Common Eider and Whooper Swan.

Less common birds include: Rock Ptarmigan, Parasitic Jaeger/Arctic Skua, Goosander,

Common Loon/Great Northern Diver, Horned Grebe, Red Knot, and Barrow's Goldeneye and Harlequin Duck.

Hotel: Akureyri

Day 2, 16th June

One of the whole tour highlights is a visit to the famed **Myvatn Lake**, and that's today!

Enjoy views of most of the common European ducks, including Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Tufted Duck, Greater Scaup, Common Scoter,

Long-tailed Duck, Goosander, and Red-breasted Merganser, as well as the regional stars - **Barrow's Goldeneye** and the **Harlequin Duck**.



Watch delightful **Red-necked Phalaropes** at close range swimming in tiny circles and picking insects off the surface of the water. Admire the **beautiful breeding plumage** of Red-throated and Common Loons (Red-throated and Great Northern Divers), and Horned/Slavonian Grebes. Get lucky and spot the rare and localized **Gyrfalcon**.

Also - spare a moment or two to look up from your binoculars and telescopes to appreciate the huge geological interest this area offers, with pseudo - craters, volcanic cones and lava fields, steaming vents and bubbling mud pots.

Night at Akureyri.

Day 3, 17th June

Come with us and today we'll explore the Eyjafjordur in the hope of finding birds such as Merlin, Short-eared Owl and Rock Ptarmigan.

However, the main treat of the day is a **Whale-watching excursion** from a nearby village along the fjord. Skipper and first mate will take us out of the harbour and to some wonderfully close encounters with a number of Humpback Whales which will be swimming around and feeding in small groups.



And there are birds too: Black Guillemots, Atlantic Puffins, Common Eiders, Northern Fulmars, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Glaucous Gulls, and more. Want to try your hand at a bit of fishing? Now's your chance.

Night at Akureyri.

Day 4, 18th June

We leave our base at Akureyri and head westwards towards our next destination in the **Snaefellness Peninsula**. En-route help us to seek out new birds and destinations. White-tailed Eagle, Pink-footed Goose, Merlin, Short-eared Owl, Long-tailed Duck and more are all possible. At the **Vantsnes peninsula** there are both Grey and Common Seals and good photographic opportunities. And of course, the scenery is spectacular!

Hotel: Snaefellness Peninsula.

Day 5, 19th June



From the delightful harbour at **Stykkisholmur**, ferries depart for the shores of the Breiðafjörður inlet, which is dotted with skerries and islets. Shall we board a ferry to explore this fjord further? If so, we should see European Shags, as well as some of the Atlantic Puffins and Black Guillemots that inhabit these waters. We'll also be on the look out for the magnificent White-tailed Eagle. (again).

Then we'll explore the shores westwards as far as Kirkjufell, which must be one of the most emblematic "picture postcard" spots of all Iceland!

Night Snaefellness Peninsula.

Day 6, 20th June



Today exploring the Snæfellsnes Peninsula is an exciting prospect, and driving as far westwards as we can go. There should be Purple Sandpipers, and perhaps some passage geese, especially Pale-bellied Brent Goose and Barnacle Goose. Orcas are regular along the northern coast of this peninsula too.

At the far western point we gaze at the nearby cliffs, and its **mesmerizing seabird colony**, with the likes of Razorbill, Brünnich's Guillemot, and Common Guillemot all coming and going. It was here that we saw an **Arctic Fox** in the autumn of 2018, and Snow Buntings are known to be around, so we'll be keeping our eyes peeled for these beautiful creatures!

To end the day with style the southern side of the peninsula has eye-opening scenery of rocky headlands, beaches, lakes and waterfalls.
Night Snæfellsnes Peninsula.

Day 7, 21st June

We depart from the Snæfellsnes Peninsula today, but slowly. First we take a look around the Hvanneyri area, which could reward us with birds such as the White-tailed Eagle, White-fronted Goose, and Common Shelduck. Goldcrests are inhabitants of the infrequent pine woods in these parts, and after a look around Akranes we head for the Golden Circle.

The **Golden Circle** is a major tourist attraction in Iceland and, somewhat unusually for a birding tour, one we feel we should not miss. That's because the active geyser at the original location of Geysir, and the thunderous Gullfoss waterfall are two memorable sights we just have to take in before reaching our accommodation on the south of the island.



Night near Hvollsvöllur

Day 8, 22nd June

For our last full day on Iceland there is so much varied scenery and still a good number and variety of birds for us to enjoy. Let's look for wetland birds on coastal marshes and lagoons, and seabirds on headlands and impressive sea cliffs.

One of Iceland's trademarks is scenery, scenery, scenery! On our route to Vik and back we'll have a full range of scenic delights ranging from great waterfalls, a glacial tongue, rocky headlands, and black sand beaches.

Night near Hvollsvöllur.

Day 9, 23rd June

Sadly we must depart Iceland today. Flight schedules permitting we'll get in some last birding en-route to the airport, along coastal wetlands and in particular at the village of Gardur, where some patient seawatching and some luck may reveal Manx Shearwater, Northern Gannet and European Storm Petrel.

Then it will be on to Reykjavik international airport, fond farewells, and the end of the tour.

The quality of the experiences and the beauty of the encounters, together with the evocative landscapes and some superb whale-watching make this "Iceland Awakes!" an absolute winner of a tour.



Price: 3,295 euros

Single room supplement: 485 euros

Look at what the price includes:

- **Whale-watching excursion** from Hauganes
- Optional cruise from Stykkisholmur (weather-dependent)
- **Domestic flight** Reykjavik to Akureyri
- All ground transfers during tour dates in private vehicle, with fuel and tolls included
- 8 nights hotel/guesthouse accommodation in shared en-suite room*, with breakfast
- Picnic style lunches
- 1 or 2-course evening meals
- Drinking water and snacks available in the vehicle
- Services of professional guide(s) and all guide's expenses

* For the most part, although en-suite facilities may not always be available

TELL ME MORE! – Contact Steve or Florinda at Info@birdinginspain.com

What previous Iceland tour participants have said – 2018 tour

“We all enjoyed the trip and were awed by the scenery...I haven't seen all the pictures I took but have seen some of Janet's which are quite spectacular. Speaking of spectacular we saw James' video of the humpbacked whale - great sequence.” – *James, USA*.

“Some great memories thanks and a lovely bunch of folk to tour with” – *Andy, USA*.

“Our trip to Iceland with you was hotly anticipated and it didn't disappoint. The scenery was magnificent as were the birds, seals, whales, etc. The Golden Plover sitting on a little mound while we all took photos was a particular highlight for me as was the Gyr Falcon and Great Northern Diver close to shore, but there were too many great sightings to list them all. We enjoyed the local food and our accommodation in various beautiful locations was perfect. As usual you delivered, Steve. Thank you and Florinda.” - *Mary, UK*.

“I really didn't know what to expect from my birding trip to Iceland, but I was delighted to find out how amazing it was. There are numerous species of birds to be seen, and Steve has a keen knowledge of them and where to find them. Best of all, you can do it all while traveling through one of the most beautiful and iconic landscape in the world - Iceland - a trip to experience.” – *James, UK*.

“In September 2018, together with my non birding son, I went on a 10 day tour of Iceland led by Steve West of Birding in Spain. Steve worked tirelessly to find the birds and we had a very successful birding trip. He also managed to incorporate all the important 'tourist sites' and general wildlife into our trip. A very successful tour on a magical island that catered for everyone. We even got the Northern Lights. This was my third birding trip with Steve, he remains my first choice for guided trips.” – *Ian, UK*.