

## Itinerary - Wonders of the West - 10 Days

### DAY 1: REYKJAVÍK TO THE SNÆFELLSNES PENINSULA

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Are you ready to begin your adventure around Iceland? The first day takes you out of Reykjavík to **Pingvellir National Park**. The park is not only home to the most important place in Icelandic history, where one of the world's oldest parliaments was founded in 930, but also Iceland's largest natural lake and a lava field, situated right on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, where the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates are moving apart. At Pingvellir you can walk through parts of the ridge. After a stroll in the park, the drive takes you over a rugged mountain pass (not a highland road though) no. 48 to **Hvalfjörður**, the deepest fjord in the south of Iceland. Carry on to the lovely **Skorradalsvatn** lake and then to the town of **Borgarnes**. For those active types, it's ideal to hike 2.5 km up the 60 m crater **Eldborg** on the way to **Snæfellsnes** peninsula.

### DAY 2: SNÆFELLSNES PENINSULA

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Today you explore the **Snæfellsnes** peninsula. From Grundarfjörður, head west to drive around the peninsula, through several small and very pretty villages along the coastline. You may want to visit the local waterfall in **Ólafsvík** before continuing to the national park. Brace yourselves, as you are about to enter a place of (supposed) supernatural powers - **Snæfellsjökull** glacier and volcano, where Jules Verne based his novel "Journey to the Centre of the Earth". A view to the glacier dominates the park, but it is only visible on relatively bright days. Highlights in the park include walks on **Djúpalónssandur** beach, known for its lava formations, pebble stones, and trial stones for strength. **Arnarstapi** and walks by the picturesque cliffs is another highlight, especially in the summer when the birdlife can be enjoyed simultaneously. Don't miss a walk to the mysterious black church located close to the yellow sand beach at **Búðir**. You can also visit the **Bjarnarhöfn** shark processing exhibition, and spend some time visiting the beautiful town of **Stykkishólmur**, with its many pretty houses and interesting museums. End the day in the lovely town of **Grundarfjörður**, dominated by the mountain **Kirkjufell**.

### DAY 3: TO THE WESTFJORDS

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Today you leave the **Snæfellsnes** peninsula and drive to the **Westfjords**. There's a ferry that you can get from **Stykkishólmur** to **Brjánslækur** in the Westfjords, but you can also choose to drive instead of taking the ferry. If you drive, you carry on to the boot-shaped fjord **Álftafjörður**, known for its big colony of the whooper swans. You might want to take a turn east to visit **Eiríksstaðir** Viking longhouse before arriving in the little village of **Búðardalur**. The drive takes you further north until you come to the bird watcher's paradise at **Reykhólar**. Here, it is possible to spot almost every bird species that breeds in Iceland. Enjoy a quiet walk among the birch trees, or hike the nearby mountains to experience the great view over Breiðafjörður bay with its endless islands and islets.

### DAY 4: TO LÁTRABJARG

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Today is dedicated to the southern part of the Westfjords. Drive towards **Látrabjarg**, spectacular cliffs rising 414 m above sea level. The cliffs are home to a vast number of seabirds, including puffins, kittiwakes, and guillemots. A footpath along the top of the cliffs offers magnificent views and you can get really close to the birds, but please be careful not to fall, and do not disturb the birds. Close to Látrabjarg is **Hnjótur** museum, where you can see an old fishing boat, a Viking ship, an Antonov An-2 and Douglas C-117D from Iceland's aviation history, and much more. **Rauðisandur** beach is located west of Látrabjarg, one of Iceland's most spectacular sites and its most famous beach, red in colour in a beautiful setting of black cliffs and blue ocean. If weather and visibility are good, you can see **Snæfellsjökull** glacier. At the end of the day, you drive the same way back to Reykhólar.

### DAY 5: MORE OF THE WESTFJORDS

You carry on your journey to the north part of the Westfjords. The next two days will take you to several fjords so get ready for a lot of breathtaking scenery, beautiful mountains, and deep fjords. Also, get ready to put your

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driving skills to the test, as there are some epic roads in this part (yes, the roads can be pretty difficult, but you should be fine as long as you drive carefully - just imagine you're driving Miss Daisy and not competing in Formula 1!). You get a chance to visit some of Iceland's most remote villages, such as the fishing villages of **Patreksfjörður** and **Bíldudalur**. You can also shorten your drive by driving straight to one of the most beautiful and impressive waterfalls in Iceland, **Dynjandi**. You can visit **Hrafseyri** museum, the birthplace of Jón Sigurðsson, who was one of the leaders of the Icelandic independence struggle in the 19th century. You can also visit **Pingeyri** to see one of the oldest houses in Iceland. Carry on your trip and enjoy the peace and quiet of the deep and narrow **Dýrafjörður** fjord, before heading to **Öndarfjörður** fjord in the spectacular **Korpudalur** valley, the perfect place to get away from it all in the midst of nature. Within minutes, you can find yourself hiking, climbing, or angling in the vast wilderness of Iceland's striking fjords and mountains.

#### DAY 6: FLATEYRI AND ÍSAFJÖRÐUR

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Today, we suggest you start by visiting the small village of **Flateyri** and its surroundings. The village was hit by a terrible avalanche in 1995. The nature in Flateyri and the surrounding area is worth exploring; across the fjord you will find a white, sandy beach. Apparently, the sand is great for building sand castles! Geologically, this area is considered the oldest part of West Iceland. Onwards to the capital of the Westfjords, **Ísafjörður**, in the enormous fjord **Ísafjarðardjúp**. Make sure to check out the very pretty part of town called **Neðstikaupstaður**, which is home to four of the oldest houses in Iceland, built in the 18th century, and a very interesting maritime and folk museum. From here, you can also book a boat trip to the romantic islands of **Vigur** and **Æðey**, and enjoy the rich seabird life in the area.

#### DAY 7: FROM KORPUDALUR TO STRANDIR

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Say goodbye to beautiful **Korpudalur** and head towards **Reykjanes**, a narrow peninsula between **Ísafjörður** and **Reykjafjörður** fjords; home to a large geothermal pool located next to hot springs, hiking trails, and fantastic bird watching opportunities. Enjoy spending time in the beautiful surroundings and hiking down to the hot springs near the shore. End the day in the village of **Hólmavík**, with a visit to the Museum of Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft, where you can for instance see trousers made from the skin of a dead man, the world famous necropants (lovely, we know!). Onwards to the **Strandir** area of the Westfjords; a perfect base to enjoy the unique wildlife. Seals swim along the coastline and there is a fantastic opportunity to see various species of birds, such as puffins, eider ducks, black guillemots, and oystercatchers to name a few. This is a peaceful place to explore the local peninsulas and creeks, while getting in touch with nature.

#### DAY 8: LEAVING THE WESTFJORDS

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Wake up in the peace and quiet of your accommodation in the Westfjords and then head over to the northwest of Iceland. You will notice that the landscape changes quite dramatically around here. Enjoy driving through some beautiful valleys and fjords. As you drive further west, you will see **Hvítserkur** rock, rising from the sea like a prehistoric monster. See if you can spot the colonies of seabirds and seal breeding grounds there. You will then visit **Kolugljúfur** gorge with many waterfalls and pass through a few pretty towns and villages, some with interesting museums, such as the textile museum in **Blönduós**. Enjoy walking down to the glacial river **Blanda** that splits Blönduós town in half. Today, you also have the chance to visit a traditional turf church from the 19th century, **Víðimýrarkirkja**. Furthermore, you can visit the lovely folk museum of **Glaumbær**, which was once a former parsonage and wealthy farm, and is one of the few remaining turf farms in Iceland. Return west and end your day in the beautiful and tranquil surroundings of the northwest of Iceland.

#### DAY 9: RETURN SOUTH

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Today you head back south, starting off by crossing the **Holtavörðuheidi** mountain pass, where on a clear day, there are good views towards several mountains and glaciers. Next up, you might want to visit the pretty village of **Varmaland** where you can go swimming in the thermal pool. Furthermore, you can enjoy some of the hiking trails around **Bifröst** and through the surrounding lava fields, and even hike up **Grábrók** crater. You can also visit one of Iceland's most important historical sites, **Reykholt**, where the famous writer and political leader Snorri Sturluson (1179-1261), author of the Snorra-Edda and a few of the Icelandic Sagas, lived and was subsequently killed. Next in line of many beautiful attractions are **Hraunfossar** and **Barnafoss** waterfalls. You could then also go swimming in the recreational area of **Húsafell** before carrying on your journey to

Iceland's most powerful hot spring called **Deildartunguhver**, and then onwards to the friendly towns of **Borgarnes** or **Akranes**.

#### DAY 10: HVALFJÖRÐUR TO REYKJAVÍK

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This is the last day of your West Iceland tour so be sure to make the most of it! Before leaving your accommodation in **Borgarnes** or **Akranes**, why not stroll down to the sea and breathe in the fresh air? Now you're ready for the day! Drive towards **Hvalfjörður** fjord and, instead of driving under the sea through the tunnel as you did on the way to the **Snæfellsnes** peninsula, you're going to drive back to Reykjavík via the fjord. Spend a good part of the day exploring the beautiful sights of one of Iceland's most picturesque fjords. If you're up for it, why not add a couple of hours to your trip and hike up to Iceland's highest waterfall, **Glymur**, at 198 m? Maybe have a picnic with you and lie in the grass for a while. Or, you could hike up to the top of **Esja** mountain, a favourite pastime of Icelanders popping out of the city for a quick couple of hours. End the day in **Reykjavík** where you can enjoy the many attractions the city has to offer.