

## Northern Lights Winter Trek



Duration: 5 days

Iceland lies on the edge of the Arctic Circle and is home to some of Europe's greatest wild landscapes. A land of incredible contrast and natural beauty, its wild volcanic landscapes, mountains, glaciers, hot springs, geysers and waterfalls, combined with its rich history, literature and folklore make it a fascinating country to explore.

We discover this stunning scenery on this fantastic trekking challenge in southern Iceland, as we trek through a striking mix of geothermal valleys and beautiful mountain scenery, streams and waterfalls. There will be snow underfoot so it's challenging walking, but no technical expertise required as we take advantage of seeing this beautiful region in winter.

Staying in a spectacular environment surrounded by lakes and mountain scenery, miles from the nearest big towns, the dark skies offer a great chance of seeing the spectacular Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) and we watch each evening – the icing on the cake on this memorable challenge!

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Day 1: Depart London to Keflavik

Depart London on our flight to Keflavik. On arrival we will be met by our guides and transferred (approx. one hour) to our hostel in the small village of Laugarvatn in southern Iceland. Tonight we will hear all about the wonderful challenge ahead and have our first opportunity to look out for the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). Appearing in many colours, most commonly pale green and pink, as ripples or clouds of light, they can be vividly bright. Night hostel.

### Day 2: Lake Pingvallavatn, Gullfoss and Geysir

Today we head to the shores of Pingvallavatn, the largest natural lake in Iceland. This area is known for its hiking,

and we follow horse tracks and old sheep trails, passing numerous geothermal hotspots. It's a beautiful area, made more dramatic in the winter. The exact route depends on the path conditions, but this is a wonderful introduction to our surroundings. Later, we have the chance to explore the two of Iceland's most well-known natural wonders – Gullfoss waterfall and Geysir, the spouting hot spring. Night hostel.

**Trek approx 4-5 hours**

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### Day 3: Geothermal hike

A short drive away, Nesjavellir is an exciting area of geothermal activity, where heat is pumped up and used for heating houses. Our hike explores this magnificent area, with its lava rocks, mud pots and boiling springs. Depending on conditions, we may use snow-shoes to explore. A short transfer takes us back to base, where we have dinner. In the evening, you can stay at the hostel, or it's usually possible to bathe at a nearby spa – you may be lucky enough to see the Northern Lights from the outdoor hot jacuzzi! Night hostel.

**Trek approx 4-6 hours**

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### Day 4: Reykjadalur Hike

A wonderful day awaits, as we leave the hostel and set off for the hills above Reykjadalur. The smell of sulphur is evident before we see the steam vents, hot springs and bubbling mud pools, surrounded by colourful minerals. It's an impressive sight, and we have plenty of time to explore this dramatic and otherworldly valley. There may be a chance for a dip in a natural pool (for the brave!) before continuing north to Nesjavellir, where we meet our awaiting transport and return to Reykjavík. We head out into this exciting city to celebrate our achievements this week. Night hotel.

**Trek approx 4-6 hours**

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### Day 5: Fly Reykjavik to London

We have the morning free to explore Reykjavik, or head off for an optional trip to the Blue Lagoon, a thermal spa approx 45 mins away. We then head off to the airport for our afternoon flight.

*(Lunch not included)*

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## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flights from London to Reykjavik (Keflavik) return and all transport
- All meals except where specified, and hostel accommodation
- Discover Adventure leaders; doctor (group size dependent); local mountain guides & drivers
- Vehicle support and back-up equipment
- Entry to any sites visited as part of the itinerary
- Airline taxes

## WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks (bear in mind that alcohol is expensive in Iceland!)
- Tips for the local guides and support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at the time of writing)
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities (eg spa visit - allow approx. £70 if booked well in advance)
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

### GRADE | YELLOW

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **YELLOW** range.



The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions (see icon) are also taken into account.

[Trip grading explained](#)

## CHALLENGE INFORMATION

### DETAILED INFORMATION

#### Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

#### Trip Doctor

An expedition doctor or medic accompanies the group (dependent on group size.) Their role is to look after the well-being of the whole group and deal with any medical incidents. They help the crew to ensure the trip runs smoothly, and encourage you when things get tough. The total number of crew looking after you will depend on the final size of your group.

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## Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local lifestyles. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely. In some destinations we work together as a team with local guides to help set up or break camp, or prepare meals. Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something!

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## Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

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## Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

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## Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick but may also depart from regional airports, and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination and low cost airlines may be used for short haul flights. If you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details.

By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

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## Accommodation

During the trek we stay at a beautifully-situated independent hostel with great facilities, in dorm-style rooms with up to 8 others. In Reykjavik, we stay at a good, well-located hotel, in twin-share rooms. Please be warned that hotel rooms in Iceland are traditionally small!

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## Roomshare Arrangements

Some accommodation will be twin-share. Please tell us if you know somebody else on the trip that you would like to share with and we will try our best to accommodate your request. If you don't know anyone else in the group don't worry, we always pair you up with someone of the same gender, and a similar age where possible. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

On some nights we are likely to sleep in more communal accommodation such as dormitories/hostels, huts, local homestays or monasteries, depending on the trip, and you may be sharing with a larger number of participants or the whole group; this type of accommodation cannot always be single-sex.

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## Group Size

Your booking is part of a group challenge, and the tour costs and fundraising targets listed on our website are based on a minimum number of participants which is shown on the challenge. Our typical groups run with approximately 15-25 participants; however you may find your group is smaller or larger than this.

We will confirm at least 12 weeks prior to departure that your challenge is guaranteed to run. Occasionally it may be possible to still run the challenge with less than the minimum numbers, subject to a small group supplement. If we think a small group supplement may be necessary, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible, usually 5 months before your departure date.

**Minimum numbers and groups sizes may vary on Bespoke Charity challenges. If you are booked onto a bespoke challenge please contact your charity for full details.**

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## Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

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## Luggage

Your luggage, food, water and equipment is transported for you from one night-stop to the next. If there is easy road access this is done by vehicle; if not porters, mules or even camels might carry your bags, depending on the terrain.

Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already. You should also

bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

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## PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

### Fitness Levels

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's limits and do not expect everyone to maintain the same pace. Inadequate training is likely to have an impact not just on your chances of completing the challenge, but enjoying it too - and we want you to have the time of your life!

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience, fitness and ability as well as all ages and backgrounds. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. If you have concerns about your fitness or if you have reduced mobility please do contact us for a confidential chat about whether this challenge is appropriate for you.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

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### Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the [FCO's advice](#) on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you with all necessary information 6 weeks prior to departure to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check [Fit For Travel](#) for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

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### Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

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### Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved



(registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies, evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click [here](#).

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

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## Cancelling your booking

In the unfortunate circumstance that you need to cancel your booking, we would ask that you notify us in writing either by post or email. Your cancellation will be considered effective from the date the notice is received. Registration fees and amendment fees are non refundable and, depending on your payment option and how close it is to your challenge departure date, you may be liable for a cancellation charge.

Full details of all cancellation charges may be found in the Terms and Conditions of booking.

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## Passenger Portal

We have a passenger portal which will enable you to see any outstanding information we need, the countdown to your challenge departure, see your outstanding balance, make payments and update your contact details. You can access this via the following link - [Passenger Portal Log in](#).

## BUY YOUR KITBAG

**Only £45 (inc p&p)** - designed to deal with the rigours of your challenge.

Easier for accessing gear than a rucksack (especially when camping) this is probably the most cost-effective way to take your luggage on a Discover Adventure challenge!



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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 5 May 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.