

Atlantic Puffin
Fratercula arctica



BIRDING IN THE LAND OF FIRE AND ICE

ICELAND

We invite you to explore the Birds of Iceland as we journey to the land of fire and ice. This specially designed birding adventure offers the expert and novice enthusiast the introduction and observation of Icelandic breeding and non-breeding birding populations. From the waterfowl of Lake Myvatn to the iconic Atlantic Puffins, your travels will provide a wide variety of species inclusive of: auks, petrels, commorants, gannets, gulls, terns, waders, stilts, a wide variety of water fowl, and birds of prey. Our travels together will include a mix of formal and informal talks, hikes, and boating adventures designed to enrich our understanding of the natural history and diversity of avian species. Iceland is a island of contrasts, a place of glaciers, erupting volcanoes, and the midnight sun. Experience the ever changing topography during our 9 day field observation as we seek to observe the rich ornithology, interact with Viking history, and experience first-hand the natural wonders Iceland has to offer.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Iceland offers the birding enthusiast a rich diversity with access to over 350 species of which approximately 90 species known to breed in Iceland
- Over half of the world population of the Atlantic Puffin breed in Iceland; it is estimated that around 3 million pairs breed in Iceland each year
- Explore how Iceland's rich birding populations have adapted to the diverse environments inclusive of volcanic systems, fresh water systems, and marine environments
- Follow the fjords of North West Iceland for our observation and photographic exploration of the majestic cliffs iconic to Iceland's rich seabird populations. Observe the Black-legged Kittiwakes, Thick-billed Mures, Arctic Terns, and Red-Throated Loonsmay
- Enjoy a variety of boat excursions to bring us up close and personal with migrating whales, Great Commorants, European Shags and of course the Atlantic Puffin
- Marvel at Dettifoss Waterfall, the most powerful waterfall in the world, before we seek out Eider populations

TRIP DETAILS

SUGGESTED TRIP MONTHS

May-June

TRIP LENGTH

9 days

LAND PRICING

Starting at

\$3250

Based on group size
minimum of 20.

Price is land only





Day 1

Reykjavik

Upon arrival in at Keflavic, we will be transferred to our hotel in Reykjavík. Within minutes of our arrival, we will begin exploring the city as we observe Common Blackbirds and Common Redpolls (Icelandic race). A visit to nearby ponds will include the abundant Arctic Terns that breed by the side of the road. Lesser Black-backed Gulls normally gather here in good numbers as well. Night in Reykjavik.

Day 2-3

Lake Myvatn

This morning we will fly to Akureyri. On our way to Lake Mývatn we visit a plantation hoping to find Goldcrests and stop to see the famous Godafoss waterfall. The latter half of the day will be spent enjoying close-up views of Harlequin Duck on the River Laxá that flows out of Lake Mývatn. Red-necked Phalaropes often spin on the river's water feeding on emerging flies while Whimbrels and Golden Plovers live their daily lives in the surrounding moorlands. We will also scan the lake for some of its fourteen Icelandic breeding duck species, such as Black Scoters, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon and Greater Scaup. With a bit of luck we might see one of the few Gyr Falcons that come to the lake's shore to hunt. Nights near Lake Myvatn.

Day 4

Husavik

We will visit Dettifoss waterfall, the most powerful waterfall in Europe, before driving further northeast to look for a female Steller's Eider that has taken up residence in one bay. This area also holds good numbers of breeding Purple Sandpipers, Arctic Terns and Snow Buntings. And with some luck we might come across Rock Ptarmigans or hunting Gyr Falcon. On our way to Húsavík we will visit a big birch forest hoping for anything unusual among the common Redwings and Common Redpolls. We might also encounter Eurasian Wigeons on a very close range. At another site we will scan the sea from a cliff top which usually is black with Atlantic Puffins and this site offer a good chance for fly-by Great Skuas. Night at Húsavik.

Day 5

Husavik – Gauksmyri

A whale watching tour will be taken in the morning from Húsavík. This site has produced both Humpback and Blue Whales in recent years along with the more common Minke Whales and White-beaked Dolphins. After lunch we will drive west towards Gauksmýri. On the way, we'll look for Pink-footed Geese, Mew Gulls and the Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit. If you are willing to stay up late, we may get a chance for Short-eared Owl. Night at Gauksmýri.

Day 6

North West Iceland

This will be a long driving day towards the majestic seabird

cliff Latrabjarg. We will follow a number of fjords on the way showing us bits of the fantastic landscapes of northwest Iceland. Scattered pairs of White-tailed Eagles breed in these fjords so that will be our target bird of the day. An eye will also be kept open for the eventual flying by Merlin. An evening walk around our hotel will produce Red-throated Loons as well as the ever present Arctic Terns, Common Redshanks and Common Snipes. Night at Breidavik.

Day 7

Flatey

Latrabjarg cliff is the world's largest cliff holding a seabird colony, and is Europe's westernmost point. The numbers of auks flying by the cliff's end are simply overwhelming, with a constant stream of thousands of birds. Common and Thick-billed Murres are common here, as well as the Razorbill. Atlantic Puffins nest on the edge of the cliff tops and can be approached within a hand's reach! The cliff is also filled with the ever calling Black-legged Kittiwakes while the Northern Fulmars soar the skies along the cliffs. Snow Buntings are numerous in the moorland above the cliff as well as Common Ringed Plovers. In the afternoon we take the ferry across the Breidafjörður Bay and stop on the way on Flatey island where we stay overnight. Birding on that island is a once in a lifetime experience since all birds are ridiculously tame. These include the abundant Black Guillemot on the shoreline as well as Red-necked Phalaropes, Common Redshanks, Meadow Pipits, Redwings and Snow Buntings. With luck we might even encounter the rare Red Phalarope, Iceland being on the south edge of its breeding distribution around the Arctic. Night at Flatey.

Day 8

Breidafjörður Bay

We spend the morning birding on Flatey Island before resuming the ferry crossing towards Stykkishólmur. In the afternoon we take another boat trip, which takes us around the islands of the Breidafjörður bay and allows us close views of Great Cormorant and European Shags, among the thousands of Atlantic Puffins that nest in the bay. Sometimes the White-tailed Eagle can also be seen. Night at Grundarfjörður.

Day 9

Keflavik – Home

After an early start looking at Glaucous Gulls, which are numerous on the shores around our hotel, we will head towards Keflavik airport. Common Shelducks will be added to the trip list before heading straight to the airport in the early afternoon to catch the late afternoon flights back to North America arriving early evening.