

WILD ICELAND

June 13-22, 2010



BETCHART EXPEDITIONS, INC.



WILD ICELAND

Land of Fire and Ice & Nature's Paradise!

June 13 - 22, 2010

Outdoors enthusiasts grab your binoculars and cameras, and come explore Iceland! Discover Iceland in all of its great beauty. Iceland has captured the imagination of people all over the world since Jules Verne wrote "Journey to the Center of the Earth" in 1871. Iceland has a proud heritage -- it is the world's oldest democracy. Its wildlife and natural wonders are truly magical! Come join our Icelandic naturalist, and see for yourself!

ITINERARY

Days 1/2 JFK to Reykjavik

Depart from JFK International Airport (or Boston) on IcelandAir for Reykjavik. Arrive on the morning of Day 2. Meet your Iceland naturalist/guide and transfer to *Hotel Leifur Eiriksson* (2 nights). Enjoy a Reykjavik city tour this morning. In the afternoon, transfer to the Reykjavik harbor for a whale watching tour. Welcome dinner.

Day 3 Gullfoss Falls & Pingveiller Plain

Today we will visit Pingveillir (the "plains of parliament"), where Iceland's democracy began in 930 AD, and Gullfoss Falls, Iceland's star attraction. We'll also walk across an astonishing geologic feature, the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, which separates Europe & North America!

Day 4 Snaefellsnes Peninsula - Reykjavik - Grundarfjordur

We will start the day by traveling around the Snaefellsnes Peninsula. Words cannot express the mystery, wonder and almost surreal energy of the Snaefellsnes peninsula! The major landmark is the **Snaefellsjokull Glacier** which is renowned for its mystical powers and has captured the imagination of people all over the world, ever since Jules Verne wrote "The Journey to the Centre of the Earth" in 1871. The area features extraordinary moorlands, meadows, marshlands, rivers, streams, and small ponds along with beautiful rock and lava formations.

The Snaefellsnes Peninsula is without any doubt one of the best places in Iceland for nature and wildlife watching during summer. Today we can expect to see a great variety of birds, seals and possibly a few cetacean species. Birds we can expect to see include the Harlequin Duck, Atlantic Puffin, Thick-billed Murre, Black Guillemot, White-tailed Eagle, Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua), Arctic Tern and many more. In recent years both Grey Seals and Harbor Seals have been seen in the area and the cetaceans seen from land include Orcas and Minke Whales.

After traveling around the Peninsula we will make our way to our hotel on the north shore of the peninsula. Night at *Hotel Framnes* in the town of Grundarfjordur.

Day 5 Breidafjordur Bay & Flatey Island - Grundarfjordur

We will start today by driving to the town of **Stykkisholmur** where our ferry will be waiting to take us on the Breidafjordur Bay. This bay is located between the Westfjords in the North and Snaefellsnes Peninsula in the south and has both landscape and seascape of a different kind. It consists of small fjords and bays and is literally dotted with around 3,000 islands, islets, and skerries.

The wildlife in the area holds millions of seabirds with species such as Atlantic Puffin, Black Guillemot, Northern Fulmar and Shag being abundant. The area is also the main breeding area for the White-tailed Eagle which we should be able to spot. Both Harbor Seal and Grey Seal can be found in the bay as well.

After making a tour among the islands we will land on **Flatey Island** where we stay for the night. Flatey Island is a small inhabited island almost in the middle of the bay. The birdlife on the island is very used to living closely with people, so there are hundreds of extremely tame individuals. The eiderdown farmers can pick up some of the female Eiders, collect part of their down and put them comfortably back on their nests.

Other bird species such as nesting Black Guillemot, Redshank, Red-necked Phalarope and Snow Bunting can also be observed at extremely close range. The Island is also known for being the only public area in Iceland where you might see the rare Red Phalarope.

The evening will be dedicated to the wildlife on Flatey Island. If you are interested in photography or behavioral studies this will possibly be one of your best times for wildlife observation. The possibilities are endless. Whether you like to watch the Puffins dive for sandeels . . . Black Guillemot return to their nests with Butterfish in their beak . . . Northern Fulmar glide right by you . . . Black-legged Kittiwakes tell their stories in the cliffs . . . Red-necked Phalarope spin on the water or even look for the rare Red Phalarope, it's totally up to you. Night at *Hotel Flatey*.

Day 6 Latrabjarg Bird Cliff - Flatey Island - Breidavik

The next morning we will make our way back to shore on the other side of Breidafjörður Bay. From here we make our way towards the magnificent Latrabjarg Bird Cliff. This cliff is one of the most spectacular places in Iceland (and Europe!). It is the largest seabird colony in Europe and extends over a 14 km long cliff. You will be astonished by the numbers, sounds and smell of seabirds along the cliff and the Puffins are so tame here that you can almost pick them up with your bare hands! While Snow Buntings feed on the cliff tops, thousands of Thick-billed Murre, Common Murre, Razorbills and Black-legged Kittiwakes throng the cliffs. *Night at Breidavik* near Latrabjarg Cliff

Day 7 The Westfjords - Breidavik - Gauksmyri lodge

In the morning we make our way to Gauksmyri Lodge in the northern part of Iceland. Much of the day will be spent driving through spectacular scenery en route to **Gauksmyri**, passing numerous waterfalls and impressive fjords. White-tailed Eagles can be seen along the way as well as one of Iceland's most elusive birds, the Winter Wren that inhabits the birch scrub. The afternoon will be dedicated to the two species of Seals that inhabit the island, the Harbor Seal and the Grey Seal. We will visit the **Icelandic Seal Center in Hvammstangi** and drive around Vatnsnes peninsula to watch seals in their natural habitats. *Night at Gauksmyri*.

Day 8 The North - Breidavik - Myvatn

Today we head off to Lake Myvatn and Husavik. On the way we will look for families of Pink-footed Geese along a glacial river. For a nature enthusiast to describe the Lake Myvatn area with words is virtually impossible. The whole area is a natural wonder of its own in a world that has nothing else like it. Even people with no interest in nature and wildlife are blown away by the variety and magnitude of both the birdlife as well as the different natural phenomenon that surround you in the area. The lake itself is approx. 37 square km, making it Iceland's fourth largest lake.

This area has been described as a strange meeting place of two worlds where you are able to find flora and fauna from both the temperate and the Arctic zones. The area is also a highly active volcanic area situated on the west edge of the meeting point of the Eurasian and North American plates. By the end of the day you have been traveling by and visiting a range of pseudo-craters, volcanoes of different sizes, hot springs, and new lava fields with lava pillars.

You will have seen a variety of bird species in the thousands, including the Common Loon (Great Northern Diver), Horned Grebe, Barrow's Goldeneye, Harlequin Duck and Greater Scaup. Species such as Red-necked Phalarope, Redwing, Common Snipe and Redshank will

also be abundant all around you during the day. You will also have an excellent chance to see the great Gyr Falcon today. The Lake Myvatn area is the only place in Europe where the Barrow's Goldeneye breeds and Iceland is also the only country in Europe where Harlequin Duck and Great Northern Diver breed. *Night at Sel-Hotel Myvatn.*

Day 9 Lake Myvatn - Myvatn - Husavik & Summer Solstice Festival

We will arrive to Husavik in the early afternoon for a whale watching trip on the **Skjalfandi floi Bay**. This bay is arguably the best area in Iceland to watch whales. Astonishing numbers of cetacean species have been recorded in the bay (up to 12 species in total). During the trip we might see Minke Whales (which are the most common species in the bay), White-beaked Dolphins, Humpback Whales, and Porpoises. Species such as Orcas (Killer whales) and the largest animal believed to have ever breathed on earth - the magnificent Blue Whale - have also been seen regularly in the area in recent years.

Tonight we will celebrate the summer solstice with the local people in Husavik in a festival called Mærudagar. If weather allows, from Husavik we can see the sun barely touch the ocean at the horizon and then go up again. *Night in Husavik.*

Day 10 Husavik - Akureyri - Reykjavik - Keflavik Airport

Today we make our way to Akureyri where we take a short flight to the capital. From Reykjavik we transfer to Keflavik Airport for our return flight to the USA.

COSTS & CONDITIONS

Expedition Fee: \$3,690 per person twin share (plus air \$695 + tax from JFK or Boston to Iceland, RT including in-tour flight Akureyri/Reykjavik). Air Fares Are Subject to Change.

Expedition Fee Includes: Land transport; group airport transfers; accommodations twin share; meals from Dinner on Day 2 through Breakfast on Day 9; entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

Expedition Fee Does Not Include: Air fare (quoted separately); independent transfers; ; tips to guides and drivers; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, snacks; personal insurance, or foreign airport departure taxes.

What to Expect: This expedition is for travelers who would like to explore the spectacular natural world and wildlife of Iceland, led by an Icelandic naturalist. This is a rich natural history experience with great opportunities for wildlife and scenic photography in the spectacular landscapes of volcanic Iceland. The group will travel from 2 to 4 hours by bus or van most days. There will be short whale watching boat trips. Walks will be at a leisurely pace suitable for discovery and photography (good quality hiking boots are recommended). It will be early summer with midday temperatures in the 50s - 60s with a few sprinkles every other day (June is the driest month of the year). The expedition will be a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure who would enjoy a real nature trip into a naturalists paradise! We will have a grand adventure of discovery. (No smoking in vehicles, during lectures, or meals please.)

Air Fare & Airline Ticketing: Please phone **Renee at Betchart Expeditions, (800) 252-4910** for information about the group flights. The group flight departs from JFK or Boston on IcelandAir. Fare quoted includes the in-tour flight Akureyri to Reykjavik. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Accommodations: Are in a comfortable first class hotel in Reykjavik and in country lodges and hotels in remote areas twin share with a private bath. Limited single accommodations are available for a supplement of \$795.

Reservations, Deposits & Payments: To reserve a place on this expedition, please mail a deposit of \$500 per person with the completed reservation form to: **Iceland Expedition, Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435.** Balance of land fee is due 60 days before departure.

Cancellations & Refunds: The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of \$100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the \$100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.

Questions: Please call **Renee Apostolou, Betchart Expeditions Inc., (800) 252-4910 or (408) 252-4910.**

Responsibility: *Betchart Expeditions Inc. acts only as agent for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels and exercises every care possible. Betchart can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident, or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, terrorism, quarantine, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or to cancel any tour prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner's risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance.*

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RESERVATIONS

#1139

YES! I/We want to join the **Wild Iceland Expedition, June 13-22, 2010**, offered by Betchart Expeditions Inc. Please reserve _____ space(s). As a deposit, I/we have enclosed a check for \$ _____ (\$500 per person), payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) _____ Age _____ Sex _____

_____ Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone: Home (____) _____ Work or Cell (____) _____

Email #1: _____ #2: _____

Membership (please circle): AAAS Sigma Xi ACS Planetary Society

Accommodations Preference: _____ Twin _____ Twin share _____ Single
_____ Nonsmoker _____ Smoker

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please mail to:
Wild Iceland Expedition
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Montebello Road
Cupertino, CA 95014-5435