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trail riding worldwide

Golden Highlights of the South

Weight limit: 110kg / 17,3 stone

Nearest airport: Reykjavik Keflavik

8 days / 7 nights / 7 days riding

Experience the spectacular Icelandic wilderness with Freerein Guide Katie Moore! An exciting, exclusive opportunity to combine your holiday abroad with a 2-day trail in Wales and get a chance to meet your like-minded fellow riders prior to travelling to Iceland.

This trail takes you to the most famous natural sights in Southern Iceland. Following narrow paths between moss-covered lava and green hills around volcano Hengill, to the hidden Valley of Horses and to the shimmering Lake Thingvallavatn. Visit the ancient site at the Thingvellir gorge, and ride across the heather towards the hot springs at Geysir. Stop to visit the giant waterfall Gullfoss and continue into the uninhabited highlands, with Langjökull glacier in the background. Cross highland desert between the glacial rivers Hvitá and Þjórsá and end your trip alongside the majestic volcano Hekla.



The Riding

Ride with a free running herd of horses and experience the diversity of the Icelandic horse in its natural environment, far from civilization, and how Icelanders travelled in the days of old with a herd of free-running horses. Every rider gets the chance to try 2 or 3 different horses each day.

This trail is for intermediate riders onwards. Participants should have a secure, balanced seat and good physical condition, riding up to 45 km, 4-9 hours per day mostly in the gait tölt with a herd of free-running horses, which requires a certain speed. Participants must be able to mount a horse with little assistance.

Hard hats are mandatory.

Guides & Group sizes

You'll be accompanied by professional guides who will show you the ropes with the Icelandic horses and help you to get used to their special gait, tölt.

There can be up to 20 riders in your group.



Horses & Tack

During this holiday you will be riding Icelandic horses. The native breed to Iceland is known to be tough, robust and hardworking, ideal steeds for the challenging terrain and changing

weather. The horses are home-bred and live in a natural herd roaming large meadow expanses. Every guest will ride 2-3 different horses each day which develops riding skills.

All the horses are ridden in simple, Icelandic style tack. The saddles are built close to a dressage saddle, with a relatively flat seat. The riding style is very close to English riding, but stirrups are worn longer.



Accommodation and dining

Accommodation during the trail is at farms, guesthouses, community centres and simple mountain huts in a sleeping bag. Some mountain huts in the highlands only have cold water and no showers.

Full board is included starting with dinner on arrival day and ending with lunch on the last riding day. Dinner is traditional Icelandic home cooking. Lunch is either packed in saddle bags or the cook meets the group.

Allergies or special dietary requirements can be catered for with advance notice.

Luggage will be transferred by car between the overnight stops. Please pack light and bring only one piece of luggage.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival

Arrive at Keflavik International Airport and take the Flybus to BSI main bus station. You'll be greeted at the bus station or at your hotel/ guesthouse in Reykjavik and driven to farm Vellir near Hveragerði where you'll be lodged at a guesthouse. The group will get to know each other over dinner. The day will end with a detailed description of the tour.

Day 2: Hveragerði – Kolvidarhóll

Meet the horses in the paddock. After lunch, follow the old route from Hveragerði to Hellisheidi. Reach the moor and continue to volcano Hengill, riding along the Kristnitökuhraun lava field, from the eruption in the year 1000. Continue on the track between lava and hills down to Kolvidarhóll, where people have stopped to rest for hundreds of years. The night will be spent at a farm.

Riding time and distance: 21 km, 4 hrs.

Day 3: Kolvidarhóll – Heiðarbær

Continue North below the Húsmúli and Hengill mountains. Lead your horse through the narrow cleft to Marardalur (Valley of Horses) and ride through Dyrfjöll (Door mountains) and alongside Sköflungur. On the mountaintop enjoy a view over Lake Thingvallavatn, the largest lake in Iceland. After arriving at Heiðarbær, you will end the day with sightseeing at the old Icelandic Parliament. From here, it is not far to Skógarhólar, where you spend the night in a mountain hut.

Riding time and distance: 38 km, 6-7 hrs.

Day 4: Skógarhólar – Geysir/Myrkholt

Ride across the Thingvellir National Park. From Gjábakki you'll have an exceptional view over the park, lake Thingvallavatn and the stunning volcanic landscape. This is the area where the North American and European continental plates meet, drifting apart about 2 cm per year on average. Cross Lyngdalsheidi moor and stop at the Laugarvatnshellir lava caves before finishing the day's ride outside the village of Laugarvatn, named after the nearby lake which is heated by underwater hot springs. A bus takes you to Guesthouse Myrkholt and on a sightseeing tour to the famous "golden waterfall" Gullfoss, and to the Geysir hot spring area in Haukadalur.

Riding time and distance: 35 km, 6-7 hrs.

Day 5: Geysir/Myrkholt – Helgaskáli

From Myrkholt you continue up towards the Icelandic highlands, leaving the inhabited farmlands. On your way into the desert-like landscape you'll have a magnificent view over the glacial river Hvítá, and you can see how the river has shaped the mountain over hundreds of years flowing deeper and deeper into it. Spend the night in a mountain hut called Helgaskáli beside the Litla-Laxá River.

Riding time and distance: 35 km, 6-7 hrs.

Day 6: Helgaskáli – Hólaskógar

Ride through the fascinating highlands, where all you can hear is silence. Reach Háifoss which with its 122 meters is the second highest waterfall in Iceland. Your destination is the

Hólaskógar hut where you'll spend the night.
Riding time and distance: 20 km, 4 hrs.

Day 7: Hólaskógur – Fellsmúli

The tour continues along Iceland's longest river, Thjórsá. Pass Mt. Búrfell, which in the old days was the home of trolls, and Tröllkonuhlaup (the place where a troll woman jumped over the river). Ride along the river and admire the view over Thjófafoss (the Waterfall of the Thieves). Volcano Hekla can be seen from the Fellsmúli Farm where the horses will stay. Spend the night at the old community centre Brúarlundur.
Riding time and distance: 45 km, 8 hrs.

Day 8: Fellsmúli – Fellsmúli

Today's ride is a loop. Your path goes along Eystri-Rangá river riding on soft grass. The day offers fantastic views over volcano Hekla, Iceland's most active volcano. It was once called the entrance to hell. Leave the horses at Fellsmúli. At around 15:30 the bus takes you back to the starting point for refreshments. Ready for the transfer back to Reykjavik.
Riding time and distance: 24 km, 4 hrs.

Exclusive 2-day trail in Wales 13-14 June 2020

Prior to the trail in Iceland we offer an exclusive 2-day trail with Freerein Riding Holidays in Wales guided by Katie Moore. This will give you the opportunity to meet your fellow riders before travelling to Iceland to ride the Golden Highlights of the South together. Katie will also accompany the group on their trail in Iceland.



The price includes

- 7 days of riding in Iceland
- English speaking guide
- Shared accommodation
- Breakfasts
- Lunches
- Evening meals
- Transfer to/from Reykjavik
- Raingear
- Helmets
- Exclusive 2-day trail in Wales

Not Included

- Flights
- Transfers from the airport to Reykjavik and back
- Tips

International flights & Transfers

Do not book flights until you have received the Booking confirmation email from saddletravel.com.

Please plan your flights to/from Reykjavik as follows:

Arrive at Reykjavik by 15:00 on Day 1 of your holiday.

Departure flight on Day 7 any time after 21:00. It might be easier for you to stay overnight in Reykjavik and fly home the day after your holiday ends.

For transportation from the airport to Reykjavík (BSI main bus station, hotels or guesthouses) please take the Flybus (operated by Reykjavik Excursions). This service is NOT included in the price.

Participants will be picked up at BSI main bus station in Reykjavík at 17:30-18:00. Guests arriving earlier can be picked-up from guesthouses or hotels in Reykjavik.



What to bring

We recommend wearing your riding boots when travelling and carrying one set of riding clothing in your hand luggage, so should your luggage not make it to the destination you'll still be able to ride.

Please do not use large and bulky suitcases and bring only one piece of luggage with you as there is a limited amount of space in the trailer. If you need more luggage for travelling in Iceland before / after the tour you are welcome to store it at the base during the trail. Raingear and hard hats are provided.

- Comfortable riding trousers
- Riding or hiking boots with a thick sole for walking over rocks. Hiking boots are fine if they are not too broad for the stirrups. High riding boots might get uncomfortable, rubber boots are unsuitable.
- Chaps
- Riding gloves
- Wind & waterproof coat (good rain gear is provided at your destination)
- Thin hat & buff to wear under your helmet and to cover your neck
- Bumbag
- Long thermal underwear
- Woollen socks
- Warm layers such as woollen jumpers or fleece
- Sleeping bag & small travel pillow (bring a flat sheet if you use your sleeping bag as a duvet)
- Flynet (can be purchased at your destination)
- Comfortable clothing for evenings
- Light weight shoes to wear after riding
- Sun cream & lip balm
- Sunglasses – these are a must to protect your eyes from the sun and dust. We recommend wrap-around sunglasses that hug your face
- Swimming costume & towel
- Camera + spare batteries
- Power bank
- Plug adapter
- Insect repellent & bite cream
- Personal medication

Please note: Used boots, riding wear etc. must be disinfected before arrival in Iceland. This is because infectious diseases can easily be brought into the country, which poses a great danger for the horses. Riding wear is normally washed, and shoes, helmets and body protectors are cleaned with iodine or some other fluid disinfectant. **Used riding gloves and all used leather articles (e.g. chaps) are prohibited.**

Climate

Thanks to the Gulf Stream, temperatures are usually moderate all year round. Average temperature in Reykjavík is about 12°C during the summer months. Icelandic weather is known to be unpredictable and changing several times a day. A beautiful day can suddenly turn windy and rainy (and vice versa). You might experience temperatures close to 0°C even in summer as well as T-shirt weather, please be prepared for anything and dress in layers.



Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>

Travel documents

For entry requirements to Iceland for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iceland/entry-requirements>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.

Currency & tipping

The local currency in Iceland is the Icelandic króna (ISK). However, paying with cash is uncommon and the preferred paying method is usually by credit or debit card.

Tipping your guide is at your discretion.

Riding declaration

"I am prepared for long hours in the saddle at fast pace and over all kinds of terrain. I'm able to mount and dismount with little assistance. I do not suffer from any illness or disability that could prejudice my safety or that of others."



Booking conditions

You are booking with the riding holiday operator, these are their booking conditions:

- All complaints must reach Eldhestar within 5 days from departure from Iceland. Otherwise possible compensation is not valid.
- Eldhestar reserves the right to alter tours and itineraries due to weather or road conditions. All programs can be changed or cancelled at any moment during the trip to assure the safety of the clients and staff of Eldhestar and other business partners in case of combo tours.

-No responsibility is accepted for losses, expenses due to delays, changes of flights, or other services or because of strikes, accidents, sickness, damage, negligence, weather, war, changes in schedules, or other similar causes.

-Eldhestar and other partners in case of combo tours do not assume responsibility for accidents or death that can be traced to the participant's negligence, acts of third parties or exterior circumstances such as weather, natural occurrences, war or other similar causes.

Cancellation policy

Payment & Cancellation Terms

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Holidays are confirmed with 20% non-refundable deposit.

The full balance is due 56 days before start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50%

28 days or more - 30%

less than 28 days - nil

Travel insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during booking process.



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