



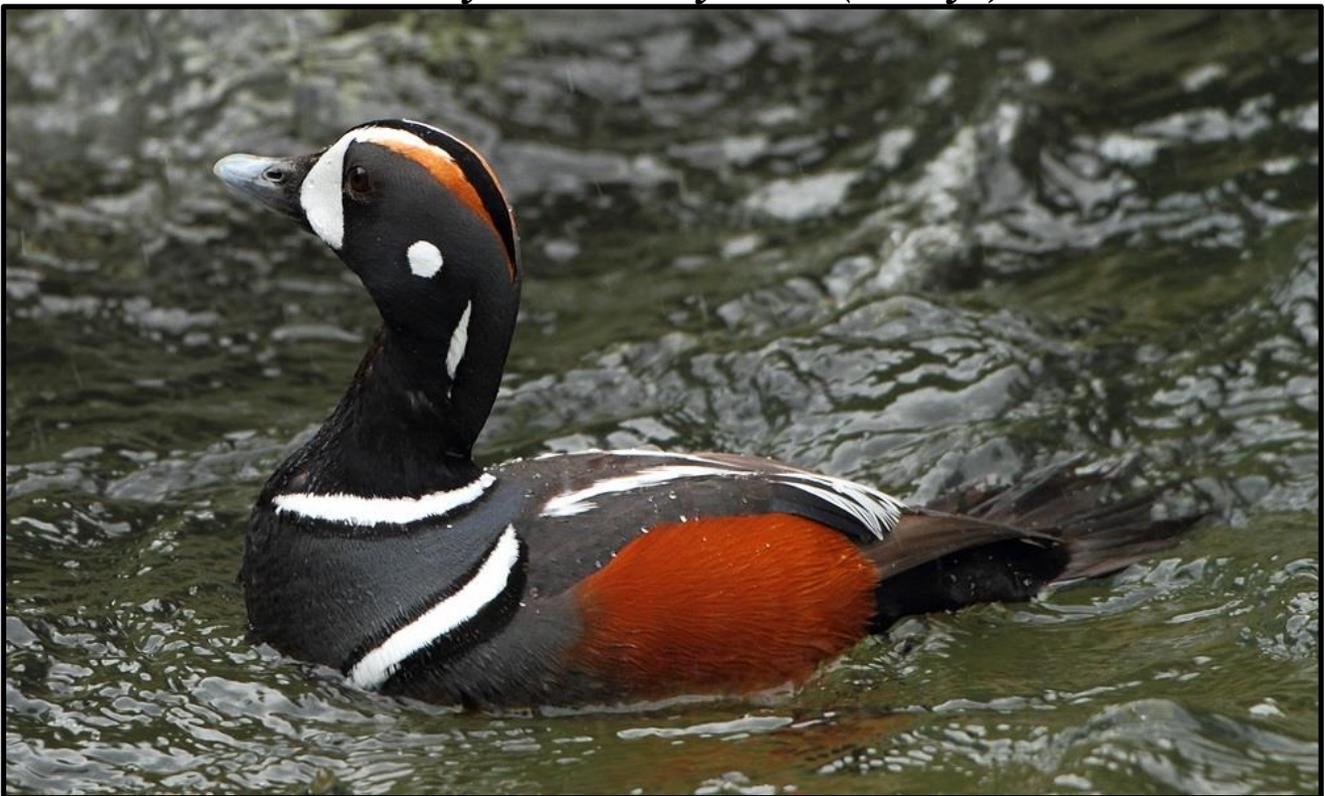
ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Iceland

Land of Fire and Ice (Budget)

21st May to 27th May 2023 (7 Days)



Harlequin Duck by Markus Lilje

Lying far out into the North Atlantic Ocean, the volcanic island of Iceland is the land between two continents; a land of fire and ice with its Viking heritage. While Iceland doesn't have a long list of breeding birds, those that do occur are in many cases abundant, with globally important populations of waders, wildfowl and seabirds. In fact, its towering cliffs are among the largest seabird colonies on the planet, with five species of breeding auk, including Thick-billed Murre (Brünnich's Guillemot), while the numerous lakes and wetlands are teeming with an array of divers, ducks and waders, such as Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-necked Phalarope and Purple Sandpiper. Top of many people's wish list is the world's mightiest falcon, Gyr Falcon, and Iceland has a healthy population of this supreme predator. As a backdrop to all this there is also the country itself, with its volcanoes, lava fields, glaciers,

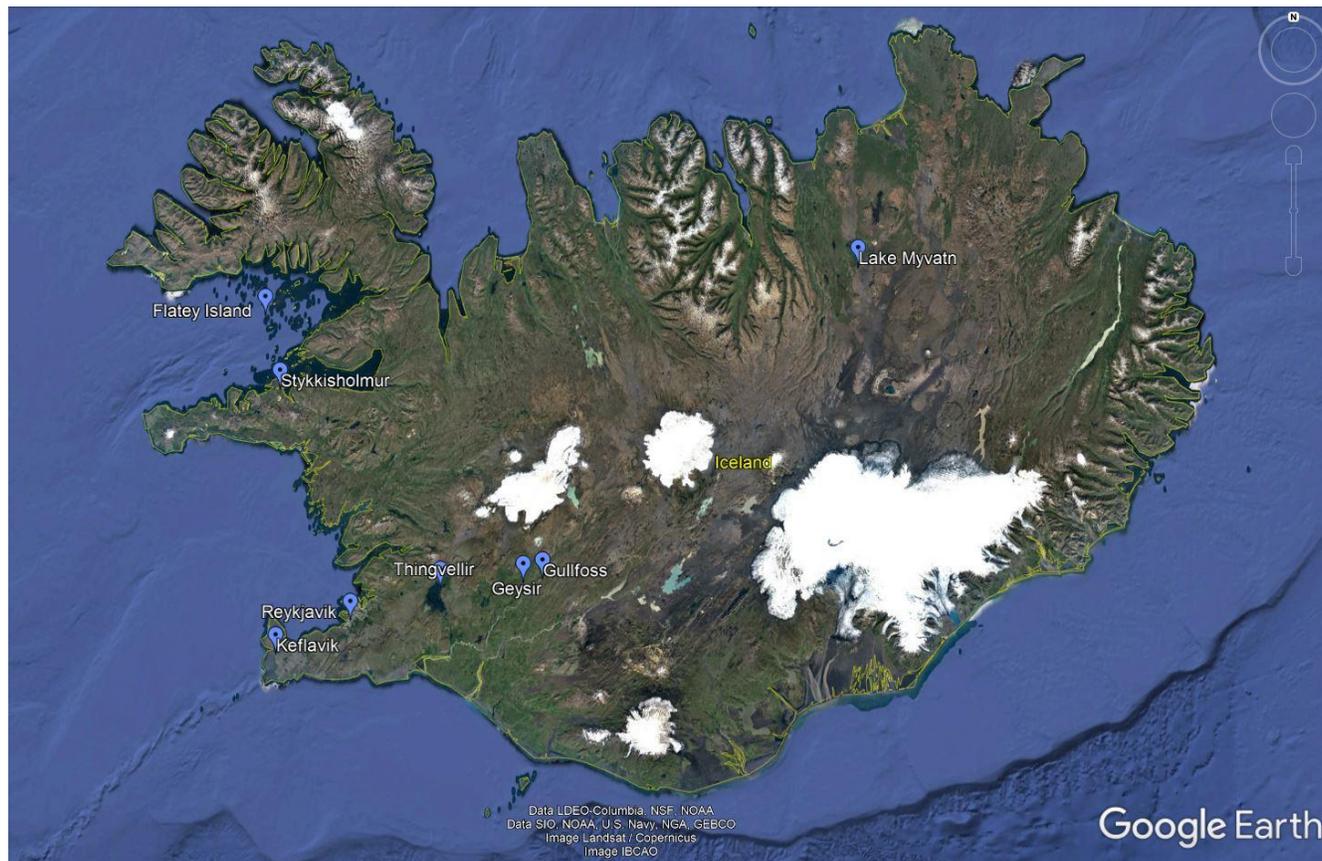
spouting geysers, mud pools, dramatic coasts and black sand beaches making for spectacular and other-worldly scenery at every turn!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Keflavík and transfer to Stykkisholmur
Day 2	Flatey Island and Snaefellsnes Peninsula
Day 3	Stykkisholmur to Myvatn
Day 4	Lake Myvatn and nearby geothermal sites
Day 5	Lake Myvatn to Geysir
Day 6	Geysir, Gullfoss and Thingvellir
Day 7	Final departure

TOUR ROUTE



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...**Black Guillemot by Jonathan Rossouw**

Day 1: Arrival in Keflavík and transfer to Stykkishólmur. Our tour starts at Keflavík International Airport in southwest Iceland, where arriving birders are sometimes welcomed by Snow Buntings singing from the terminal building.

We leave Keflavik behind and start driving north, perhaps finding one of the local Harlequin Ducks, before reaching Stykkishólmur in the mid-afternoon. Using the remaining day light hours, we shall make our first foray to the spectacular Snæfellsnes peninsula with its rich diversity of habitats. The lakes on the flat plains by the sea hold very dense numbers of breeding Red-throated Diver and Arctic Skua, while on the rivers tumbling down from the mountains we may encounter Harlequin Ducks. While driving along the coast, we are certain to encounter molting flocks of Whooper Swan.

Day 2: Flatey Island and Snæfellsnes Peninsula. This morning we will embark on a boat trip from Stykkishólmur to the island of Flatey in Breidafjörður Bay. Flatey is a small island that is home to more than 30 species of breeding birds, including abundant Arctic Tern, Atlantic Puffin and Red-necked Phalarope, while on the way over we will also use the

opportunity to look for cetaceans, which may include White-beaked Dolphin, Minke, Humpback or even Blue Whale. While on the island, we can expect a welcoming committee that is liable to include large numbers of Common Redshank, the ubiquitous Arctic Tern, Meadow Pipit and White Wagtail, while both Snow Bunting and Redwing sing from the surrounding roof tops.

After our boat trip to Flatey Island, we head shall spend the remainder of the day on the Snæfellsnes peninsula. Here the roadside lakes along the southern edge of the peninsula hold a typical mosaic of wetland species including Great Northern Diver and Horned Grebe, and scarcer ducks such as Northern Shoveler. At the end of the peninsula is the Snæfellsnes National Park, crowned by the glacier-filled volcano Snæfellsjökull. The lava fields here are home to Rock Ptarmigan and the *leucorhoa* race of Northern Wheatear.

The attractive basalt cliffs at the end of the peninsula hold colonies of all five breeding Icelandic auks, including Thick-billed Murre, Razorbill and

**Red-necked Phalarope by Adam Riley**



Barrow's Goldeneye by Alasdair Hunter

large numbers of Black-legged Kittiwake, while Arctic Tern is abundant along the coast. Killer Whales are also frequently seen along this section of the coastline. The northern side of the peninsula is quite different in character to the southern shore and has huge numbers of breeding Glaucous Gull and will give gull enthusiasts the chance to study large gulls in every possible plumage!

Day 3: Stykkisholmur to Myvatn. After an early breakfast, we start the long drive east towards one of the tour highlights, Lake Myvatn. Along the way, we will make strategic stops for

Whooper Swan, while keeping a close eye on the deeply indented coast line that dovetails our route for Great Northern Diver. The surrounding tundra hosts Rock Ptarmigan, and good eyes will be needed to find individuals sporting well camouflaged plumage at this time of year.

Family flocks of Pink-footed Goose form 'skeins' overhead, while scanning rivers may reveal more Harlequin Duck. Wooded areas in the surrounds hold good numbers of Common Redpoll, Eurasian Wren and the abundant Redwing, while we should see our first Common Gulls by the roadside. As we get close to Lake Myvatn, we shall make a quick stop Godafoss, one of the most impressive waterfalls in Iceland.

The profusion of midges and other insect life mean that the wetlands surrounding the main lake are often teeming with wildfowl, including Common Redshank, Dunlin, European Golden Plover, Red-necked Phalarope, Whooper Swan, Barrow's Goldeneye, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser and Long-tailed Duck. Should we have remaining daylight, an initial foray to the main lake could reveal out first Horned (Slavonian) Grebe and Gyr Falcon on the nearby cliffs. Checking into our well-appointed lodgings, we can expect a serenade from vociferous Common Snipe, Redwing and Common Redpoll.



Purple Sandpiper by James Wakelin

Day 4: Lake Myvatn and nearby geothermal sites. Lake Mývatn (Midge Lake) is quite simply one of Europe's great birding destinations. The





Rock Ptarmigan by David Hoddinott

main attraction at the lake, Gyr Falcon, can occur anywhere in the area. This, the world's largest and most powerful falcon, takes advantage of the great numbers of Rock Ptarmigan, wildfowl and waders here, and several pairs breed in the vicinity. Its smaller cousin, the Merlin, also breeds in the area, and if we are lucky we might see Short-eared Owl hunting in the 24-hour daylight. With fascinating geology and geothermal sites around the lake, a day at Mývatn is an unforgettable experience and will no doubt be yet another highlight on this fascinating tour. If time allows, may also visit Europe's largest waterfall, the thundering Dettifoss.

Day 5: Lake Myvatn to Geysir. Today we have another long drive, moving from the north east of Iceland back to the geothermal hotspot of Geysir. Most of our day will be spent on a rough gravel road, traversing the desolate tundra through the centre of the island.

En route, we shall make a short stop at Hveravellir to view the hot springs and gloopy fumaroles. As we travel further through this harsh environment, the halcyon blue Hvitá River sparkles us into life, possibly hosting a few more Harlequin Duck. We end the day at Gullfoss, the 'Golden Waterfall'. An iconic waterfall that presents an amazing view of the falls and surrounding landscape. Fed by Iceland's Langjökull Glacier down the Hvitá River, the water plunges 32 meters over a two stage drop into the canyon below. We spend the night perfectly located

midges, actually harmless *chironomids*, are the mainstay of life at this bird-rich lake, home to thousands of breeding wildfowl. Barrow's Goldeneye, at its only European breeding site, is common here and shares the lake with other ducks such as Long-tailed and Tufted Duck, Common Scoter, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon and Greater Scaup, while American vagrants including Ring-necked Duck and American Wigeon are recorded regularly at this superb spot. Harlequin Duck are common on the river Laxá, which flows out of the lake, while Horned Grebes are confiding and highly photogenic on the lake itself. Great Northern and Red-throated Divers provide the background noise, while arguably the



Strokkur by Adrian Burne





Mid-Atlantic Ridge crest, Pingvellir by Adrian Burne

Eurasian tectonic plates that are slowly tearing Iceland apart. The park is also the historical seat of the Icelandic parliament, and was declared a National Park precisely 1000 years after the first parliamentary proceedings took place in 930.

In the early evening, we shall head to our lodgings in Reykjavik for a little sight-seeing and a fabulous, celebratory dinner.

Day 7: Final departures. This morning we head out to the Reykjanes Peninsula, a barren, lunar like landscape visiting the small village of Sandgerði and the Gardskagi point. Offshore we should find good numbers of Northern Gannet, Great Northern Diver and Razorbill, while other pelagic species could include Manx Shearwater or perhaps European Storm Petrel, and even the odd Humpback Whale if we are very lucky. Our last stop of the morning is the Reykjanestá headland, which is plastered with hundreds of Black-legged Kittiwake and their nests. About ten miles off the coast is the island of Eldey, site of the last known breeding pair of Great Auk which were killed in 1844. We then continue through the mossy lava fields of the Reykjanes peninsula, reaching Keflavík International Airport, where the tour will conclude.



Gyr Falcon by Markus Lilje

in the town of Geysir, a few minutes from the eponymous Great Geysir and Strokkur Geysir

Day 6: Geysir, Gullfoss and Thingvellir. No visit to Iceland would be complete without visiting the world-famous geothermal field at Geysir. We will spend the morning admiring and photographing these amazing spectacles, whilst also keeping an eye out for Merlin that sometimes breed nearby. We move onwards to Pingvellir (Thingvellir) National Park. Situated on the rift valley that marks the crest of the mid-Atlantic Ridge, this is the boundary between the North American and



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- Breakfasts from day 2 to breakfast on day 7;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- All activities as mentioned in the itinerary;
- All guiding services; and
- Tips (including local guides, drivers, porters, camp staff and hotels)

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY flights (International and domestic, see above);**
- **No lunches or dinners;**
- Any beverages, including bottled water;
- Camera fees in national parks;
- Telephone calls; and
- Laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.



Special Notes:

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- **No lunches or dinners are included on this tour.**
- **Fitness:** This Birding Iceland tour does not require a high level of fitness but participants should be in good general health. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure. Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are very comfortable. There is no camping on this trip.

ARRIVAL and DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **any** airfares. The tour will depart mid-morning from Keflavík International Airport (IATA: KEF) on day 1 and conclude around mid-morning at Keflavík International Airport (IATA: KEF) on day 7.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Keflavík International Airport (IATA: KEF) is the main port of entry for international flights into Iceland and is well serviced by Icelandair and several other airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

