

FOUNDER'S TOUR:

# ICELAND

AUG 27 - SEPT 6, 2016

A RAWHYDE-AYRES WORLDWIDE ADVENTURE



Ask an adventurous motorcyclist for his or her “bucket list” of riding destinations, and Iceland is almost guaranteed to be included. There’s a good reason for this: Iceland is one of the wildest and most beautiful, historic, colorful places on earth. Frozen glaciers, towering volcanoes, steaming geysers, and soothing natural hot springs abound on this Arctic island. This is nature at its most primitive: raw and untouched, forged in ice and fire.

Join us on an unforgettable 11-day motorcycle adventure into the wild heart of Iceland, as no other tour company can offer. You will visit Viking ruins at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Þingvellir (pronounced “Thingvellir”), skirt the cliff edges of fjords, traverse the remote Highlands of Iceland, get up close and personal with some of Iceland’s most notorious volcanoes and stunning blue glaciers, and set out on a whale watching excursion on a traditional oak boat. Prepare for the ride of a lifetime on our Iceland Adventure!

## *Trip Highlights:*

- Þingvellir National Park – No other single location embodies Iceland’s geological and human history like Þingvellir. Sitting directly astride the Continental Rift, this is the only place on earth where the growth and splitting of tectonic plates is visible above water. And as the site of the world’s first Parliament, Iceland’s General Assembly convened there from 930-1798. Þingvellir is a truly amazing site that holds a special place in Icelanders’ hearts.
- Hveravellir – Situated between two massive glaciers, Langjökull and Hofsjökull, Hveravellir is an oasis in the middle of the remote and desolate Highlands of Iceland. The rustic huts and steamy hot springs are a most welcome sight after a day in the saddle!
- Gullfoss, Godafoss, and Dettifoss – Some of the most well-known waterfalls in Europe.
- Hekla – Iceland’s most notorious volcano, known as the “Gateway to Hell”.
- Húsavík – Our rest day takes place in the fishing village of Húsavík, where we will offer a whale watching tour in a traditional oak boat. With any luck we’ll see Minske, Humpback, and even Blue whales before heading back to shore for lunch and some well-deserved R&R.

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- Arctic Circle (almost) – While the Arctic Circle doesn't actually cross the Icelandic mainland (the only part of Iceland technically inside the Arctic Circle is the tiny island of Grimsey), we will get you as close as we can (within .3 degrees)!
- Geysir – The original geyser, for which all others are named.
- Vatnajökull – The largest glacier in Europe.
- The West Fjords – Wind along the edges of deep fjords on narrow dirt roads. Don't worry, we'll have plenty of stops for photo-ops!
- Eyjafjallajökull – Under this glacier lies the volcano whose eruption in 2010 wreaked havoc for air travelers worldwide as its ash plume covered much of Europe.

### ***The Ride***

Only 37% of Iceland's roads are paved; the rest vary from wide graded gravel to single-lane mountain trails that are rated for 4x4s only. While we plan to stay off the most difficult roads, you can still expect multiple water crossings, some of which may be a couple of feet deep and up to 20 meters across, fist-sized rocks, and sandy sections. The difficulty of the river crossings will depend largely upon how much snow falls over the winter; the rivers are fed entirely by glacier and snowmelt. For the most part, however, the roads will be paved or graded dirt/gravel, with the focus being on enjoying the breathtaking landscape around us.

### ***Climate***

Despite its high latitude just outside the Arctic Circle, Iceland enjoys a relatively temperate climate thanks to the warm Gulf Stream and North Atlantic currents. Average high temperatures in the summer hover in the mid-to-upper 50s, with lows in the mid-40s. If you're a seasoned world traveler and are looking for a comparison, the Aleutian Islands, Alaskan Peninsula, and Tierra del Fuego all have similar climates.

### ***History***

Although Iceland had been explored by both Celtic and Scandinavian settlers as early as 770, the first permanent resident was a Swedish Viking named Náttfari who settled in what is now known as Nátifaravik around 870. He was followed by Norse chieftain Ingólfr Arnarson, who built his house in what is now the capital city of Reykjavik in 874. By 930, most of the arable land on the island had been claimed by settlers, largely of Scandinavian, Irish, or Scottish origin. That same year, the Alþing, the world's first Parliament, was organized to regulate the Icelandic Commonwealth.

By 1292, internal struggles and infighting between the regional chieftains led to Iceland being brought under the Norwegian crown. There it remained, through the evolution of the kingdom of Norway to eventually become a dependency of Denmark, until it was granted recognition as a sovereign state in 1918 through the Danish-Icelandic Act of Union. On December 31, 1943, the Act expired and Icelanders were given the opportunity to vote on whether or not to terminate the agreement, abolish the monarchy, and establish a republic. The vote was 95% in favor of a new republican constitution, and so in June of 1944, Iceland formally became a republic.

Today Iceland is one of the most progressive countries in the world, and is a leader in renewable energy technology. The volatile combination of sitting atop both a continental rift and a geological hotspot means Iceland enjoys abundant hydroelectric and geothermal power, with 85% of its total energy supply derived from domestically produced renewable energy.

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