



# ICELAND

## LAND OF FIRE & ICE

~ RIVER SAFARI ~



### INTERIOR HIGHLANDS: PJÓRSÁ, TUNGNAÁ & VATNAKVÁSL RIVERS

**JULY 27 - AUGUST 5, 2005**

A **JEWEL OF PRIMEVAL BEAUTY** in the North Atlantic, Iceland remains amazingly undiscovered. Nowhere on earth are the forces of nature more evident than in Iceland. Its geography displays the most spectacular chronological range on the planet - black lava and active volcanoes stand contrasted against massive white glacial ice caps. It is truly a land of awesome natural phenomena, geothermal and visual – geysers, waterfalls, hot springs, fumaroles, calderas, some of the world's



CRATER LAKE

oldest and newest rock formations, the midnight sun, aurora borealis, and arctic mirages. The rich cultural heritage, expressed in the famous Icelandic Sagas, dates back to the early medieval era of Nordic and Celtic settlement and discovery. **In August of 1994, we conducted several first descent river explorations in the INTERIOR OF ICELAND** -one of the few regions remaining on earth overlooked by the adventure travel/river running community.

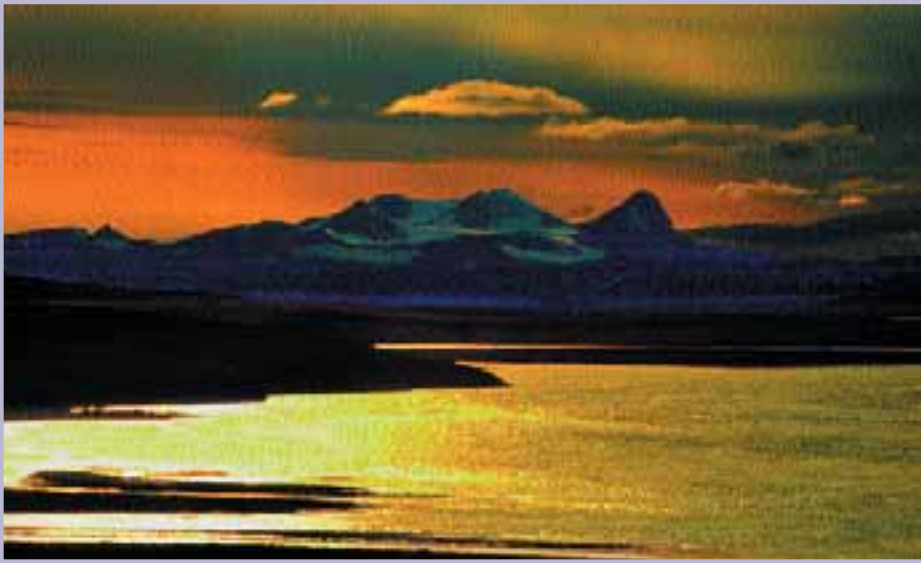
caves, and bizarrely shaped headlands. In the heart of this wild interior lies the sprengisandur ("exploding desert") - perhaps the most desolate, harsh and spiritual region of all - in the Sagas it was the mystical home of legendary outlaws, elves, and mythical creatures.

**Totally uninhabitable, most of its dramatic rivers**, both glacial and spring fed, are typically unnavigated...and unexplored due to both their remoteness, and an historical inclination to avoid the unpredictable interior waterways. In August 1994, we conducted explorations on two rivers; the **Pjórsá** (*Theor-sho*), and the

**The interior, vast and intensely surreal, remains uninhabited.** It's a stark and imposing landscape; characterized by immense black lava deserts, volcanic craters, tundra, sandur, snowcapped peaks, glaciers, ice



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PJÓRSÁ RIVER

over day at **Landmanalaugar**, (a national preserve known for it's incredible volcanic mountain vistas, superb hiking, and welcoming hot springs. Access to these desert highlands is via an **all-terrain "lunar-bus"**.

From a professional standpoint, we regard our **Icelandic**



TUNGNAÁ RIVER

**Safari** as one of our most unusual river excursions to date. The rivers differ substantially from one another - both in terms of surrounding landscape, and the nature of the whitewater. Although in recent years we have not run anything much more technically difficult than Class II+, climactic conditions could potentially make the trip more formidable. We

intend to continue to explore new and different rivers every year. Thus, it is entirely possible that no two expeditions to the Icelandic interior might ever be the same - participants should definitely be prepared for unexpected adventures.

Our excursion also includes an introductory first day's tour of several of Iceland's classic natural and historic highlights. This trip culminates in **Reykjavik** - the world's most northerly capital, and a surprisingly lively, cosmopolitan city.

The last night's accommodation is at the **Hotel Borg** - a first-class, old-world style hotel, which is included in the trip price.

**Tungnaá** (*Tungnaa-ow*). Both were first descents commencing right at the glacial source. The **Pjórsá**, adjacent to the glacier **Hofsjökull**, featured spectacular gorges, and miles of moderate **Class II white-water**. The lunar-like **Tungnaá**, originating from under Europe's largest glacier, **Vatnajökull**, flows highly braided through a singularly strange and eerie black valley -one of the most unusual appearing rivers anywhere. We later added another river to our itinerary, the **crystalline and serene, spring-fed Vatnakvísl**. Our time in the interior is divided between these rivers; with a lay-



LANDMNNALAGALAU

Although in recent years we have not run anything much more technically difficult



GULFHOSS

**\$3650 (\$6750 for two) (from Reykjavik)**

\$650 DEPOSIT REQD. • FAMILY & GROUP RATES AVAILABLE

• Prices may be subject to change due to currency fluctuations

See following pages for specific logistical details







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**ICELAND**  
**LAND OF ICE & FIRE**  
~ **RIVER SAFARI** ~  
**2005**

• **ITINERARY** •

**U.S. Departure** 7/26 (optional departure for extra day in Reykjavik would be 7/25): Depart New York (J.F.K.), Baltimore (BWI), Minneapolis, or Boston on ICELANDAIR flight for Keflavik.

**DAY 1 ( 7/27):**

Early morning **arrival** in Iceland at Keflavik Airport. Party met by Sunrise staff. Approximately one hour drive to Reykjavik. Trip briefing at Hotel Borg. Opportunity to repack; change into river gear, and store excess travel clothing and luggage in hotel. Participants who have arrived early in Iceland (highly recommend) can meet up with us at this point.

Party heads upcountry, visiting three of Iceland's classic tourist attractions en route to the interior: 1) Gullfoss (the Golden Waterfall), Iceland's "trademark" waterfall; 2) the famed geyser area; and 3) Pingvellir National Park, ancient site of Iceland's original Parliament. Conditions permitting, we access the interior highlands that evening, camping alongside a crater lake in the vicinity of the mountainous Landmannalaugar region. Travel is by all-terrain "lunar bus".

**DAY 2 - 8 ( 7/28 to 8/3):** *Our time in the interior is divided between the various rivers listed below.*

**VATNAKVISL RIVER**

Featuring classic glacial and volcanic Icelandic landscapes, this placid waterway in the interior's most geologically active region, serves as our introductory river. Emerging totally from underground springs, crystalline in quality, and flowing through relatively lush terrain, the **placid**



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**Vatnakviöl** is designated by the Icelandic government as a protected refuge, rich in fish and waterfowl. We obtain exclusive permission to traverse this pristine area.

### **TUNGNAÁ RIVER**

The most singularly unusual rivers of all the rivers that we encountered, we access this river at its origin - at the base of **Europe's largest glacier - Vatnajökull**. Flowing through an incredibly strange and eerie black valley - comprised of vast black gravel dunes, lava fields, and ice caves; the powerful Vatnajökull has the snow-capped peaks of **Landmannalaugar** as a backdrop. We camp in an immense volcanic crater, accessed off the main river, and adjacent to one of the area's few freshwater lakes which provides spring water bathing. We **layover** in the Landmannalaugar area; a spectacular volcanic mountain range which offers extraordinary **hiking** opportunities, as well as bathing in Iceland's famous thermal **hot springs**.

Travel, by vehicle, from the Tungnaá Valley, across the desolate reaches of the **Sprengisandur**, "**exploding desert**", mythical home of legendary outlaws, and other mythical characters and creatures from the famous Icelandic sagas. Camp that evening in the heart of the desert - at the glacial headwaters of the Þjórsá River - one of Iceland's most significant interior waterways.

### **PJORSA RIVER**

Adjacent to the impressive **glacier Hofsjökull**, this river is characterized by considerable stretches of Class I-II+ whitewater, lots of action, plus several spectacular gorges.

*\* Please bear in mind that the interior highlands of Iceland are an incredibly volatile environment, both in terms of climactic conditions and geothermal activity. Changes and/or substitutions in itinerary may become necessary due to weather conditions (such as high winds), water levels (generally related to glacial and/or volcanic activity), and limitations of vehicular access - all part of the adventure.*

**DAY 8: Last Afternoon/Evening (8/3):** Visit to **Stöng**, a deep, mystical and lush glen, reputed home of the mythical spirits of Icelandic lore, followed by a dusk walk to the preserved ruins of an 1100 A.D. Viking longhouse.

**DAY 9 (8/4):** After a visit to another nearby Viking homestead restoration, party returns to **Reykjavik** in the early afternoon. Check into **Hotel Borg**, a four-star, old-world European style hotel, adjacent to the Parliament Square, in the very center of the city (accommodations, based on double occupancy, are included in the trip price; single occupancy at additional charge). Day of leisure in Reykjavik, **the world's most northerly capital**, and a surprisingly cosmopolitan and lively city - especially on weekend nights! Arrangements can be made for extended stays.

**DAY 10 (8/5):**

Shuttle from Reykjavik to **Keflavik Airport**. Optional stop, en route, for a swim in the hot, mineral-rich waters of Reykjanes, the "Blue Lagoon". Depart Keflavik mid-afternoon for ICELANDAIR flight back to New York/Baltimore/Boston. Evening arrival in U.S. (five hour time difference).



HOTEL BORG & "LUNAR BUS"

## • LOGISTICS & BUSINESS •

**TRIP COST:** \$3650 for one; \$6750 for two.

- "Frequent Traveller" discounts apply for return clientele - up to 10% discount per person.
- Trip is limited to 15 participants.
- A deposit of \$600 per person is required to hold a reservation.
- Balance of payment is due in our office three weeks prior to departure date.
- Trip Insurance is recommended, and is available through our office.

**INCLUDED:** All canoes and equipment; Sunrise guides plus driver; all land transportation in Iceland; all meals from Day 1 through the morning of Day 9; last night's hotel accommodations in Reykjavik.

**NOT INCLUDED:** Round trip commercial airfare on ICELANDAIR from the U.S. to Reykjavik (see below); meals in Reykjavik at the end of trip, (Days 9-10); additional hotel accommodations for early or late departures; optional single occupancy evening of Day 9 (\$140 surcharge); personal purchases, liquor, gratuities; excess personal baggage charges, personal medical/evacuation costs.

**AIRFARE:** Sunrise is a licensed booking agent/"tour operator" for ICELANDAIR. We can offer you the absolute lowest ITB fare available. Your air reservation will automatically be made coinciding with your trip reservation (please advise us if you wish to arrive early/depart late).



### **PACKING & EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS:**

The Arctic Circle skirts the top of Iceland; summer weather conditions in the interior are somewhat comparable to those found in the eastern Canadian Arctic, at similar latitudes. Characterized by long hours of radiant sunlight, daytime temperatures are generally quite pleasant; (50°-70°F). Evening temperatures, however, drop considerably (25°-45°F); below freezing nighttime temps. are possible. High winds can also be an issue; the dramatic sand/gravel storms of the highland desert regions can be quite fearsome. On the other hand, the period from mid-July to mid-August is considered the optimum time to visit the interior - the brief, though beautiful "arctic summer". And...there are virtually no bugs. Water temperatures, reflecting their extremely recent glacial origins, are generally in the 30's and low 40's Fahrenheit.

Our Northern Packing List will be forwarded to participants. On this particular excursion, a lightweight parka for the cold evenings would not be unreasonable. And, of course, there's always the incredible selection of substantial Icelandic wool sweaters and other woolen goods available throughout the country. As with all trips, tactical layering, and quality outer shell garments are critical.

Again, as with all our trips and expeditions, we are prepared to supply you with all necessary tents, personal packing gear, paddles, and vests; although you are welcome to bring your own. For boats, we are using Mad River Explorers, and Old Town Discoveries, all 16.5 to 17.5 in length and properly outfitted. These boats, along with our customary setting poles, were shipped to Iceland in 1994, and are stored there permanently; the first canoes in Iceland!

### **Suggested Reference Sources:**

- 1) *The Lonely Planet Guide to Iceland and Greenland.* Published by: Lonely Planet Publications  
P.O. Box 2001A, Berkeley, CA 94702, USA
- 2) The national map store: LANDMAELINGAR ISLANDS; Lauavegi 178, postholf 5060 125  
Reykjavik 91-681611



