

## The origins of the earth and the four seasons of Iceland

“Slow travel”, an opportunity to reinvigorate yourself at the other end of the world in the four seasons of Iceland – volcanic hot springs – contemplation – active hiking – observation of birdlife and volcanoes.

6-7 days on site – lakeside chalets – medium range hiking– 3-5 hours of hiking daily – international group – English speaking guides – maximum 12 participants.

Lake Mývatn is located in the northern part of the country at latitude of 65.6 degrees, exactly over the active mid-Atlantic Ridge that emerges in Iceland. The rift is gradually widening at a rate of slightly less than an inch per year, continually pushing the European and American continental plates further and further apart. Hence the great volcanic activity in the region, which is in constant formation.

This beautiful lake is a sanctuary for waterfowl (ducks, swans and geese), of which seventeen American, Eurasian and Arctic species all come here to breed: a paradise for the bird-watcher. For the contemplative spirit the site offers exceptional variety, one of the most beautiful, strangest places on the planet. Our imagination is continually called upon by the bizarre shapes of the landscape and the trolls, elves and fairies who no doubt live there ....

**Harpa** and **Jean-Marc** accompany these “Rebirth on Lake Mývatn” trips in each of the four seasons of Iceland. Their intimate knowledge of the terrain and their specialist training made the first trips we offered an immediate success, but we have remained true to our principle of preserving their small size and an unsophisticated approach. Our aim – which is also our priority – is to ensure a maximum of quality on these trips, whether in terms of food, human relations and awareness of nature, enabling each participant to experience a re-centring of his or her personal life. These short adventures are proposed to people with open, contemplative, active minds, who are willing to take time to discover, feel and meet.

A stay at Lake Mývatn is an immersion in a very powerful primeval natural environment, where man has learnt to develop and maintain traditions such as baking bread on the hot ground, fishing below the ice, etc. The Mývatn region offers an incredible diversity within a limited area, and there is no need for long trips by car. The periods of stay are outside the tourist season, on the one hand because of the greater quiet this affords, but primarily because Mývatn shows very different faces from one season to another. Depending on the time of year and the reigning conditions, we can trek with snowshoes or cross-country skis or on foot, and if the weather prevents us from going out we take advantage of the chance to meet the local people with their age-old traditions. Without a doubt, every outing provides an opportunity to discover the rich and subtle features of the lake: its legends, culture and culinary traditions such as peat-smoked trout or lamb, and many others just waiting to be discovered...

The hikes will depend on the weather and the inspiration of your guides. They may be gentle or energetic, mysterious or dazzling, but they will always finish in the evening with a wonderful relaxing immersion in the milky blue silica-rich water of natural hot springs (between 37° and 42° C). To bathe thus in winter under the starry sky, the body warm as toast, and the head in the cool air, virtually alone in the middle of an immense natural landscape is an unforgettable experience, which has become essential for some. This is a sort of thalassotherapy at the origins of time. The immensity of the landscape, the low density of the population, the quality of the water, air, silence and light make Mývatn an ideal place to recharge one’s batteries.

## YOUR GUIDES:

**Harpa Barkardóttir** is Icelandic and the mother of a 7 year old boy. She has studied Anthropology and took her guiding diploma 10 years ago and has since accompanied groups in Iceland – often within the theme of geology. Harpa is a Kundalini yoga teacher, specialised in the field of pregnancy. She is also a musician and a singer, talents that she puts to great advantage in these trips.

Harpa likes to accompany people into the sacred dimension of nature, she has a sensibility and respect towards the « unseen world » - and a solid knowledge of the material one. Encountering nature is for her first and foremost the encountering of your own nature.

**Jean-Marc Plessy** is French, an Aikido and Qi gong teacher, Shiatsu practitioner. He has experience of organising workshops within different disciplines in France.

He has travelled in Iceland for several years as a photographer and moved here two years ago and now he guides groups and individuals in the country. He chose at first to settle at lake Mývatn – where he worked as a photographer and massage therapist. He is therefore enthusiastic to help you discover this region for which he has a particular affection.

Jean Marc is a musician and plays the indian Bansuri flute and did a concert tour in Iceland in 2008 with his band Triskyn. At the moment he is working on several artistic projects, one of which is a video called « On the riverbanks of reality » - which is exactly where he would like to take you...

Jean Marc likes taking time while walking, contemplating, feeling the elements around – connecting with the source, connecting with himself.

## THE FOUR SEASONS OF MÝVATN

### MÝVATN IN WINTER

**The dominant colours are white and blue, often with magical skies**

For those who encounter Mývatn in summer with its lava chaos, winter provides an opportunity to experience a landscape "smoothed out" by the snow, from which only the most chaotic lava peaks and major craters emerge.

Crossing the Krafla caldera or the frozen lake on cross-country skis is an unforgettable experience.

Hiking is done on snowshoes, cross-country skis or on foot, depending on the snow conditions.

The air is extremely pure at this time of year and the skies are often magnificent, exhibiting the famous "glitský" (multicoloured clouds) and the aurora borealis.

The frost glistening on the trees creates a fairytale landscape. It is not uncommon to come across a flock of fine ptarmigan or to catch sight of an Arctic fox.

In December we are likely to meet "sausage-swiper," "door-slammer", "candle-beggar" and other Yule lads, the 13 Icelandic Father Christmases, little pranksters who can be quite startling, and who do not have much in common with the globalized red Santa Claus. ([Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yule\\_Lads](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yule_Lads)). The aurora borealis, Christmas, and New Year's Day fireworks all contribute to bringing light and explosions of joy during the darkest moment of the year.

The trips provide an opportunity to discover traditions such as trout smoked in dried sheep manure, ice fishing, rye bread baked on the burning ground, and more. In December, a pale sun rises around 10:30 a.m. and by 3 p.m. it is night again. In February the days lengthen significantly.

Full moon nights are often brighter than during the daytime as a result of snow glare, and may offer an occasion for an unforgettable hike. The temperature ranges from zero to -20°C.

**Feb 28 to Mar 06**

**Dec 21 to Dec 28 (Special Christmas and solstice)**

## **MÝVATN IN SPRING**

**Green and black now emerge from the snow, their rebirth after the long winter!**

Now is the time for the return of large flocks of migratory birds from Africa, Europe and America that converge at the lake sanctuary. Wild swans, greylag geese, fifteen species of duck, grebes, great northern divers, wheatears, phalaropes, snipe, all are enthusiastic to start their new lease of life. Courtship is the order of the day, and these birds, which have not yet fully acquired their wild habits, are more trusting than they will be in a few weeks once they start raising their broods.

This is also the lambing season, which comes into full swing before the snow has completely disappeared and winter still seems to have trouble admitting defeat before the eternal summer light invades the roof of the world.

We will spend our time walking, bird-watching and discovering the local traditions of the land: sheep-farming, wool, smoked trout, fishing, bread baked in the hot ground and more. The climate is often sunny and quite mild at this time, with temperatures between 5 and 15°C.

**Contact us**

## **MÝVATN IN SUMMER**

**This is the season of green and black**

The northern summer has come at last, full of life and light. But its duration is short, and with all its outpouring nature senses that its days are numbered...

The snow has disappeared, also from the peaks, and almost all the paths are accessible on foot. This is a great time for bird-watching. Life spills over on and around the lake and we can admire the last male harlequin garrots in their nuptial plumage on the rapids of the Laxá, and observe the first hatching of their broods, while waders freeze at the slightest alarm, requiring their chicks in the foam to remain absolutely still and trust in their powers of mimicry... This period has the advantage of benefiting from summer temperatures before the peak tourist season gets fully into its stride. Temperatures range from 10 to 25°C.

**Jun 07 to Jun 14**

**Jun 14 to Jun 21 (special solstice)**

## MÝVATN IN THE AUTUMN

### The colours are flamboyant, with red and yellow dominating

With the arrival of September, the spectacular aurora borealis begins to light up the starry night sky. Night is gradually taking more and more of a foothold over the summer light. With the early night frosts come the first mirrors of morning ice. The peaks become powdered over with icing sugar and the sheep come down into the valleys to be gathered together by men on horseback. The light now falls obliquely and the fiery tones of autumn light up the Arctic vegetation: dwarf birch, woolly willow and rowan now offer us their resplendent colours and redwings feast on red berries and blueberries. The tundra with its thousand shades of colour hosts gatherings of large flocks of geese for their dress rehearsal before their great flight southwards. The world is once again preparing to sink into the storms and the night of the northern winter, but first the ephemeral beauty of the autumnal season assures its place in the natural cycle, thrilling our senses and desire for harmony. The climate remains mild, with temperatures between 10 and 20°C, unless we are surprised by an early snowfall ...

### Sep 12 to Sep 19

#### Indicative itinerary :

- D1: Reykjavik – domestic flight to Akureyri – Welcome by your guide
- D2: Lava Chaos of Dimmuborgir –Hverfell crater
- D3: hot spring of Námaskard
- D4: Caldera of Krafla and Gjástyki eruptive zone
- D5: Reefs of Kálfaströnd and Höfði peninsula
- D6: Stream of river Laxá ,...
- D7: Fall of Godafoss - Akureyri - domestic flight to Reykjavik

**Price: 1,460 €** (6-12 participants)

Ask for quote for private group!

**IMPORTANT:** All rates are based on current purchasing prices in Iceland. ALKEMIA reserves the right to increase prices already quoted in the event of currency fluctuation, government taxes, or due to any other cost increases that are outside ALKEMIA control. Due to the difficult creases Iceland is going through the Icelandic Krona ISK has seriously fall down compare to Euro. This means that our price are constantly decreasing

#### Included:

- Domestic flight from Reykjavik to Akureyri and return
- Road transfers between Akureyri and Mývatn
- Vehicle transfers around Mývatn
- English speaking guide
- Made-up bed accommodation in twin bedded room in cabin or hostel
- All meals from lunch Day 1 to breakfast Day 7
- Daily entrance fee at the Mývatn's spa D2 to D6
- Accomodation in Reykjavik
- Travel agent sales commission

**Not included:**

- Flights to/from Iceland
- Transfers from/to Keflavik international airport
- Meals in Reykjavik
- Entrance fees for museums and optional excursions (horses rental)
- Drinks and other personal expenses
- Personal travel insurance

**Small group surcharge:** +150 € for 4-5 participants

**Group size:** Multi-national group 6 to 12 members (Note: for group sizes of 4-5 persons a small group surcharge applies) ALKEMIA staff or ALKEMIA representatives accompanying professionals (e.g. photographers, journalists etc...) and other discounted travelers such as children, are excluded from the participant count.

**Level:** Easy walking with light daypack. The participants are supposed to help the guide with the preparation of meals and when doing the dishes in the huts (of course both men and women ☺).

**Itinerary & security:** The day-by-day itinerary as it is indicated here can be modified or even reversed depending on natural circumstances (late or early heavy snow, eruption's threat, river inundation, storms...) The guide knows the field perfectly and is able to judge exceptional circumstances.

**Transport:** Small and comfortable 4wd bus, specially modified for Icelandic roads.

**Accommodation during the trip:** 6 nights in twin bedded room in lakeside chalet / cabin (or in small hostel).

**Food:** We pride ourselves on providing the best cuisine in the highlands! Breakfast is Scandinavian-style, with muesli, breads, jams, fish and cheese. Packed lunch, with a variety of sandwich fillings, from fish or local cheeses. Dinners involve fresh, local fish and meat dishes, with pasta, rice or potatoes, fresh vegetables and salad. Vegetarians and those with food allergies can be fully catered for with a range of tasty options. It is essential that you inform our office of any special food requirements at the time of booking!

**Electricity:** 220 V, continental European standard

**Trip extension:** This trip can be combined with an individual extension to see more of Iceland. You can also stay a couple of days in Reykjavik or Akureyri enjoying the world's most northern capital. From there you can take short excursions to the Blue Lagoon or go whale watching...