



2026

# *EcoTravel*

*Overnight Natural History Tours and Day Trips*

*Iceland: Puffins, Glaciers, and The Ring Road*

May 21 – June 1, 2026



# *Iceland*

## *May/June 2026*

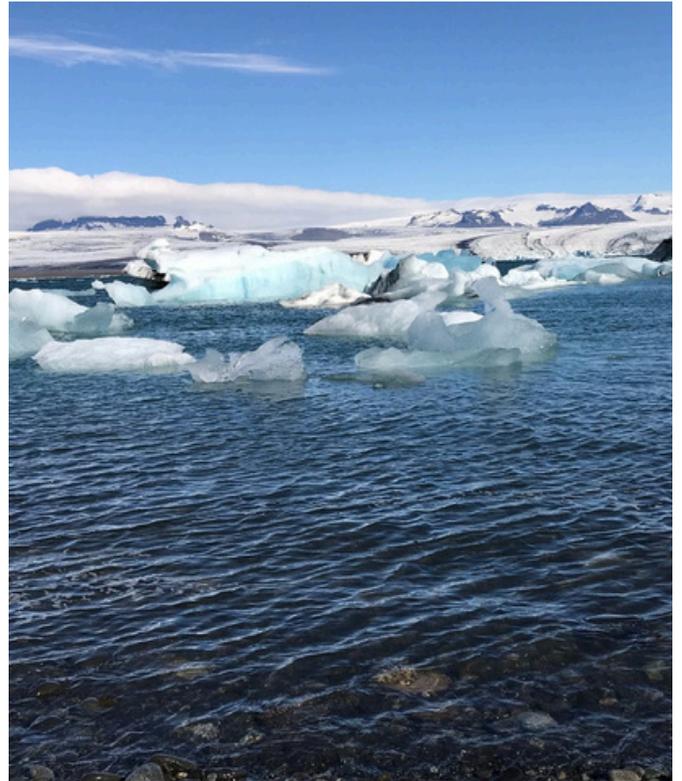
### *12 Days*

#### Overview

Iceland's avifauna is a unique mixture of species. There's not a wide variety of regular breeding birds, about 80 species, but Iceland holds enormous numbers of certain species during the breeding season. It includes a unique mix of Nearctic and Western Palearctic birds plus some high-Arctic species that are at their southernmost breeding limit in Iceland. The Nearctic species, such as **Barrow's Goldeneye**, **Harlequin Duck**, and **Common Loon**, are among the main target birds of visiting birders from Europe, while most of Iceland's species are new and exciting for North American travelers. Of course, everyone would like to see the **Gyr Falcon**, which is probably easier to see in Iceland than anywhere else. The Gyr Falcon is a specially protected species by law during the breeding season and can't be approached at nest sites.

Late May into June is the prime time for seeing birds in Iceland. The migrants have all arrived, plus some of the Arctic nesting shorebirds that pass through on migration, such as **Red Knot**, **Sanderling**, and **Ruddy Turnstone**, are still present in small numbers. The overall bird list for Iceland is nearing 420 species, of which most are accidentals. Birding in Iceland is, therefore, always exciting, even for the most hardcore listers, as almost anything can show up at any time. But one of the biggest attractions of watching birds in Iceland is the environment that they're in. Iceland's nature is spectacular, and much of it remains wild and untouched. Breeding birds on an Arctic tundra landscape set against a backdrop of mountains and glaciers is a sight to behold.

A birding tour in early summer will generally yield 70–80 species, or even more if an emphasis is put on locations that are known to have vagrant birds around. The days are long this time of year, with over 20 hours of daylight, and the weather is generally mild with temperatures mostly ranging between 50°F–60°F. Iceland is, however, often wet and windy; more so the latter. Being prepared for the worst while hoping for the best is, therefore, the common saying among Icelanders.



## Itinerary

The fixed part of the itinerary are the hotels. Apart from that, the day-to-day activities may change according to the weather or other factors. The general itinerary below is therefore subject to change. It'll be a circumnavigation of Iceland's main highway (Route 1 - "The Ring Road") with some detours, such as out to the Snaefellsnes Peninsula. The Icelandic alphabet has 32 letters, of which 10 are not present in the English language. For location names in the itinerary, we substitute the Icelandic characters with English ones.

### Day 1 – Overnight Flights

#### Day 2

LD

Arrive in Iceland in the morning, meeting up with the local guide at the airport. The international airport at Keflavik is about 45 minutes outside of Reykjavik and is located on the Reykjanes Peninsula, an excellent birding area. We'll start by heading out to Gardur Lighthouse, where we'll scan Faxafloi Bay through our spotting scopes with the hope of catching a glimpse of **Manx Shearwater** and other seabirds. The nearby beach and pools are known to attract passing migrants, so birding in the Gardur area and the next town of Sandgerdi, can produce some surprises.

We'll also drive out to the Reykjanes Lighthouse, where we'll get a taste of the first seabird colony. **Black-legged Kittiwake** and **Northern Fulmar** nest on the cliffs, and there's a **Northern Gannet** colony just offshore. It's also an area of geological interest with some geothermal activity.

Continuing to the town of Grindavik, we'll scan the harbor for **Iceland Gull** and other interesting gulls. We'll continue driving through lava fields towards Reykjavik and, depending on time, we'll make one or two stops at good birding locations at the outskirts of the city, including at Alftanes, where we'll find the residence of the President of Iceland. We'll then head into downtown Reykjavik to rest up after a long day of travel.

Night: Hotel Borg

#### Day 3

B

This will be a free day to explore Reykjavik on your own. We'll be sure to share lots of suggestions for your day.

Night: Hotel Borg

#### Day 4

BLD

We'll leave the city in the morning and head north to the Snaefellsnes Peninsula. The route takes us through Borgarfjordur, where we'll be on the lookout for **Common Shelduck**. This area holds most of the breeding population of this gooselike duck. Once out on the peninsula, our first stop will be at Ytri-Tunga, a renowned seal watching location where Harbor Seals and the occasional Gray Seal can be found relaxing on rocks just off the beach. It'll also be our first experience of nesting **Eurasian Oystercatcher** and **Common Ringed Plover**.



The area between here and our next accommodation in Budir is littered with ponds where we'll see a good number of waterbirds, including **Horned Grebe** and hopefully **Northern Shoveler**, which is very rare in Iceland. We should also see our first **Common Loons**, for which Iceland is their easternmost breeding ground.

After getting our luggage to the hotel, we'll continue west towards the Snaefellsjokull Glacier and the national park area that partly surrounds it. Seabirds are on the agenda, with visits to the cliffs of Arnarstapi and Thufubjarg and eventually to the western tip of the peninsula, known as Ondverdarnes. Kittiwakes and fulmars will be present in good numbers, plus **Arctic Tern**. The most common alcid will be the **Common Murre**, but we should also have views of **Black Guillemot**, **Razorbill**, and **Thick-billed Murre**. We might also see our first **Atlantic Puffin**, but we'll get to know them up close and personal once we get to the far east later in our journey.

Night: Fosshotel Stykkisholmur

## Day 5 BLD

Our second day at Snaefellsnes might have us catching up with some birds that we missed the day before, while also heading over to the northern side of the peninsula, where we'll be on the lookout for White-tailed Eagles. This part of the country is the stronghold for this species, and we might see large groups of migrating shorebirds.

Night: Fosshotel Stykkisholmur

## Day 6 BLD

This will be our longest travel day, as we drive from Snaefellsnes north to the town of Husavik, about 270 miles away. We'll break the day up with frequent stops to look for birds and to admire the scenery. We'll be in the town of Akureyri in the afternoon, where we plan to walk in a local park in search of woodland species such as **Redwing**, **Eurasian Blackbird**, **Eurasian Wren**, **Redpoll**, and **Goldcrest**. In the early evening, we'll arrive in Husavik, where we'll stay for two nights.

Night: Fosshotel Husavik.

## Day 7 BLD

Lake Myvatn is our destination today. The lake is a highlight of any birding tour to Iceland, as it has the largest congregation of waterfowl on the island and possibly anywhere in the world. All of Iceland's duck species are present in Myvatn. The lake and the ponds of various sizes around the main lake are where we'll be looking at **Barrow's Goldeneye**, **Tufted Duck**, **Common Scoter**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, and more. The Laxa River that flows out of Lake Myvatn is a fantastic place to see **Harlequin Ducks** up close. The neighboring lava fields are also home to **Rock Ptarmigan**, **Snow Bunting**, **Northern Wheatear**, and **Redwing**, plus a few pairs of **Merlin**.

Night: Fosshotel Husavik.



## Day 8 BLD

From Husavik, we'll make an excursion east along the north coast. We'll stop by Asbyrgi, within Vatnajokull National Park. The plan is to walk a bit in the woodlands and enjoy some of the woodland species. We'll then cross a highland plateau on our way to the far eastern end of the island. Our destination is the small village of Bakkagerdi, where we plan to visit Hafnarholmi, a bird reserve owned by Fuglavernd (BirdLife Iceland) and the municipality. Stairs and platforms have been built here, allowing for close access to **Atlantic Puffins**, which have become used to visitors and remain photographically cooperative despite the intrusion. There's no other location in Iceland where puffins can be observed so closely without being disturbed. Our hotel is the Blabjorg Resort, where we can enjoy a soak in hot tubs overlooking the fjord and harbor.

Night: Blabjorg Resort

## Day 9 BLD

Our journey now brings us south and west through a fascinating landscape of winding fjords. We'll make several stops to look at birds and enjoy the scenery. We'll pass through the town of Djupivogur, which has a good number of wetland birds, and Lon, which is a staging area for large groups of **Whooper Swans**. We'll then continue to the town of Hofn in the southeast, where a view opens up to the glaciers of the Vatnajokull Ice Cap.

Night: Fosshotel Glacier Lagoon

## Day 10 BLD

The Vatnajokull Glacier is the largest in Europe, and covers almost 10% of Iceland. It's a massive icecap with dozens of outlet glaciers running down carved out valleys, with some ending in a glacial lagoon. The birdlife in the region takes on an Arctic feeling. We can expect to see **Barnacle Goose**, **Parasitic Jaeger**, **Great Skua**, and **Red-throated Loon**. This full day in the Vatnajokull Region allows us to slow down a bit and enjoy a relaxed approach to enjoying both the nature and birdlife of this fascinating area. We'll spend a good time at the Jokulsarlon Glacial Lagoon scanning icebergs for a possible **Sabine's Gull** or a **King Eider** swimming with its **Common Eider** relatives. Snow Buntings breed in rocks by the side of the short Jokulsa River, the outflow from the lagoon, as do **White Wagtails**. These birds have become used to people and can be enjoyed and photographed from up close. We'll also visit some of the smaller glacial lagoons, such as Fjallsarlón.

Night: Fosshotel Glacier Lagoon

## Day 11 – Departures B

West is the general direction of the day. We're travelling a fair distance along the south coast, again with many possibilities for nature walks and bird sightings. Our eventual itinerary for this day will be decided by the weather, by what birds we've seen so far, and by what birds we might possibly be missing.

Night: Hotel Ranga.



## Day 12

BL

This is our last day, and we plan to be at Keflavik Airport just after 2 pm. We're not far away from the airport, just over a two-hour drive, so we have an opportunity to make a stop at the Floi Nature Reserve. This wetland reserve on the south coast is managed by Fuglavernd and features the densest known breeding of Dunlin in Iceland. There are Red-throated Loons on nearly every pond in the area. Much of the wetland in Floi had been drained, but has now been restored with great success by Fuglavernd in cooperation with the local municipality. This has greatly increased habitat for wetland species, such as the ones mentioned before, plus many others. After experiencing the Floi reserve, we continue to the airport and say goodbye to Iceland for now.



## General Information

Tour Cost: \$10,998.

**Members: \$8,998.**

The above cost is based upon a minimum number of eight paying participants traveling together. If there are fewer participants, there will be a small group supplement. Per person Tour Cost is based on two people sharing a room.

Single Room Supplement: \$1,250.

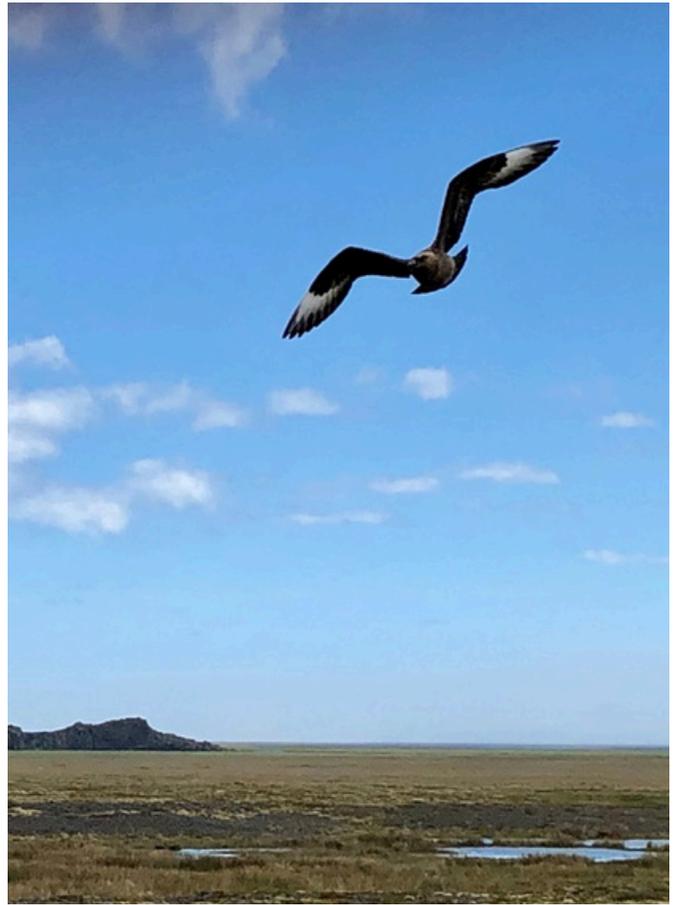
All rates are calculated at the time of publication and are subject to change due to conditions out of our control (i.e. hotel rates). All passengers will be notified if changes in pricing occur.

### **Tour Includes:**

Accommodations are based on double occupancy, one or two beds. Ground transportation within Iceland. Meals are included as outlined in the itinerary section (B=Breakfast/L=Lunch/D=Dinner). Additional charges for meals may apply if needs are out of the standard offerings. Entrance fees to national parks and sightseeing as specified in the itinerary.

### **Not Included:**

Taxes; costs of obtaining passports and visas; airfare; baggage fees; personal expenses such as room service, beverages, laundry, gratuities for the local guide and housekeeping; personal communications; airport taxes; tax increases or new taxes charged for services that were not taxed at the time the booking was made; excess mileage carried out at the request of the passenger; sightseeing or meals not specified in the itinerary; personal insurance coverage (strongly recommended); and transfers to and from your home airport.



**Andrew Griswold**, Director of EcoTravel for Connecticut Audubon Society, graduated as an honor student in biology from Hartwick College, where he worked at their biological research station in the Bahamas studying avian ecology. He's the original concept creator and scientific consultant for a cable television series on bird watching called All Bird TV that aired on Discovery's Animal Planet. Andy's the original concept creator of the award-winning Connecticut River Eagle Festival (at the time the largest birding festival in the Americas). He leads trips to Canada, Texas, South Florida, Nova Scotia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, and many other unique destinations. Andy is a former licensed USCG 100-Ton Master boat captain and lives in Essex, Connecticut, with his wife and son. He's known for his attentiveness to travelers' needs, fine birding skills, and infectious sense of humor.



## General Terms & Conditions

### Reservations

Early reservations with deposit are essential to guarantee your booking. A **\$2,000 deposit**, per person, applicable to final payment, is required to reserve space on this trip. Reservations made within 120 days of departure require full payment along with the formal Registration Forms. Final payment for programs is due 120 days prior to departure. Payments can be made by personal check, money order, certified check, or a cashier's check.

### Rates and Fares

Prices are accurate as available at the time of publication. Prices do not include airfare unless otherwise stated. The Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) reserves the right to alter quoted prices to reflect changes in airline fares, land service, or currency exchange rates. In the event that the number of participants is below the minimum required for the quoted price, a small group surcharge may be added.

### Cancellation and Insurance

At the time the EcoTravel Office receives written notice that you must cancel your trip, the following cancellation fees will apply: Prior to 120 days from departure, your payments will be refunded minus **\$500 per person**. At 120 days and less, no refund is granted. NOTE: In addition to cancellation fees, airline tickets and deposits required to guarantee hotel rooms may be nonrefundable. The purchase of a general travel insurance plan covering baggage, accident/life, and trip cancellation is highly recommended. Give us a call and we can put you in touch with those providers. CAS reserve the right, if registration is insufficient or other reasons out of our control, to cancel, postpone, or offer the trip with a small group supplement. In the event that CAS cancels or postpones, those with reservations will be notified as soon as possible and a credit of payments will be held on file. The Connecticut Audubon Society is not responsible for the refund or credit of additional expenses incurred in preparation for a trip. Any "delay" or "postponing" of departure by tour participants is considered a cancellation and cancellation parameters will be apply relative to the 120-day window. There are no exceptions.

### Responsibility

Payment of deposit represents and acceptance of the following terms and conditions by the purchaser: The Connecticut Audubon Society, its affiliates, and all cooperating airlines and agencies act only in the capacity of agents in all matters of transportation and tour operations, and their liability is limited to the terms of the airline tickets and land accommodation contracts. They are not responsible for any delays, inconveniences, accidents, expense, or mishap of any kind whatsoever resulting entirely or in part from the negligence of others or from causes beyond their control. They can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, riot, war, pandemic, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses must be borne by the passengers, as the tour rate provides for arrangements only as describe in the tour brochure. The right is reserved to change tour leaders, substitute hotels, of similar category, and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by unforeseen circumstances. Baggage is at the owner's risk entirely. No refund can be made for unused hotel rooms, meals, and sightseeing tours unless arrangements are made at time of booking. The right is reserved to decline any person as a tour member for any reason which affects the operation of the tour or the rights, welfare, or enjoyment of the other tour members. Any refund of the recoverable land tour services in the limit of The Connecticut Audubon Society and its affiliates' liability.

### To make a Reservation:

Send the above stated deposit to hold your reservation. Nonmembers, please add \$45 (single) or \$58 (family) for your annual membership and to take advantage of the member discount.

Send your name(s), address, phone number, email address, name of the trip, your deposit, and membership fee (if applicable) to:

**The Connecticut Audubon Society EcoTravel**

**PO Box 903**

**Essex, CT 06426**

(860) 767-0660

ecotravel@ctaudubon.org

www.ctaudubon.org/ecotravel-home

