



Visit Vik, the most southerly village in Iceland

Midwifery and Childcare in Iceland

4 – 13 May 2019





Bathe in the thermal waters of Blue Lagoon

This midwifery study tour, led by Professor Nicky Leap, is designed to follow on from the 21st Congress of the Nordic Federation of Midwives in Reykjavik. Iceland is a magical island humming with energy and natural phenomena that turn everyday experiences - a walk, a drive, a dip in a pool - into something that will take your breath away. Its beauty comes from a vast volcanic landscape where mighty forces shape the earth: geysers and glooping mudflats, rumbling volcanoes swathed in ice and glaciers grinding their way through mountains. Its rich cultural life encompasses a literary legacy that stretches from medieval sagas to contemporary thrillers by way of Nobel Prize winners, as well as live music and Nordic style.

As well as its wonderful culture and landscapes, the local people are welcoming and creative and have a progressive, egalitarian sensibility. Here, midwives are known as ljósmodir, or 'Mothers of Light', which reflects the status that midwives have always held in Iceland, where formal midwifery training first began back in 1761. Although medicalisation has increased since the years when home births were around 70% (in the 1950s-60s), home births are steadily increasing again. Iceland now has the lowest caesarean section rate of all OECD countries and breastfeeding rates are among the highest in the world.

Experience the beauty and culture of this remarkable island while gaining insight into its midwifery and maternal services through a wide ranging professional programme, led by Professor Nicky Leap.

Arrive in Reykjavik, the world's most northerly capital, and check into your hotel. The city combines colourful buildings, quirky, creative people, striking design and a richly cosmopolitan feel with its excellent museums and art, food and vibrant nightlife. Settle in at your leisure before a welcome dinner with the Icelandic midwives in the evening.

The following morning visit the Björkin midwives who run a birthing home and offer a range of pre and post-natal services for women. Their aim is to increase women's options in the



Reykjavik



The turf houses of Glumbaer (top); Godafoss Falls (above)

childbirth process and promote a continuous service focused on home delivery. In the afternoon visit the Blue Lagoon, an unmissable hot spring experience in a magnificent black-lava field. The milky-teal spa is fed water from the futuristic Svartsengi geothermal plant, heated to a perfect 38°C and rich in blue-green algae, mineral salts and fine silica mud, which condition and exfoliate the skin.

The next day visit the National University Hospital, Landspítali - Iceland's biggest hospital. Landspítali's role is threefold – patient care, teaching and training and scientific research. Meet with local midwives and learn about Iceland's approach to midwifery on a morning tour of the hospital. Head to the small port town of Akranes later in the morning and visit the local hospital, which is known for its natural birth programme. Continue your drive through the stunningly beautiful north of Iceland, an area rich in mythology and legend, visiting Kolugljúfur waterfall and Glaumbær turf farmhouses. Continue to Akureyri, the second

biggest town in Iceland (although its population is less than 20,000). This vibrant, friendly town belies its small size with buzzing cafes, quality restaurants and late night bustle, with summer flowerboxes, trees and well-tended gardens making it easy to forget that it's a mere stone's throw from the Arctic Circle.

Visit Akureyri's multidisciplinary hospital the next morning, which serves north and east Iceland. In the afternoon go on a sightseeing tour in Akureyri.

The next morning drive to the dramatic east of Iceland, visiting Goðafoss, Skútustaðagjár, Dimmuborgir and Hverarönd. The drive will take you through the changing landscapes of northeastern Iceland to the east coast, from stunning waterfalls to lava fields and lakes. Continue to the far eastern fjord town of Egilsstaðir and check into your hotel.

Next morning visit Neskaupstaður Hospital. Continue through the dramatic scenery of the East Fjords to Höfn, a small harbour village in a stunning setting, overlooking Vatnajökull and its fellow glaciers. Check into your hotel and spend the night.

The following morning head out to visit the spectacular glacial lagoon of Jökulsárlón, a



A street in Akureyri



birdlife-rich glacial lagoon where wind and water sculpt icebergs into otherworldly shapes. Continue along the coast and see the many glacial tongues and one of Iceland’s largest ice-covered volcanoes, Öräfajökull Glacier. Stop off at the Skaftafell National Park where you can walk to the waterfall of Svartifoss, one of Iceland’s most popular sights for its distinctive hexagonal black basalt columns beneath a 20m tall waterfall. Continue to Iceland’s most southerly village, Vik, and spend the night in a beautiful coastal setting.

It’s time to head to the great lands of the south. Here the landscapes forged from fire and ice become wonderfully jagged, with spectacular waterfalls and vast glaciers cutting their way to black sand beaches. Stop at two of Iceland’s great waterfalls - Seljanlandsfoss and Skógafoss - on the way. Continue to Selfoss, a town on the banks of the Ölfusá River. Visit the Selfoss Hospital, which has excellent facilities for natural birth.

The following morning set out for the ‘Golden Circle’, a circuit that allows you to see a meeting-point of the continental plates, the site of the ancient Icelandic parliament (Þingvellir), Strokkur Geyser, spurting hot water and steam 30 metres into the air, and a roaring waterfall (Gullfoss). Continue to Hafnarfjörður, which is a small town outside Reykjavik where you will overnight

at the Viking Hotel and experience a Viking farewell dinner.

Make your way to the airport for your return flight the following day.

“Excellent visits – Iceland must be the leading light in midwifery”

Mary Norton, Midwifery in Iceland, 2017



Strokkur Geyser

Itinerary 4 – 13 May 2019

B = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

2 nights Reykjavik – 2 nights Akureyri – 1 night Egilsstaðir – 1 night Höfn – 1 night Vik
– 1 night Selfoss – 1 night Hafnarfjörður

4 May (Sat) Reykjavik **D**
Pm Arrive Reykjavik and check into your hotel. Time at leisure to explore Reykjavik
Eve Welcome dinner with Icelandic midwives

5 May (Sun) Reykjavik **B D**
Am Visit Björkin Birth Centre and meet the midwives who run the project
Pm Visit the Blue Lagoon for a hot outdoor bath in spectacular scenery

6 May (Mon) Reykjavik / Akranes / Akureyri **B D**
Am Visit the biggest hospital in Iceland, Landspítali, and meet with local midwives
Pm Drive to Akranes and visit their hospital, which is popular for natural births. Visit Kolugljúfur and Glaumbær. Continue to Akureyri, the second biggest town in Iceland

7 May (Tues) Akureyri **B D**
Am Visit Akureyri's multidisciplinary hospital, which serves north and east Iceland
Pm Sightseeing around Akureyri

8 May (Wed) Akureyri / Egilsstaðir **B D**
Am Drive on to Eastern Iceland visiting Goðafoss, Skútustaðagjar, Dimmuborgir, Hverarönd
Pm Arrive in Egilsstaðir and check into your hotel and at leisure

9 May (Thur) Egilsstaðir / Neskaupstaður / East Fjords / Höfn **B D**
Am Visit Neskaupstaður Hospital
Pm Continue to the East Fjords to the small sea village of Höfn and overnight

10 May (Fri) Höfn / Jökulsárlón / Skaftafell / Vik **B D**
Am Visit beautiful glacial Jökulsárlón lagoon and explore the birdlife-rich area
Pm Continue along the coastline and see the many glacial tongues and one of Iceland's largest volcanoes, Öräfajökull glacier. Stop off at the National Park Skaftafell where you can walk to Svartifoss waterfall. Overnight in Vik

11 May (Sat) Vik / South Shore / Selfoss **B L**
Am Head to the south shore of Iceland, known for its beautiful landscapes; Waterfalls, black sand and great glaciers
Pm Continue along the south shore, stopping at the great waterfalls of Seljalandsfoss and Skógafoss on the way. Visit Selfoss Hospital*

12 May (Sun) Selfoss / Golden Circle / Hafnarfjörður **B D**
Am Visit the Golden Circle, stopping first at Thingvallavatn, Iceland's largest natural lake. Continue to Gullfoss Waterfall and the geothermal area where Strokkur Geyser spouts hot water and steam
Pm Continue to Hafnarfjörður and check into the Viking Hotel
Eve Farewell Viking dinner

13 May (Mon) Hafnarfjörður **B**
Am Depart for the airport

* As this visit is scheduled for a Saturday, availability will depend on how busy the staff are on the day.



Puffins



The lava field formations of Dummuborgir

Hotels

You will be staying in good quality, mid range hotels. In Scandinavian style hotels, rooms tend to be simple but comfortable. A full list of the hotels will be sent with your joining instructions.

Iceland facts

- There are just 250 midwives in Iceland, with 12 retiring and 12 new midwives taking their place every year.
- Midwives are known as ljósmodir, or 'Mothers of Light'.
- For the sixth year running, Iceland has been ranked as the world's safest country in the Global Peace Index (The Institute for Economics and Peace).
- The national flag (blue with a red cross outlined in white) represents red for volcanic fire, white for snow and glaciers and blue for Iceland's vivid skies.
- Iceland was the last country to be settled in Europe, through migration from Scandinavia and the British Isles, in the ninth and tenth century. There are fewer than three inhabitants per square kilometre.



Oraefajokull Glacier



Skaftafell National Park

Tour Leader

Professor Nicky Leap is currently an Adjunct Professor of Midwifery at the University of Technology, Sydney. For more than 30 years Nicky has had a variety of roles in midwifery practice, education and research. She has published widely and is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences. Nicky is well known for her work supporting the development of collaborative midwifery models of care in different settings and as the co-author, with Billie Hunter, of 'The Midwife's Tale: an oral history from handywoman to professional midwife'.

Nicky grew up in the West Country in England where she was involved in setting up and promoting Women's Aid Refuges. She became a National Childbirth Trust teacher in the 1970s and was a youth and community worker in London before training to be a midwife. In the 1990s, while living in South East London, Nicky was a member of the first group of self-employed midwives to contract into the National Health Service. She now divides her time between living in Bristol (UK) and Sydney (Australia) and has led successful midwifery tours to China, Vietnam and Iceland.

"All hospital visits were great. To learn about Iceland's midwifery services and struggles was great. The highlight of this tour was to visit Bjorkin Birth Centre. To meet such inspirational midwives was so great."

Kaye Clarke, Midwifery in Iceland, 2017

Ground only price is £2,995 per person (not including international flights and airport transfers)

The cost includes:

- 9 nights' accommodation in mid-range hotels

Single supplement £550

- Meals as per the itinerary
- Tour Leader Nicky Leap
- Comprehensive briefing notes
- A full programme of professional visits and cultural tours as per the itinerary
- Admission fees where applicable
- An English speaking National Guide (who is also a midwife herself)
- All transport in Iceland

The cost excludes:

- Meals not mentioned
- All personal extras such as tips, portorage, laundry, inoculation fees and drinks
- All optional excursions, tours and visits
- Travel insurance and visas (if applicable)
- International flights and airport transfers

This tour is designed to follow the Congress of the Nordic Federation of Midwives. Full details about the congress can be found on their website: www.njfcongress.is

The professional visits are being arranged through and supported by the Icelandic Midwifery Association.

Flights

International flights are not included in the cost of the tour but we can assist in booking them for you. If you would like a flight quote please do let us know.

Airport Transfers

Private transfers or taxis can be very expensive in Iceland. We suggest that people book themselves onto the Fly Bus service that operates from the airport and drops off at selected hotels. Details about this will be with your pre departure notes or feel free to get in touch.

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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Iceland's mountain landscapes (top); Akureyri, North Iceland; Svartifoss Waterfall; Jökulsárlón ice lagoon at sunset (above)



Jon Baines
tours

