

ICELAND

This Handbook contains everything you need to know about this Secret Compass Adventure Academy [expedition to Iceland](#).

Read on to discover our ethos and team-centred approach and for the nitty gritty like flight and visa advice, insurance requirements and kit recommendations. Use the buttons below to ask questions or to apply for this team or, once approved, to secure your spot on this team with a Booking Form and a £400 deposit.

Key facts

- Arrive: by 1700 on 30 June 2018 into Reykjavik.
- Depart: leave at any time on 08 July 2018.
- Insurance: ensure you have comprehensive cover.
- Docs: send your flight, insurance and passport copy in.
- Balance due: 90 days before departure on 31 March.
- Find [FAQ](#) and [Testimonials](#) online.

Overview

Aim

The aim of this [Adventure Academy expedition to Iceland](#) is to learn and to practice hill and mountain skills in a truly expeditionary setting: a multi-day trek in the iconic, world-class hiking destination that is Iceland.

Summary

This Adventure Academy expedition to trek Iceland's trails will also be hugely rewarding for anyone with existing experience in this field. If that's you and you're keen to get a bit more out of your annual leave, join this team and learn from the expedition experts in Iceland: the world's ultimate geothermal playground.

Highlights

- Trek epic long-distance trails through Iceland's stunning and unique volcanic scenery.
- Acquire and develop mountain and hill skills in an expedition environment.
- Get professional advice and tips towards planning your own expedition.
- Learn from a highly-qualified and experienced Secret Compass expedition leader.
- Pitch yourself against Iceland's rugged landscape – negotiate river crossings and tough terrain along with Iceland's famously volatile weather.

To do

Flights

You need to organise your own international flights.

It is advised that you book a flexible flight ticket that can be changed for fee or refunded if the expedition dates are changed or if it is cancelled for any reason. You need to be at the team hotel in Reykjavik by 1700 on the 30 June 2018 and the expedition officially ends after breakfast on 8 July 2018 although you are free to depart anytime as many flights depart early in the morning. Wait for expedition confirmation before booking your flights.

Insurance

[Travel insurance](#) that provides cover for repatriation in case of a medical emergency is compulsory for all expeditions. You should be aware that many standard insurance policies may not cover you adequately for all

aspects of a remote expedition and so we strongly recommend that you purchase a suitably designed insurance policy. Secret Compass cannot comment on the suitability of your cover so if you are in any doubt please contact your policy provider and ask them to confirm that you are covered to our minimum standard (below).

- Emergency medical repatriation (to home country) including any associated expenses abroad of at least \$500,000.
- Activities: ensure that any activities carried out on the expedition are included i.e. trekking, horse riding, rafting, MTB etc.
- Geographical region: check your geographical region is insured (often the US/ Canada/ Afghanistan etc. are not insured).
- Foreign Ministry advice: check your insurance is not sensitive to any travel warnings issued by your respective foreign ministry. In the UK, many insurers will not insure you if the Foreign Office warns against travel to this area. Foreign Office advice will not necessarily mean we cancel an expedition or do not travel to a particular area. Please check @FCOtravel and the [FCO Travel Aware site](#).
- Dates: ensure your cover begins at the departure and ends at the return to your home country. Many flights take a day or two and time zones vary. Insurance companies may prejudice claims due to this.
- Pre-existing medical conditions: disclose these to your insurance company and to Secret Compass.

Prior to travel Secret Compass will require the name of your insurance policy provider, their 24-hr emergency contact number and your policy number. For full information on travel insurance and links to suggested companies, please visit the [Travel Insurance](#) page of our [Get Ready](#) section.

Visas

Visas are your responsibility. British and European Nationals do not need visas to enter Iceland, and most countries such as Australia and the United States who hold a valid Schengen Area visa are also exempt from requiring a visa.

Passports

You should have a passport valid for the duration of the expedition and for your travel dates. Iceland does not require any validity beyond this but we recommend six months remaining before expiry. Please send a clear, colour copy (a scan or a crystal clear colour image) of your passport to Secret Compass ahead of the expedition and carry photocopies with you on the expedition in a safe place.

Itinerary

Day 1: Jun 30 – Reykjavik

Arrive in Reykjavik and make your way to the team hotel by 1700 to meet your leader. Welcome meal and expedition briefing. The hotel will be named nearer departure.

Day 2 to Day 7: Jul 1 to Jul 6 – Expedition

Take a bus out of Reykjavik to the trail head to start your expedition. There will only be a few hours of hiking on your first day on the trail but for the rest of the trek expect to hike all day to a wild campsite each evening, with lessons and exercises taking place where best suited depending on the location and weather conditions on the day.

Skills covered will include navigation, team management, leadership, pacing and timing, river crossings, mountain weather, emergency procedures and medical evacuations. Iceland lies just below the arctic circle so in early July you'll enjoy long hours of daylight allowing for plenty of time for discussions and lessons in your evenings and for perfecting your campsite routines. Topics covered in the evening will include risk assessment, health and hygiene, first aid, camp craft and equipment, expedition food, expedition planning including logistics, travel and budgeting.

The list above is of course not exhaustive. Your Secret Compass leader will be your team's personal fountain of knowledge for the week, capable of answering all sorts of questions that may crop up and so do take advantage of this.

Day 8: Jul 7 – Reykjavik

On your last day in the wild, pack up your tent for the last time and hike to the road head to catch your bus back to Reykjavik. Hot showers await at the hotel and you will celebrate over a final meal and with drinks in the city.

Day 9: Jul 8 – Reykjavik

You are free to depart anytime today or to make arrangements to extend your stay. The expedition officially ends after breakfast although many flights depart early in the morning.

A note on Secret Compass itineraries

Please remember that the itinerary acts as a framework plan. It provides guidance as to our intentions but it may not be followed religiously. This is an adventure and by definition the outcome is uncertain. The leadership team will adapt, flex and change the plan depending on the numerous frictions you may encounter along the way. Read more about the Secret Compass [Approach](#) and [Ethos](#) here.

Prepare

Fitness

All our expeditions are achievable by people with an active and healthy lifestyle. However, this is an arduous expedition that will test you and at times you will be sore, tired, hungry and possibly wet! You must be prepared physically and mentally for the expedition and for living in basic conditions for the duration. Please ensure that you train for the expedition and arrive fit and ready to go (see our [Expedition Training Guide](#)). You must be fit enough for the following.

- Expedition [Grade](#): 270°.
- Daily activity: up to eight hours' trekking per day.
- Trek: for six consecutive days (up to 25km per day).
- Carry: up to 20kg of personal and shared kit.
- Terrain: steep and loose, lava-strewn mountainous terrain.
- Climate: temps from 8° to 15° C with rain likely. Night time temps can reach freezing and with wind temps can feel sub zero.

Previous experience

No previous experience of mountainous conditions is necessary to join this expedition but team members would benefit from trekking or hill-walking practice and being used to carrying 10kg to 20kg for multiple days. This expedition will teach mountain and expedition skills on the assumption that team members have no previous knowledge and will provide a platform for those with previous hill-walking experience to further develop their skills in a challenging expedition environment.

Medical

Vaccinations. Please seek advice from your health professional on recommendations. The NHS [Fit for Travel](#) and [Travel Health Pro](#) are useful sites.

Dental. It is strongly recommended that you have a dental check up prior to departure. Dental problems far from help are very unpleasant.

Money

The currency in Iceland is the Icelandic Krona. There are ATMs widely available in the airport and in Reykjavik, and virtually all shops accept all forms of card. On the trail there are few opportunities to spend anything. This expedition is all-inclusive (see the Included tab on the website) so you won't need much money – only for a beer in the town and some souvenirs on the way or for (discretionary but always appreciated) tips. Be aware that Iceland can be expensive.

Kit list

The following is Secret Compass's recommended kit list for the 2018 expedition to Iceland. You will carry all of your own kit for this expedition. You'll also carry share of a technical mountain tent; of group food and cooking equipment; and of the medical and communications packs. Secret Compass will supply tents, food, cooking equipment and other safety related items of equipment. You might find our [Expedition Kit Advice](#) series of short films useful.

Discounts

Secret Compass has arranged team member discounts with Cotswold Outdoor, Nordic Life, Outdoor Hire and Expedition Kit Hire. Details of these will be sent through on booking.

Baggage and sleeping

- RUCKSACK: 60-70ltr, all your personal gear needs to fit easily into this pack and have enough room for a tent, food and share of group equipment provided by Secret Compass.
- DAYSACK (optional): To leave at the hotel if you want to leave some personal items or a change of clothes behind.
- WATERPROOF RUCKSACK LINER: Sealable "canoe" or "dry" bags made by Podsac or Ortlieb. You need a large one to line your rucksack.
- SMALLER DRY BAGS: As above, but smaller bags to put essential items in. The large rucksack liners sometimes leak so anything important needs to be waterproofed individually. This also helps to keep you organised.
- SLEEPING BAG: Rated to at least comfort -10C. Down is lighter and more compact than synthetic options but you should also invest in a waterproof stuff sack if you choose down.
- FULL LENGTH SLEEPING MAT: Bring your repair kit. You may be camping on rough ground or on snow.

Clothing

- 2 x THERMAL BASE LAYER: Top and bottom, avoid cotton and look for synthetics or wool.
- 2 x LONG TREKKING TROUSERS: Thin trekking trousers that dry quickly and are comfortable.
- 1 x MID LAYER: Fleece or equivalent.
- 1 x DOWN JACKET: Lightweight down jacket or synthetic equivalent suitable for evenings while camping down to -10 degrees C
- 1 x WATERPROOF JACKET AND TROUSERS: Gore-tex or equivalent.
- 1 x WALKING BOOTS: Ensure your boots are worn in and comfortable. Waterproof, (minimum) three-season walking boots with ankle support. Recommend you visit your local outdoor store for advice on fitting.
- 4 x HIKING SOCKS: Fitting well with your boots and comfortable.
- SANDALS: For around camp and for river crossings. Not flip-flops as these can get lost in water, bend under your feet or allow stubbed or cut toes in the dark.
- WARM HAT FOR EVENINGS.
- GLOVES: Consider cold weather gloves for wind protection and liner gloves for when it's not too cold.
- 4 x UNDERWEAR: Sport or cycling-styled shorts don't chafe.
- BUFF OR BALACLAVA: Some form of face protection from high winds.
- GAITERS (optional): For walking across snowfields, to prevent mud and water entering boots and for shallower river crossings.

Eating

- MUG.
- SPOON: You will eat directly out of a dehydrated ration bag, so a bowl is not necessary. Consider an extra-large spork or a long-handled spoon to eat with.
- 1 x ROBUST WATER BOTTLE: (optional if using a bladder system) Nalgene or Sigg are good brands.
- 1 x CAMELBACK: You need to be able to carry a minimum of three litres of water in a combination of camelback and water bottles.
- 0.5L Thermos flask (optional): for warmth and a morale boost on the trail.

Health and hygiene

- SMALL WASHBAG.
- SOAP: Anti-bacterial and biodegradable.
- TRAVEL TOWEL/SARONG.
- WET WIPES OR BABY WIPES.
- ANTIBACTERIAL HAND GEL.
- TOILET PAPER.
- SANITARY PRODUCTS. Also bring a ziplock bag for disposal later.
- LIP SALVE WITH UV PROTECTION.
- VASELINE: Keep readily available to prevent chafing skin and heel friction blisters.
- VITAMINS.
- AFTER SUN/MOISTURISER.
- FACTOR 30+ SUN CREAM.

Small First Aid Kit

A team medical kit with a comprehensive primary care provision will be carried (by the leader and shared between teammates). You should also carry your own small first aid kit but consult your expedition leader before using your personal medical supplies.

- A WATERPROOF BAG OR TUPPERWARE BOX: Keep kit dry and safe.
- PAINKILLERS: Ibuprofen and Paracetamol.
- ZINC OXIDE TAPE AND SMALL SCISSORS.
- COMPEED BLISTER PADS: Please note that Compeed produce several similar looking blister packs for corns, etc. Please ensure you purchase the standard/original item.
- DIARRHOEA TABLETS: Imodium.
- REHYDRATION SACHETS OR TABLETS. Consider Nuun or Zero tablets.
- ANTISEPTIC WIPES.
- ANTISEPTIC CREAM.
- PIRITON TABLETS: For allergies if required.
- EURAX CREAM: For bites.
- ANY MEDICATION YOU NORMALLY USE: Find out the generic/chemical name for your medication in case you need to source more in country. Please also check that your medication is legal in your destination. You MUST make Secret Compass aware of any medical conditions before you travel.

OTHER

- TREKKING POLES (optional): Many team members find trekking poles useful on slippery or uneven terrain or for steep descents.
- WATCH: A watch is essential for the navigation exercises.
- COMPASS: A Silva style compass with a rotating bezel and roamer scale is essential for the navigation work, such as the Silva Expedition 4 model.
- MAP CASE: A waterproof map case to keep map dry. Secret Compass will provide the mapping.
- HEAD TORCH AND SPARE BATTERIES: Petzl Tikka head torch or equivalent.

- SUNGLASSES: With UV-filter lenses.
- PENKNIFE: (optional) Don't pack in your hand luggage.
- LIGHTER: For lighting stoves.
- GAFFA TAPE: For emergency repairs to your kit, you can take some off the roll and wrap it around something else in your kit.
- 1 x KARABINER: For securing your rucksack.
- SPARE BOOT LACES.
- SMALL SEWING KIT.
- RE-SEALABLE PLASTIC BAGS: For dirty washing, wrappings etc.

Approach

Our approach

Secret Compass organises expeditions, not sightseeing tours. Our expeditions are team-centred, flexible and dynamic. Teams are managed on the ground by Secret Compass staff: industry-leading professionals and guides of the highest calibre. They put the structure in place for your team to have an incredible experience while achieving your expedition's aims. Our people are as passionate as you are about achieving the extraordinary in the world's wildest places. Secret Compass teams often go to places that others don't. This makes our expeditions truly different, taking you beneath the skin and beyond the headlines of the world's most remote reaches. Inspired by history's great explorers and challenges, you'll be set ambitious goals and will overcome similar hardships to those experienced on the audacious journeys of the past.

Remember this is not an organised tour. It is an adventure. More often than not expeditions don't run smoothly! The nature of the areas we operate in mean that we will encounter a number of challenges that we expect everyone to meet and relish. Friction and hurdles are all part and parcel of an arduous expedition and also to our success as a team. These make the journey more interesting and are often the best and most amusing parts when looking back. Each expedition is thoroughly reviewed on its return and team members will have the opportunity to provide feedback which helps to inform planning for future expeditions.

Local partners and bureaucracy

Our teammates can only achieve the extraordinary with the help of people in the communities we travel through. NGO and aid workers, guides, fixers and interpreters all work extremely hard and are generous in their hospitality to us and our teams: visitors in their land. They are crucial to our success. Please remember and respect that their perspectives and concepts of time, environmental responsibility and customer service might differ to yours. Occasionally there is no established protocol for outside visitors which means we encounter local power struggles or disagreements. Our leaders have years of experience in delicate negotiations like these and conversational chess – especially through an interpreter – and these interchanges are often memorable parts of any expedition.

Infrastructure and natural events

The areas we travel to often especially remote. Transport infrastructure can be ageing, inadequate or non-existent. Flooded roads, collapsed bridges, fallen trees and vehicle break-downs are all par for the course. Our teams thrive on overcoming challenges like these – be prepared to get stuck in and push occasionally! Natural phenomena like desert sand storms, early monsoons, landslides across key routes, winter coming early, gale force winds and driving snow can all make for a more interesting time on the expedition.

Food

In some areas our teams explore, we rely on local food sources. This can often be outstanding (but can also be very average) and we always make the best out of the resources available. In other cases, we will supply filling and high-calorie dehydrated expedition foods (ration packs)

Part of a team

Secret Compass fosters a team mentality across all its expeditions and projects. Like all teams you will have a leader who will give direction to your progress. Crucial to your team's success – especially when the going gets tough – is the attitude of the teammates working together to achieve the aim. You really are part of a team, not a cosseted guest on a tour. We ask teammates to muck in and help out any aspect of the expedition, from fetching water and helping to prepare and cook food, to carrying some group kit and equipment if required. The working language of all teams is English.

Typical teammates

There really is no typical expedition member, though everyone needs to be fit, healthy and ready to take on the expedition's aim by the time of departure. Participants range from 21 to 65+ in age and come from all over the world. Backgrounds include contract workers and engineers, IT specialists and students, teachers and literature lovers, journalists and keen photographers and so many more. What bonds our pioneering teams is their shared spirit of adventure and their sense of humour and positive outlook. A good teammate looks on the bright side when the 4x4 breaks down, the rain comes early and when a meal is distinctly pedestrian. Our teammates help each other, look out for each, encourage each other and help each other when needed. Our teams have done us proud in working together to achieve their common goal: the aim of the expedition. If this sounds like you, you've come to the right expedition company.

Teammate mentality

You need a robust, spirited and can-do attitude to cope with demanding days and rough camping in rugged and wild places. You'll cover good daily distances (generally carrying your own kit and equipment), eating expedition foods or relying on local food sources. These elements combine to create the unique character of each expedition. On expedition, challenges, frictions and changes to plans are inevitable. Teammates should meet and relish these as an integral part of any arduous expedition and its ultimate success. Such things make the journey more interesting and are often most memorable parts when looking back.

Risk management

Secret Compass is an expedition company not a tour company. Expeditions contain inherent risk. This is part of the appeal for teammates. We do not make expeditions safe as, by definition, that is impossible. We construct and implement a three-staged risk management approach to reduce risk to what we perceive as a tolerable level.

1. Risk assessment.

We conduct a thorough risk assessment of potential hazards and threats that may be encountered on the expedition and provide recommendations to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring/ severity if it does occur.

2. Safety plan.

As part of our expedition plan, we detail actions to be taken to implement and resource the recommendations of the risk assessment. This includes a detailed medical and communications plan.

3. Delivery.

The expedition leader is responsible for dynamic risk management on the expedition itself.

Key risks.

Key risks encountered on this specific expedition include accidents (i.e. slips/trips/falls) whilst trekking on uneven terrain. If you would like to see the full Risk Assessment for this expedition, please email info@secretcompass.com

Incident management and medical

As part of the safety plan, Secret Compass has a full incident and emergency plan for medical and other emergencies. This will be discussed in full at the arrival brief, so everyone is aware what action will be taken. In summary, incidences are usually managed on the ground by the expedition leader in the first instance with remote support from Secret Compass's 24 hour Operations Room before evacuation to the nearest appropriate medical

centre.

Informed consent

It is your responsibility to understand the risks associated with adventure travel in remote areas. You also must understand that medical evacuation will take an extended period of time (potentially up to two days) and will require wilderness extraction techniques and long carries by stretcher. In-country search and rescue and emergency services are very basic or non-existent and the expedition will rely on internal resources for medical evacuation. By joining this expedition, you accept the risks associated with the venture. If you require any more information on specific risk management for this expedition, or would like to speak to us about our medical planning prior to the trip, please get in touch.

Testimonials

Read team [Testimonials](#) or watch this short video featuring expedition teammates (filmed on location in Ethiopia) for an insight into life on expedition.

On exped

Cultural

Iceland is a very well developed country with a cosmopolitan and hip city life. It has a great food, music and cultural scene. It is worth extending your stay to explore some more of its sights such as the Blue Lagoon or to do the Golden circle tour (neither of which included in this expedition).

Terrain

This expedition will cover almost every type of terrain. It passes through a variety of landscapes, but will mainly be over loose, lava-strewn trails which at times can be steep and unstable under foot.

Weather

Temperatures can range from 8 to 15 degrees C with the probability of rain for consecutive days. Night time temperatures can reach freezing levels, and if the wind picks up the temperatures can feel below zero.

Transport

Iceland's main Keflavik airport is located 40 minutes from Reykjavik. Team members are responsible for their own transfers between the airport and the accommodation at the start and end of the expedition. Teammates will be advised of the team hotel nearer to departure. Transfers are available by bus or taxi depending on your arrival time. A 4x4 mountain bus will take the team to and from the trail.

Accommodation

The team will stay in a comfortable hotel in Reykjavik at the start and end of the expedition, rooms will be on a twin-share basis and the hotel will be able to store any luggage not required for the expedition. Extra nights outside of the Secret Compass itinerary can be booked directly with the hotel by teammates. While on the trek, the team will mostly be camping in technical mountain tents provided by Secret Compass. These will be shared between two people and will be carried (one tent shared between two people) by the team members in addition to their personal equipment, food and cooking equipment.

Food

In Reykjavik, the team will eat well in local restaurants. Dehydrated expedition rations will be used on the trek, these are high-calorie (and surprisingly) tasty meals. Dietary requirements can usually be catered for but should be discussed with Secret Compass in advance. It is recommended that you bring a favourite snack or cereal bar for each expedition day as a morale boost.

Communications

Secret Compass staff will be carrying at least two methods of communication, usually a Satellite Phone and a DeLorme two-way communication device. These will be used for regular updates to head office and for emergencies.

Unfortunately, routine communication between team members and family/friends is not possible – please reassure them that no news is good news! If there is an emergency and someone needs to contact a team member, they can contact Secret Compass's Operations Room on +44207 096 8428 who will endeavour to pass a message on within 24hours.

Cell Phone: Your mobile roaming will work in Reykjavik and there will be wifi in the hotel. While on the trail there will be intermittent opportunities for mobile signal, but as this is in the mountains, it cannot be relied upon.

Exped FAQ

Here are some frequently asked questions that are specific to this expedition. Read our [general FAQ](#) too for questions such as 'how do I join an expedition' and more. Can't find your answer? Contact SCHQ.

I'm a vegetarian. Can I join?

Teammates with dietary requirements are welcome to apply for this expedition and should state their specific requirements when applying. Secret Compass will always endeavour to accommodate dietary requirements but may request you bring additional supplementation if you are on a restricted diet.

Can I have a one-person tent?

Secret Compass will provide the tents for this expedition. Teammates will each carry a share kit and so tend to share tents on this expedition to keep weight to a minimum. If you would prefer a one-person tent, please get in touch.

Can I arrive a day late?

As The Plan outlines, there is a chain of transport to get teammates out to the start of the trek and then back to Reykjavik so start and end dates are not flexible.

Can I charge electricals?

This will be very challenging with limited access to power once the trekking section begins. Please ensure that you are self-sufficient in terms of charging your appliances by bringing things like spare batteries, lightweight solar panels or power packs to avoid frustration.

Will my camera work in the cold?

Battery life can be a challenge in cold climates. If camera or phone battery life is of paramount importance, research the best ways to protect and keep your batteries warm and come equipped accordingly.

What if I'm new to all this?

This trip is designed to teach skills and knowledge to someone who has never been on a multi-day trek or expedition before. The only essentials are that you are willing to work as a team, and fulfil the requirements under the fitness section, although previous hill-walking or camping experience is also beneficial. If you do have multi-day trekking or expedition experience already, unless you have been on a specific Mountain Skills course before then many of the lessons on this course will still be new and even experienced team members will benefit from refreshers in navigation, team management and other topics.

Alongside the useful mountain and hill skills taught and practised, Iceland offers some of the most impressive scenery in the world, and anyone is welcome to join the team to experience this.

Are there porters?

There is no local support for this trek, so you will have to be completely self-sustainable. This means carrying personal and camping equipment, a share of the group equipment, such as medical kit and stoves, and enough food for the duration. You should train in preparation for this expedition by meeting the requirements in the fitness section.

How can I find out more?

Apply for this expedition team using the button on this page. Secret Compass is then on hand to answer any questions or to firm up your place on the team.