

ICELAND

AUG 24-SEPT 4, 2019

Anacortes Diving Adventure Team

JOINS

BLUE GREEN EXPEDITIONS



**Kelley, Bob, Faith, Paul, Richard, Dale, Peggy, Audrey, Dennis, Liz K, Ken,
Barbara, Mary S, Wayne, Liz W, Dave, Mary W, Louise W, Deke, Colleen,
Mike, John, Donna, Ruth, Gary**

ICELAND 2019

Route—Vancouver, BC—Reykavik, Iceland Carrier—Iceland Air

Day 1

Our adventure begins as we left Anacortes early afternoon for a 7 PM departure. First speed bump was an accident on I-5 which left us with a detour through Bellingham and then back on the highway at Guide Meridian. Thank goodness for Nexus as the wait at the border was 90+ minutes! The lines at Iceland Air were a breeze even with all our luggage. Once we were through security it was just relaxing until our flight, which ended up



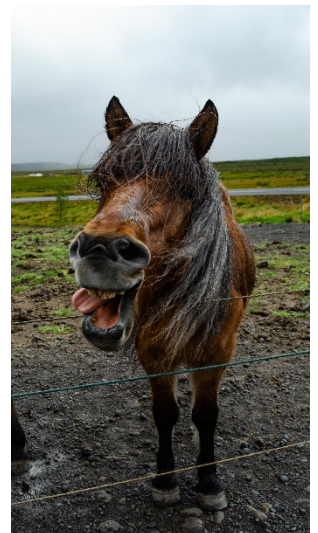
departing an hour late. Two hours into the flight a message came over the screen announcing aurora out the window. We quickly put the shade up to enjoy an incredible show of aurora for about 90 minutes. Bob scrambled around the plane and had everyone come look out our

window to at least see it. Most people didn't even look outside. It was amazing swirling green, this was a great way to start off our trip. The flight to Iceland was 6 ½ hours and once we landed we picked up our luggage and looked for our bus transfer to the hotel. Unfortunately, Grayline bus service had a very small bus so all of us and our luggage did not fit. Bob and Wayne took the remaining luggage and caught a second bus. It is about a 45 minute drive to our City Park Hotel and it is howling winds and pouring rain. Bummer. Once we check in, a group of us walk into the main town, about a 15 minute walk, to get some lunch. We decide on Hlemmur Matholl, which was a food court with a bar in the center. The great part of this place is that everyone could get the food they wanted. We had Pho, others had pizza, but there were soups or eggs benedict etc. Really great spot for lunch. By the time we finished it was now raining and the wind was still blowing so the walk back to the hotel was brutal. We were pretty soaked and cold, so hot showers and dry clothes were in order. The entire group met up at 6 pm for a short bus ride over to Arctic Adventures/Magma Dive for dinner and a presentation. Here we got to meet everyone in the group and also the dive crew. This trip is going to be a lot of fun. Everyone started fading fast so back to the hotel to call it a night and get ready for the big check out dive tomorrow.

Day 2

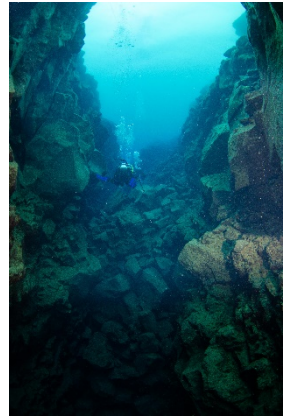


Our day begins with breakfast at the hotel and then on the bus for some touring. The other bus is diving first then touring. It's about 90 minutes to the first waterfall called Faxifoss, a small waterfall with a fish ladder next to it. With the wind and rain we are only here briefly. Along the way to the next waterfall, we make a quick stop to feed some Icelandic Horses. This group looks like it really knows what to do to get a piece of horse candy. Our next stop is Gullfoss which is very large and is 2 waterfalls in one. The second fall takes a 90 degree turn. It is magnificent and extremely loud. Very wet today with rain and wind. Our last stop is the Geyser. Here we have a





wonderful lunch of hot soup and sandwiches before making our way out to the Geyser. There are breaks in the weather with blue sky and no rain for the moment. The Geyser blew about 3 times and I'm pretty sure it does not blow as high as it did last year. Still impressive to watch. It is now time for us to dive, so a quick run back to the lake where we are diving "David's Crack". The crew is waiting for us as we quickly get set up and into our gear. Of course the rain is back so this makes for a very wet gear up. After a quick weight check, off we go to see if our buoyancy is good and our regulators don't free flow. Success this year since we added the Atomic heat



sync onto our regulators! Good job Bob! A smooth hour dive around the lake in and out of the cracks where the temp drops to around 36 degrees. This mimics Silfra so we can make sure everything will work fine. Once all the gear is loaded up, back on the bus for a 45 minute drive back to the hotel. It is now 7 PM and most of us are starving so we opt for the Hilton next door for dinner. I had a lamb hip with cherry glaze and it was amazing! Back to the hotel to grab some sleep before a very long day tomorrow.

Day 3

A quick breakfast and then group 1 is off to Silfra for 2 dives. When we arrive the parking lot is already full of snorkel and dive vans. We quickly gear up and head to the entrance platform. The wait is not too long before it



is our turn to jump in. The water is cold but crystal clear. In my group is Peggy, Liz K and our guide Nick. We all make a stop to get our picture taken to touch the two continental plates. The weather today is overcast but not raining. Bob, Faith and Paul are all here as surface support to help carry cameras, weights etc. Everyone is doing great and having a fun time. The walk back from the exit point is long and daunting. A quick change of tanks and we are back in for the second dive. The entire dive takes anywhere from 30-45 minutes



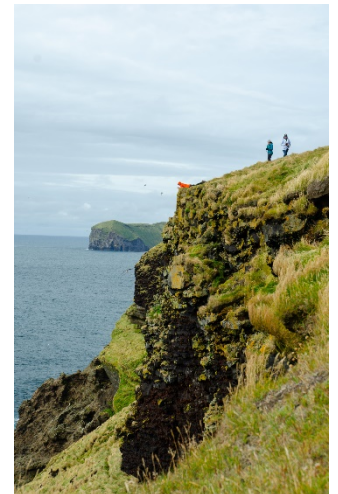
depending on how many photos you take. Once we are done, it is back to the hotel to drop off the day divers and pick up the night divers. Richard has just arrived late last night so he is giving a talk before we head back out to Silfra. I had just enough time to catch a shower and then back on the bus. Luckily we had pizza for Richards talk as this is the first opportunity for

food that we have had. Faith, Paul and myself are back on shore support so we help get everyone ready for the dusk dive. It is close to 8 PM when they jump in and it is a beautiful evening out here as everyone else has gone home. The wind has died down and we have a few breaks in the clouds. Everyone exiting the water is super stoked for the night dive as they quickly change out to a new tank. There are 8 hearty souls ready to take the night plunge into Silfra. Other than our group

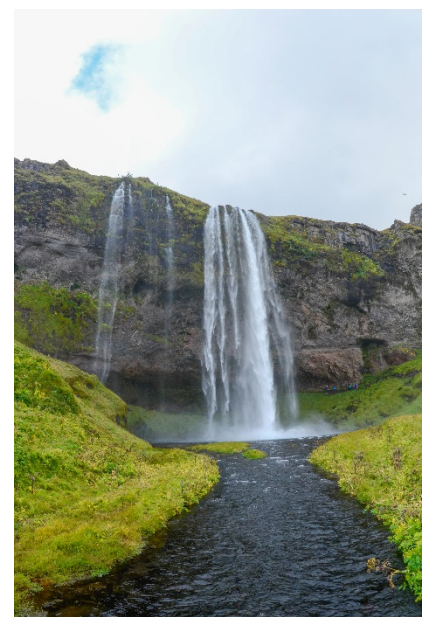
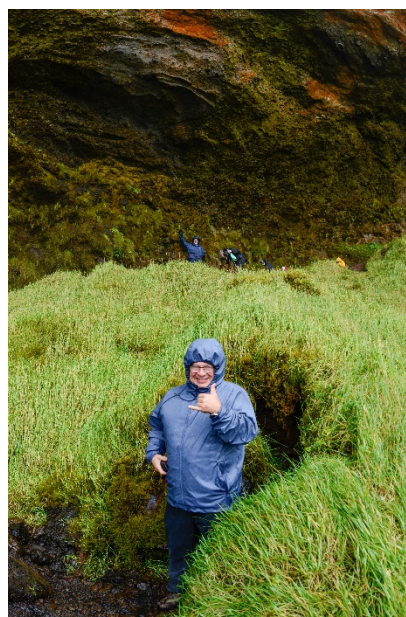
last year this is the only other group to do a night dive at Silfra. The lights are amazing as the divers all descend in the crystal clear waters. The dive only takes them about 30 minutes, everyone is frozen but big smiles for the long walk back to the parking lot. Unfortunately, it is too cloudy for us to see any aurora tonight. We arrive back at the hotel around 12:30 PM as we start to pack our bags because we are leaving in the morning at 7:45 AM. Once again time to get a few hours of sleep.

Day 4

After very little sleep last night we are packed up and ready to go. We are leaving Reykavik today and starting our long journey on the ring road. Our path is counter clockwise so we are starting towards the south. Our driver Becca is wide awake and ready to go as it will be about an hour drive to the ferry to take us to the Westman Islands. The ferry ride takes about 35 minutes before we land at the town of Heimaey on Vestmannaeyjar Island.



It is just a 10 minute drive to the other side of the island to the weather station up on the hill. We start our hike into the fields with the sheep and make our way down a slope to the ocean. This place is known as the windiest place in Europe. Lucky for us, it is not that windy today and we have a bit of sunshine. It is getting steeper and then it just drops off in cliffs. On these cliffs are hundreds of Puffins. This is why we're here, lots and lots of Puffins. However, it is a bit daunting as people start dangling off the cliffsides to get pictures of these very small colorful birds. At this point it is scaring the daylights out of me! One miss step and someone's a goner. I get close with a little help from Nick, but I just can't do it. I take a quick look below and see all the Puffins on a ledge and then that's it. I decide that taking pictures of everyone on the cliff is even more interesting than the birds. Finally we are leaving thank goodness, I'm not sure I can take anymore of it. Everyone makes it back to the bus and Faith, Paul and myself breathe a sigh of relief. We have one more stop to look for more Puffins and to see Elephant Rock. It is right next to the golf course and this time we are looking UP at the Puffins on the cliff which is much more relaxing than the first stop. The next stop is to Seljalandsfoss waterfall that you can walk behind.



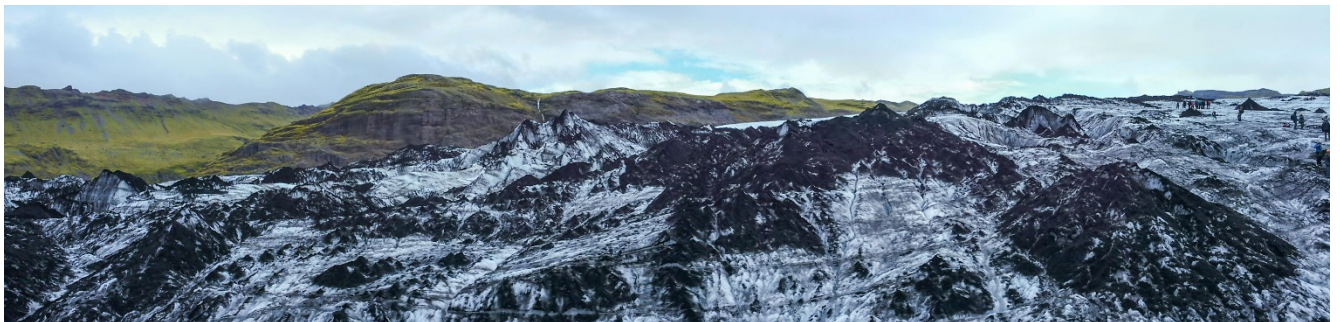
It is an amazing waterfall but plan on getting pretty wet in the process. This is also our late lunch stop and the little place here has wonderful lamb soup. This gives you plenty of energy to forge ahead and enjoy the waterfall. It is late in the day and we headed back into the town of Hella, this is where we will overnight. I am



exhausted from lack of sleep and food so we check into our room and take a quick 45 minute nap before meeting for dinner. We drive to hotel Stracta for a wonderful buffet dinner with pickled herring, salmon lox both smoked and cured. Back to the hotel for a couple hours of sleep as our alarm is set for midnight where a group of us are meeting up to head out and look for Northern lights. A total of 13 crazies came out and stayed until 1:15 AM before calling it. We had clear skies but it just wasn't meant to be. Back to the hotel for a few hours of sleep before we are up and on our way for another day of touring.

Day 5

Sleep? What sleep? You can sleep when you're dead! Another 8:00 AM departure as we drive to the Solheimajokult Glacier. We arrive before 9 AM and get geared up with harness, ice axe, helmet and crampons. We look official now! It is a 20 minute walk until we reach the base of the glacier where we don our crampons,



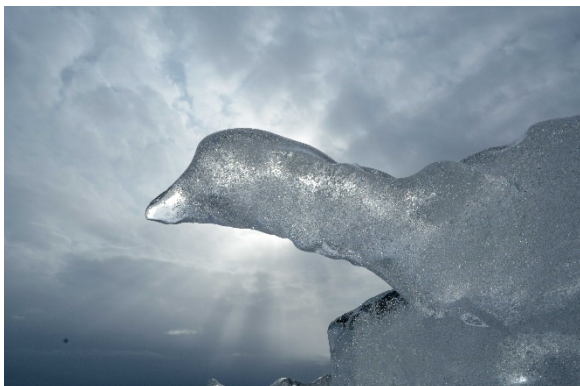
get our instructions and off we go. It is a zig zag pattern up to the top of the glacier. We take several breaks along the way before we start to transverse across to the new ice cave they just discovered two weeks ago. We are sweating bullets and this is a much longer and challenging hike than we thought. It is a steep downhill to the base of the waterfall and just underneath is a beautiful ice cave. So beautiful inside and amazing! We are so lucky to be here to see this. Now comes the bad part...hiking all the way

back. It is going to take about 2 hours to get back and we are tired already. Seems like it was much shorter but once back we load up and off we go. Next stop is the black sand beach (reynisfjara) and a lunch break. They do



have the best Icelandic hotdogs here along with a cold Gull beer. The sun is out so we take a walk along the beach to see all the columnar stone. This is also the place where they do filming for the Game of Thrones. Back on the bus to the town of Veer to see the fisherman's church on the

hill. Just a small detour around an over turned truck which lost it's load of pipes in the river before we get there. The stain glass windows in the church are beautiful but once again the doors are locked and we are unable to go inside. Time to make some miles around the ring road with a few stops along the way. There are lava fields, waterfalls, church floors etc. We finally make it to Hotel Laki where we finally make a stop for dinner. The area is



very sparse of facilities, but this is a beautiful little hotel. We had our first taste of Char (fish) which was delicious. It is slightly pink in color and very mild in flavor. A couple glasses of wine and then back on the bus for a 2 hour drive to our hotel for the night. About an hour into it we stop at the oldest church, which we are now looking at in the dark, but luckily it is lite and it is a bathroom stop. A twofer! As we near the hotel Becca takes a wrong turn and we are off on a gravel road. As she attempts to turn around the bus is tipping up at a bad angle. We quickly jump off the bus as the front wheel is no longer on the ground. Several of the group help direct her and we get the bus back on the road. We were very close to getting stuck. Whew, that was close. The next driveway was the hotel so we quickly unload and find our rooms as it is now 11:30 PM. This was one long day!

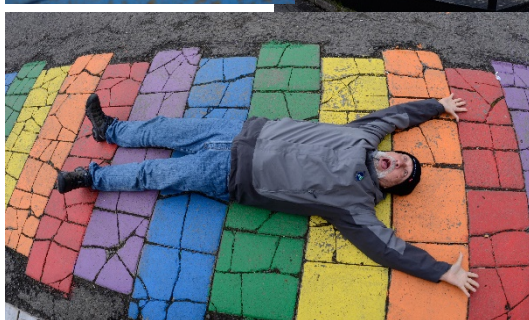
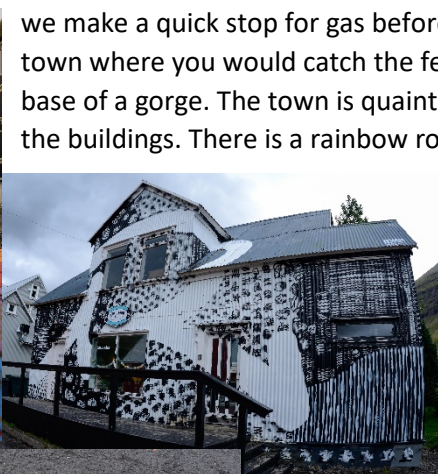
Day 6

Seems like our heads just hit the pillow when the alarm went off. An 8:30 departure this morning as we backtrack to the jokulsarlon (glacial lagoon). There are lots of glacial bergs floating in the lagoon which is almost a river. Richard joined

our bus this morning as he directs us in taking better pictures of all these beautiful pieces of ice. The sun is trying to come out, but it looks like it will be another overcast day. From here we have a 2 hour bus ride to Djupivogur, a small fishing village for a lunch break. Along our Griswold tour we stopped at a red chair, orange lighthouse



and eggs of Mary Bay. We then took a short cut up a gravel, wash board road called Oxi. This will save us 10 minutes in travel time...whoa! Not sure how much time it saved us when we encountered the road grater smoothing the road out in front of us. Doesn't matter as the view is amazing up here. Back down the other side



we make a quick stop for gas before we have one last stop in Seydisfjörður. This is the town where you would catch the ferry to Norway. It is tucked away in the fjord at the base of a gorge. The town is quaint with small houses, some with creative artwork on the buildings. There is a rainbow road running through the middle of this little artistic town. A quick 30 minute drive back to Egilsstaðir to Gistihusid Lake Hotel. It is a very nice hotel, but seems to be surrounded by a working farm so the air is ripe with parfum de manure. It is an early arrival for us at 6 PM so a group of us decide to walk up the hill to the Askur brewpub and pizzeria. Great beer and pizza as we sit and relax and wait for our ride to the Vok Baths.

Becca and Nick are joining us as they have not been there before either. It is a beautiful setting on a local lake, where the pools are actually out on the lake. The farthest pool is the warmest, but you start out in the main pool where the bar is, so grab a drink and then make your way around to the different pools. It is a bit windy tonight which makes the walk between pools very chilly. Some of the group are crazy as they take the cold plunge in the local lake and then straight back into the hot pools.

Too crazy for me! We wrap it up around 10 PM and back to the hotel for a good nights sleep. Sooo relaxed now.



Day 7

The hotel has a wonderful breakfast buffet and a good espresso machine. Departure time is 8 AM once again and off we go towards Akureyri. This will be mainly driving so we can get there and still get an afternoon dive in. Another overcast day today with spotty rain showers as we cross over the moors finally heading west. After a good hour of travel we arrive at the most powerful waterfall in all of Europe known as Dettifoss. We hike through the lava fields down to the waterfall. It is massive, powerful and roaring loud. If you want

to get an up close look, plan on getting wet. We are now making the final push to Akureyri so we can get there in time to do a shore check out dive. The wind is up but the dive in front of the Strytan Dive Center is protected and calm. Erlander gives us the briefing and the entire crew from Magma dive are there to assist us. There is a bit of a scramble over some rocks to reach the beach. The visibility is not great and the bottom is pretty silty. There are a few macro critters on the schmucky bottom to photograph. After the dive we pack up and head to



the Fagravik Cabins to relax and take a hot tub. All our luggage and breakfast food have been delivered to our cabins earlier in the day. Bob and I are sharing a cabin with Mary and Liz K, so we all unpack and get a bit organized. For dinner we go back into town and have dinner at Akureyri Fish & Chips. It is tasty and goes down with a nice cold beer. We wander around town a bit and decide to try licorice ice cream. Apparently, it is one of the most popular flavors in Iceland. It was actually pretty good. Back to the cabins to call it a night.

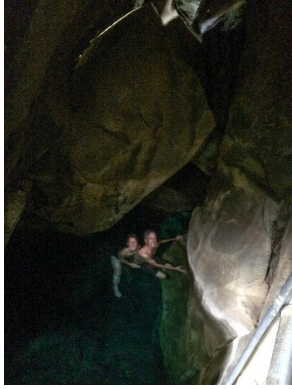
Day 8

The wind is up this morning which isn't a good thing for our scheduled dives. We arrive at Strytan Dive Center and it is way too windy to go out. Even the whale watching boats had cancelled the tours for the day. Our options for today is to either snorkel little Silfra and Littlaa' geothermal pond or do a dry land tour. The group pretty much divides in half and off we go in our separate buses. Becca is driving the wet snorkel group and Nick is driving the rest of us. Even Byron decides to come along for the ride. Our adventure begins with a stop at



Dimmuborgir, which are the Lava Fields and home of Grýla and the Yule Lads. This will also be our lunch stop and unlimited bowls of warm soup sounds spectacular. There is Lamb or a type of

curry and both were wonderful. After filling our bellies we are back on the bus to the next stop of Námaskarð, which is notable due to its barrenness as no vegetation grows on its slopes. This is due to the heat beneath the earth, the acidity in the soil, and poisonous fumes being expelled. As we slowly make our way back to Akureyri we have to stop at Grijótagjá cave where they filmed a very racy sex scene from Game of Thrones. It's a cool cave with clear water, I never saw the show, maybe I might have to watch it now. Another quick stop at



[Stóragjá](#), another warm body of water in a cave where Liz, Wayne and Mary W decide to go for a swim. Just a few more places to go as the big stop is at [Goðafoss](#) Waterfall of the gods. It is located in the river Skjálfandafljót in north Iceland, the fourth largest river in Iceland. It is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the country, falling from a height of 12 M (39 feet) over a

width of 30 M (98 feet). Once we get back on the bus, it is time for Christmas music because our last stop on the trip is [Jólahúsið](#), the Christmas House. Come to find out that Nick loves Christmas as the music starts playing



and he starts singing. I think I might be in the twilight zone! If you love Christmas as much as Nick then this is a must stop for anyone. I did find an interesting piece of “art” in the back woods called “the breast box”, even Nick didn’t know this was here. Still trying to figure out how this relates to Christmas!

While Kelley’s group heads on a land tour, the other bus heads to snorkel little Silfra and Litlaá’. We pull off the highway, drive down a small road then pull over at a gate heading down into a field. Everyone asks is this it? But there is Kuba and the gear van so this must be the place. It is howling winds and sheeting rain as we disembark the bus. It is a good thing that everyone is in a drysuit; the hardest part is staying dry while you suit up. It is short walk in pouring rain down to the little silfra crack. It is a mini version of Silfra but with no crowds. The water is just as magically clear and just as cold. As you ride the lazy river down the crack there are cool rock formations and algae along the bottom. When you reach the end of the crack, you enter down in the lake, then take your fins off and walk back to the start and do it again. Most everyone did it twice and a few did it three times. The algae grows in a sheet that is suspended by bubbles, so it made for some interesting photos and video. Then it was off to Litlaá’. Turns out it is just a small lake located down the road in a farmers field. So back into the suits and off we go. The water starts out to be a little shallow (about a foot) then slowly gets deeper. The hot water comes bubbling up from the bottom of the lake bed. The water here was a balmy 65 degrees. Everyone paddled around for about an hour then it was time to head back home. A quick stop in Hasivik to get espressos and a bathroom break and back to the cabins to end our long day. We all did a quick change of clothes and then back into town for dinner. Faith and Paul are treating us to a nice dinner at the Bautinn Restaurant in

Akuyeri. Thank you both so much for a very nice meal at the end of a fun day. Once we are back at the cabins, the skies look like they might be clear so we are on the hunt for aurora. A large group of us grab our cameras, tripods and timers and try and find a dark place to hangout and wait. We are rewarded big time tonight as the



aurora really starts to shine. It is literally pulsating above us and all around us. How lucky are we to see such an incredible show?? Our cameras are on rapid fire as we enjoy the show into the late hours. We can't stay out to late so most of us call it around 1:00 AM. What an amazing night!

Day 9

The wind is up again today so we will not be going out diving. The only option we have is if we wanted to do another shore dive. Since a few people spotted some lumpfish on the shore dive, Bob and I decide that we will dive to see the lumpfish. Lena is our guide today so off we go. There are plenty of Flounders on the bottom as we make our way over to a crane wreck and this is where we find 3 different Lumpfish and they are all on eggs.

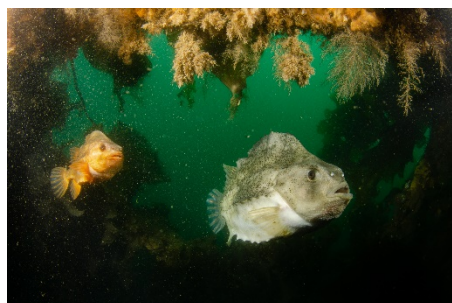


So exciting to see them. They are different colors and their eggs are different colors depending on what stage they are before hatching. After the dive we pack up and enjoy Erlanders fish stew for lunch before heading back to the cabins. Time to fill the hot tubs and do some relaxing finally. We have been going non-stop and this really is a much needed break. Richard is spending time with people going over their photos so my appointment is around 4 PM as I walk over to his cabin. The room is full of people as no one has left and it is now a group photo class. So we take a look at everyone's photos and do some lightroom fixes to make them even better. Thank you Richard. Time for dinner, so most of the group heads back into town. I'm not really up for it so I stay

behind with Liz K and we cook up a bunch of bacon and make grilled cheese sandwiches for dinner. I think Richard smelled the bacon all the way to his cabin so he came by for a grilled cheese and a relaxing night. The

rest of the group comes back from town and time for bed. We did check for more aurora before going to bed, but it was a bit cloudy.

Day 10



This morning it looks promising for diving as the winds are calm and we have sunny skies. Looks like the Whale watching boats are in luck to go out this morning too. Once we hit the dive shop the dives are a go so group 1 gets ready to go out. It is about a 10 minute boat ride out to Little Strytan for our first dive. We drop down and the vis is about 10-15 ft. Not too bad considering the wind we have had for the last several days. We drop right down on some Wolffish, several which were out swimming but quickly head back to their rock homes. These Wolffish are a bit more aggressive than our local Wolfeels at home. We swim part way around the pinnacle and back looking at all the Wolffish and Codfish. Little Strytan has some geo thermal vents on it as well, so you can see the warmer water swirling and mixing with the fresh water. Time to go, so back up to the boat where it is old school pass your gear up and then do your best Whale breach belly flop into the boat. Erlander gives you a hoist by your britches or your arm to get you back on board. Nobody said diving had to look pretty! Back to the dock as group 2 is anxiously waiting to jump in. Meanwhile the Whale watching crew has come back with big smiles on their faces and telling us how great their day was out on the water. We take a long surface interval while we wait for group 2 to come back. Group 1 is now ready for dive 2 on the hydrothermal chimney, it is the only chimney in the world that is dive-able on recreational scuba. The chimney is 165 ft tall and the top at the shallowest point is 55 ft. The water emerging out of the chimney is estimate to be about 1000 years old. Since I have dove it before, I decide that I am going to dive the shore dive again to shoot the Lumpfish one more time. Audrey decides to join me as the rest of our group heads out. We spend a good 70 minutes doing our best trying to shoot these fish and it is difficult. They spend the entire time facing their eggs and blowing on them. Talk about butt shots. Got a few lucky shots when they turned to face me. I did have a big shock when an extremely large Lumpfish came out of the murk and swam up to

the smaller Lumpfish I was shooting. It was about 4 times larger than the others and then it just swam off. Crazy! Time to go as we make our way back to the beach. Once on land, we quickly pack up and head back to the cabins. Time to get gear hung up and drying so we can get packed for our departure in the morning. Faith has prepared a wonderful meal for our last night in Iceland as we all gather for one last toast. Here's to you Ken, "God dammit!"

Day 11

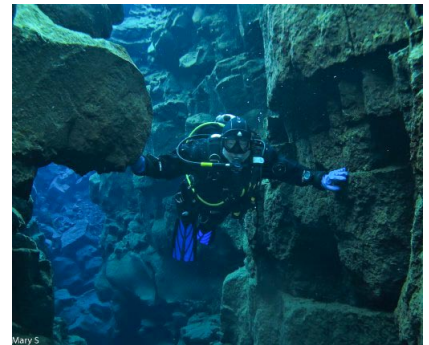
Everyone is up early and packed as the crew comes around and picks up all the luggage for our long journey back to Reykavik to catch our flights home. It is a good 6 hour bus ride back with a few stops along the way. Once we hit the airport, everything is off loaded and time to say goodbye to the crew and our fellow travelers catching different flights. It's been amazing, safe travels home everyone.



Bob and I would like to thank everyone for joining us on this golden circle tour around Iceland. We had an incredible time with all of you, and spending time and getting to know Faith & Paul's group too. We look forward to traveling with you all again in the future.

~Kelley & Bob

We dedicate this trip to our friend Ken. You are forever in our hearts.





Map of Silfra



Map of Geothermal Chimney