

# Circumnavigating Iceland: Birding the Ring Road

*May 27–June 5, 2019*  
with **Kathy Seymour**



*Horned Grebe in spectacular breeding plumage*

This NEW trip combines the best of our perennial favorite, Iceland: Birds and Natural History tour with the addition of rich birding areas on the eastern coast, including Flói Bird Reserve. From black sand beaches to glaciers, from waterfalls to mountains to wetlands, we'll witness huge breeding colonies of Puffins, of Dunlin, and of Gannets; watch overhead for the flights of high Arctic migrants like Sanderlings, Red Knots, and Ruddy Turnstones; sail Breiðafjörður's islands; hike around a lake in search of breeding pairs of Gyrfalcons; and experience one of the largest seal colonies in the country followed by seeing Iceland's breeding ducks in their stunning plumage, including Barrow's Goldeneye, Harlequin Duck, Scaup, Tufted Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, and Gadwall. Led by well known Icelandic birder and photographer Daniel Bergmann who will be available to offer photography insights and tips to anyone in the group.

Prepare to be dazzled.

## About This Tour

**PACE:** This is an active birding and wildlife watching tour that requires fairly lengthy drives on two days as we move between accommodations. Walking (up to 4 miles each day) often involves rough tracks and uneven terrain. Of course, travelers can remain close to the bus during these walks if they prefer.

## Day-to-Day Itinerary

### Day 1, May 27: Arrival and the Snæfellsnes Peninsula



*Arnarstapi*

Arrive at Iceland's Keflavík International Airport in the early morning. We will stop in Keflavík for breakfast and then travel towards Snæfellsnes with stops along the way by Akranes and Borgarfjörður where we'll look out for migrating high-Arctic shorebirds such as Sanderling, Red Knot, and Ruddy Turnstone. Migrating Brent Geese on stopover will be in the area along with Greenland White-fronted Geese. With luck we might spot a White-tailed Eagle as their main distribution is in the western part of the country.

From Borgarfjörður we'll travel to the southwestern tip of Snæfellsnes, towards the Snæfellesjökull glacier. In the afternoon we'll visit a number of seabird colonies for views of Common and Thick-billed Murre plus Razorbill, Black-legged Kittiwake and Northern Fulmar. At this time of year, when northerly migration is in full swing, anything can show up and the southern part of Snæfellsnes is known to have produced a number of good spring sightings of species such as Sabine's Gull. A few wintering Iceland Gulls will still be around in late May. In the late afternoon we'll find ourselves in the beautiful coastal town of Stykkishólmur, where we'll overnight for 2 nights.

**Overnight:** Fosshotel Stykkishólmur || <https://www.islandshotel.is/hotels-in-iceland/fosshotel-stykkisholmur> || (B,L,D)

## Day 2, May 28: Stykkishólmur , Breiðafjörður’s islands, and Snæfellsnes Peninsula



*Freshest shellfish you'll ever taste*

In the morning we'll bird around Stykkishólmur, including a nearby lake that has a number of breeding Red-throated Loons. At 11:00 we'll get on a Seatours boat and sail with them for two hours around Breiðafjörður's islands on the Viking Sushi Adventure Voyage:

<https://www.seatours.is/excursions/vikingasushi/>

A highlight of the tour is the towing of the dredge along the ocean floor, when different kinds of shellfish are scooped up from the bottom of the ocean: scallops, sea urchins, crabs, starfish, sea cucumbers, some of which can be eaten fresh (scallops and sea urchins, for example).

During the sailing we may expect to see Atlantic Puffin, European Shag, Great Cormorant, and other seabirds along with the interesting island geology. After returning to Stykkishólmur, we'll explore the northern part of Snæfellsnes Peninsula. We'll scan the many Common Eider flocks for a possible King Eider, we'll visit the iconic Kirkjufell mountain in Grundarfjörður and bird our way west to the town of Rif.

We'll then return to Stykkishólmur in the early evening.

**Overnight:** Fosshotel Stykkishólmur || (B,L,D)

## Day 3, May 29: The Northern Coast



*Hvitserkur*

After breakfast we'll start our journey east along the northern coast. We'll detour around the Vatnsnes Peninsula, which is one of the best locations in Iceland for seals; mostly Harbor, and the occasional Grey, Seal. Vatnsnes is also home of the magnificent Hvitserkur sea stack, one of the north coast's most iconic landmarks. We'll then continue east to Lake Mývatn, where we'll overnight for three nights. After dinner we'll do an evening walk around the ponds near our hotel and the shore of the lake. Mývatn is arguably one of the most important breeding sites for waterfowl on the planet: in late May there is a lot of activity and ducks are in full breeding plumage. Here we can expect to see all of Iceland's breeding duck species, including Barrow's Goldeneye, Harlequin Duck, Greater Scaup, Tufted Duck, Red-breasted Merganser,

Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, and Gadwall. Red-necked Phalaropes will also have just arrived at their breeding sites, but they are among the last migrants to arrive. Horned Grebe will offer great views on a pond right outside the hotel, so will Whooper Swan and Common Loon.

**Overnight:** Sel Hotel Mývatn || <http://www.myvatn.is/> || (B,L,D)

## **Day 4, May 30: Lake Mývatn and Whale-watching**



*European Golden-Plover*

During our first morning at Lake Mývatn we'll drive around the lake and take short walks at a few selected stops. We'll keep an eye out for Gyrfalcons as a number of pairs breed in the vicinity. Apart from the waterfowl we'll expect to see the breeding moorland birds such as Whimbrel, European Golden-Plover, Common Snipe and Black-tailed Godwit. Male Rock Ptarmigans will also be conspicuous as they'll still be displaying their white winter plumage although the surrounding landscape will be snow-free. Lava fields will produce Snow Bunting, Wheatear, and Merlin. And a walk through the Höfði tree plantation will give good views of Common Redpoll, Redwing and Eurasian Wren. In the afternoon we will be in the town of Húsavík where we'll do a whale-watching tour for not just the possibility of whale sightings, but also for seabirds.

**Overnight:** Sel Hotel Mývatn || (B,L,D)

## **Day 5, May 31:**

From Lake Mývatn we will travel back to Húsavík and then further east along the coast. We'll make stops along the way in Kelduverfi, will take a walk through the Ásbyrgi woodlands in the Vatnajökull National Park, and then visit Rauðinúpur bird cliff that has a breeding colony of Northern Gannets. On our way back to the hotel we'll enjoy some of the high-plateau mountain landscapes of the northeast. Another after-dinner walk near the hotel may produce some additional sightings of local waterfowl and the low sun may provide ideal conditions for bird photography.

**Overnight:** Sel Hotel Mývatn || (B,L,D)

## **Day 6, June 1: Wild Reindeer and Atlantic Puffin**

We'll leave Mývatn after breakfast and travel east through Möðrudalsöræfi. We'll keep our eyes open for herds of wild Reindeer that frequent this part of the country and will pass through the town of Egilsstaðir and then go further east to Borgarfjörður-eystri, where we'll visit Hafnarhólmi, which will offer outstanding views and photography of Atlantic Puffins at a breeding colony. Fuglavernd (BirdLife Iceland) is a majority owner of the area and manage it for bird protection. After our time with the puffins, we'll continue on to the town of Breiðdalsvík on the east coast, where we'll spend the night.

**Overnight:** Hotel Bláfell || (B,L,D) <http://www.breiddalsvik.is/hotel-blafell/>

## **Day 7, June 2: Wetlands, Mudflats, Rarities, and Glaciers**

We'll now start travelling west along the south coast. Our first stop will be at Djúpivogur, where we'll scan the wetlands for breeding Northern Shoveler and Common Shelduck. We'll then pass through the expansive mudflats of Álftafjörður, visit the town of Höfn, which is an excellent area for rare birds that have been blown off their spring migration route. We are now in the Vatnajökull glacier region where we plan to visit some of the outlet glaciers that flow off the main icecap that covers about 9% of Iceland. This is some of the most

impressive landscape in Iceland, a feast for the eyes and a joy to photograph. We'll overnight at Hotel Smyrlabjörg for two nights.

**Overnight:** Hotel Smyrlabjörg || <http://www.smyrlabjorg.is/?lang=en> || (B,L,D)

### **Day 8, June 3: Glacial Lagoons and Moraines**



*Red-throated Loon*

We'll have a full day in the Vatnajökull region. We'll visit the Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon and watch the seabirds fishing in the short outwash river channel. A drive through an area of glacial moraines will give us an opportunity to observe breeding Great Skua and Parasitic Jaeger. This is also the stronghold of Iceland's fast growing population of Barnacle Goose. Red-throated Loons are on ponds in the moraines and Wheatears are fluttering about. We'll do some walking towards a couple of the glaciers and enjoy the spectacular landscape.

**Overnight:** Hotel Smyrlabjörg || (B,L,D)

### **Day 9, June 4: Black Sand Beaches, Waterfalls, and Flói Nature Reserve**

This will be a day of travel west. We'll make a number of stops along the way and spend some time on the black sand beaches near the town of Vík and enjoy visits to waterfalls such as Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss. We will find ourselves at the town of Eyrarbakki for dinner and will make an evening visit to the nearby Flói Nature Reserve, which is also managed by Fuglavernd (BirdLife Iceland). This reclaimed wetland supports one of the densest breeding populations of Dunlin and has Red-throated Loons and Red-necked Phalaropes on almost every pond. We'll then continue to Keflavík, where we'll spend the last night.

**Overnight:** Park Inn by Radisson Keflavík || <https://www.parkinn.com/airport-hotel-keflavik> || (B,L,D)

### **Day 10, June 5: Morning Birding, Then Fond Farewells**

After breakfast we'll do birdwatching around the Reykjanes Peninsula. We'll visit the Garður Lighthouse, where we may see passing Manx Shearwater. After lunch we plan to be at the Keflavík airport at around 2 pm for outbound flights.

## About Your Guides



**Kathy Seymour** is the Adult Birding Coordinator at Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary. She runs a full schedule of day trips throughout New England, and develops and leads birding tours all over the United States and Canada, including Alaska, Manitoba, Texas, Nevada, Colorado, Minnesota, Florida and California. She has birded Costa Rica, Peru and Trinidad. She teaches regular classes on bird identification and electronic resources for birders.

Kathy holds a master's degree in economics from Brown University, and worked as a financial data systems programmer for 21 years, where she honed the logistical and organizational skills trip participants appreciate. At the same time, she became heavily involved with all aspects of birding at Drumlin Farm—leading programs and trips, managing a northern saw-whet owl banding project, coordinating Bird-a-thon fundraising, and conducting breeding bird surveys. She is a member of the Nuttall Ornithological Society and published an article about saw-whet owl banding in *Bird Observer* magazine.

For Kathy, the most rewarding part of being a trip leader is sharing the wonder of new places and new species with birders of all levels. She has a special place in her heart for owls and shorebirds, though her favorite bird is often the one she is looking at in the moment.



**Daniel Bergmann** is Iceland's most recognized nature photographer. He is also a passionate birdwatcher and has been on the board of directors at Fuglavernd (BirdLife Iceland) since 2001. At Fuglavernd he acts as the editor of the annual *Fuglar (Birds)* magazine and manages the publishing and educational programs of the organization. Daniel has been leading bird and landscape photography tours in Iceland for over 15 years and will be on hand for photographic instructions if needed. [www.danielbergmann.com](http://www.danielbergmann.com)

## Price, Terms and Conditions

**Tour Price:** US\$5200 per person, double occupancy. Single supplement, US\$700. Minimum number of travelers for this pricing: 8. Maximum group size is 14.

**Price includes:**

- All meals and accommodations as indicated in the itinerary
- Services of Mass Audubon naturalist leader, Kathy Seymour
- Services of local naturalist and photography guide, Daniel Bergmann
- All excursions and entrance fees
- Extensive trip preparation notes and bird checklist
- Transportation within Iceland starting and ending at Keflavík International Airport.
- All tips and gratuities
- Medical evacuation insurance
- Carbon offset for all your international flights

**Price excludes:**

- International airfare to/from Keflavík International Airport
- Porterage
- Passport and visa fees; travel insurance
- Airport taxes; excess baggage charges
- Items of a personal nature, including alcoholic beverages, snacks, laundry, and telephone calls; other

**HOW TO BOOK:** Please fill out the reservation form attached and send via:

- **email** to [travel@massaudubon.org](mailto:travel@massaudubon.org) and call us with your credit card info: 800.289.9504, or
- **mail** to Mass Audubon – Travel, 208 South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773 with your check.

**APPLICATIONS, RESERVATIONS, DEPOSITS:** Early applications are strongly encouraged. Trip rosters usually must be finalized 4 months before departure! **All applications must be accompanied by a completed reservation form and \$500 deposit.** Deposits can be by check or credit card (Visa or MasterCard). We reserve the right to decline your application. In the case of questionable health, we reserve the right to require a physician's certification to affirm you are capable of the activities. Final payment is due 90 days before the departure date. **Final payment must be by check or money order.**

**RATES:** All tour prices are based on double occupancy. If you would like us to find you a roommate, we'll do our best, but cannot guarantee a share. If we cannot find a share, you will need to pay the single supplement. All forms and fares are accurate at the time of publication (**August 2018**) but are subject to change at any time prior to departure. It is our policy to only pass on the actual amount of any increases in airfares or land costs such as those increases due to the devaluation of the dollar. Rarely, a price increase may be called for if the group falls below the minimum, as listed in the itinerary.

**TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:** A U.S. passport valid for *at least six months beyond* the trip's departure date is required.

**FLIGHTS:** You, the traveler, are responsible for booking and paying for your own international flights. Once you reserve your space, we'll provide you with suggested flights and tell you which flights our staff will take. You may book flights directly with the airline, online, or with a travel agent. Please be aware that most

tickets are non-refundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go. We ask that you provide us with your flight details.

**TRIP INSURANCE:** A brochure and application for optional trip cancellation, illness, and baggage insurance will be sent to you upon registration. We purchase medical evacuation insurance to cover you while on the tour. We strongly recommend that you research and purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself. See [www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com)

**PHOTOS:** Mass Audubon reserves the right to make use of any photographs taken by our guides on the tour. We guarantee that no photos of a compromising nature will be used. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us.

**CANCELLATION POLICY: If you need to change your booking, you must inform us immediately in writing.** All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the Massachusetts Audubon Travel Office. Cancellations received up to 121 days prior to departure will be refunded deposits less a \$300 per person fee. For cancellations between 120 and 90 days prior to departure, all deposits are forfeit, but any balance paid beyond that is refundable. There are no refunds of any kind for cancellations 90 days or less from departure. **We strongly urge all travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance.** You will be sent information from the Massachusetts Audubon Society upon receipt of your deposit.

**YOUR RESPONSIBILITY:** Although every precaution is taken to safeguard you and your belongings, group travel trips by their nature involve a certain amount of risk. Trip participants should understand that the domestic and international trips sponsored/operated by Massachusetts Audubon Society (Mass Audubon Tours) - hereafter collectively "M.A.S." - involve known and unknown risks. M.A.S. assumes no responsibility for injuries, death, financial losses or damage to clients' property caused by or occurring during participation in any of the travel trips sponsored/operated by M.A.S. Trip participants must assume responsibility for having sufficient skill and fitness to participate in the trips and activities offered or sponsored by M.A.S. Trip participants must also certify that they have no medical, mental or physical conditions which could interfere with their abilities to participate in the activities and/or trips they are participating in and they must assume and bear the cost of all risks that may be created, directly or indirectly, by any such condition. It is the responsibility of trip participants to have in place adequate insurance to cover any injury, damage or emergency transportation costs related to their travel and/or participation in trip activities and/or to bear the costs of such injury, damage or emergency transportation costs. Because of the risks associated with the travel trips sponsored by M.A.S. we urge all trip participants to supplement their own insurance with travel or vacation or emergency response types of insurance. M.A.S. requires that all trip participants acknowledge and assume these risks by reading and signing an M.A.S. Release and Waiver and Assumption of Risk contract prior to departure.

**CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL:** Travelers will be provided with an itinerary and trip preparation information. It is expected that travelers will read this information prior to trip departure. Travelers will be responsible for completing an application reservation form, including the personal information and a release of liability (see attached). Travelers will be expected to abide by the terms set for in the invoice. During the tour, travelers are asked to respect and follow the directions of their guide and leader.

**PHOTO CREDITS:** All photos by Daniel Bergmann, except Seatours' fresh shellfish photo.

# Mass Audubon Natural History Travel Traveler Registration and Waiver

Name (1) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
(as shown on your passport)

Name (2) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
(as shown on your passport)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ (needed during the tour)

Home/office #: \_\_\_\_\_ (Is this your preferred number for us to use routinely? Yes/No)

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Room Preferences:

- I request single accommodations where available and will pay the single supplement.
- I would like to be assigned a roommate. If one is not available, I will pay the single supplement.

### DEPOSIT: \$500 per person

Please find my enclosed check (payable to "Massachusetts Audubon Society")

Please charge my credit card  
MasterCard  Visa

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp.: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV/CVC: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Passport #: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_

Food allergies? \_\_\_\_\_

Food requirements / special diet? \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies to medications, insects, or other? \_\_\_\_\_

(if yes, you must carry your own EpiPen or medications)

Is there anything else we should know about your health that might impact your ability to participate comfortably on this trip? Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, PLEASE NOTIFY:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please read and sign the back of this form →**

**Massachusetts Audubon Society, Inc.**  
**RELEASE AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK**

I would like to participate in the birding and nature tour named above (the “Tour”) organized by Massachusetts Audubon Society, Inc. (“Mass Audubon”). I am aware that participation in a Mass Audubon tour involves risk, including, but not limited to, the hazards of living in and traveling over unpredictable terrain often in remote areas without adequate medical facilities, exposure to disease and infection, being subject to the forces of nature, and travel by airplane and motor vehicle. In addition, I understand and acknowledge that, if I participate in the Tour, one or more of the risks described above or set forth below could result in or cause bodily injury or death to me or damage to personal property of mine: physical exertion; travel by foot, plane, train, auto, vans, bus, boat or other conveyance; consumption of food and beverages; civil unrest, terrorism, banditry, or criminal activity; high altitude; inadequate medical facilities or service.

I acknowledge that I have received and read carefully information describing the Tour, including, but not limited to, the Terms and Conditions and the paragraph in the Terms and Conditions entitled “Your Responsibility.”

I acknowledge that the enjoyment and excitement of touring is derived, at least in part, from the inherent risks incurred by travel and activity beyond the accepted safety and routine of life at home or work, and that part of the reason I have decided to participate in the Tour is to experience this enjoyment and excitement. I further acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to discuss with my medical provider the medical risks involved in the Tour. I have also had the opportunity to research the Tour and to understand fully the risks involved.

Therefore, notwithstanding the risks of participating in the Tour set forth and as described above, and in consideration of Mass Audubon permitting me to participate in the Tour:

- (1) I AGREE TO ASSUME AND ACCEPT ALL RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TOUR; AND
- (2) I HEREBY RELEASE AND FOREVER DISCHARGE AND COVENANT AND AGREE NOT TO SUE, AND AGREE TO INDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS, MASS AUDUBON AND ITS DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, EMPLOYEES, AND AGENTS (COLLECTIVELY, THE “RELEASEES”), AND EACH OF THE RELEASEES, FROM AND AGAINST AND IN REGARD TO ANY AND ALL CLAIMS, DEMANDS, ACTIONS, SUITS, LOSSES, COSTS, DAMAGES, AND EXPENSES (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, ATTORNEYS’ FEES), AND ANY AND ALL LIABILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF EVERY KIND AND DESCRIPTION, WHICH I SHALL OR MAY HAVE AGAINST THE RELEASEES OR ANY ONE OR MORE OF THEM ARISING OUT OF, OR IN CONNECTION WITH, MY PARTICIPATION IN THE TOUR.

I agree that this Release and Assumption of Risk shall be (a) binding upon me and my heirs, executors, legal representatives, successors, and assigns, and (b) deemed a contract made under seal under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and shall be governed by, and construed and enforced in accordance with, the internal laws of said Commonwealth without regard to its principles of conflict of laws.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ, UNDERSTAND, AND VOLUNTARILY SIGN THIS RELEASE AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (s) (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_