

ICELAND

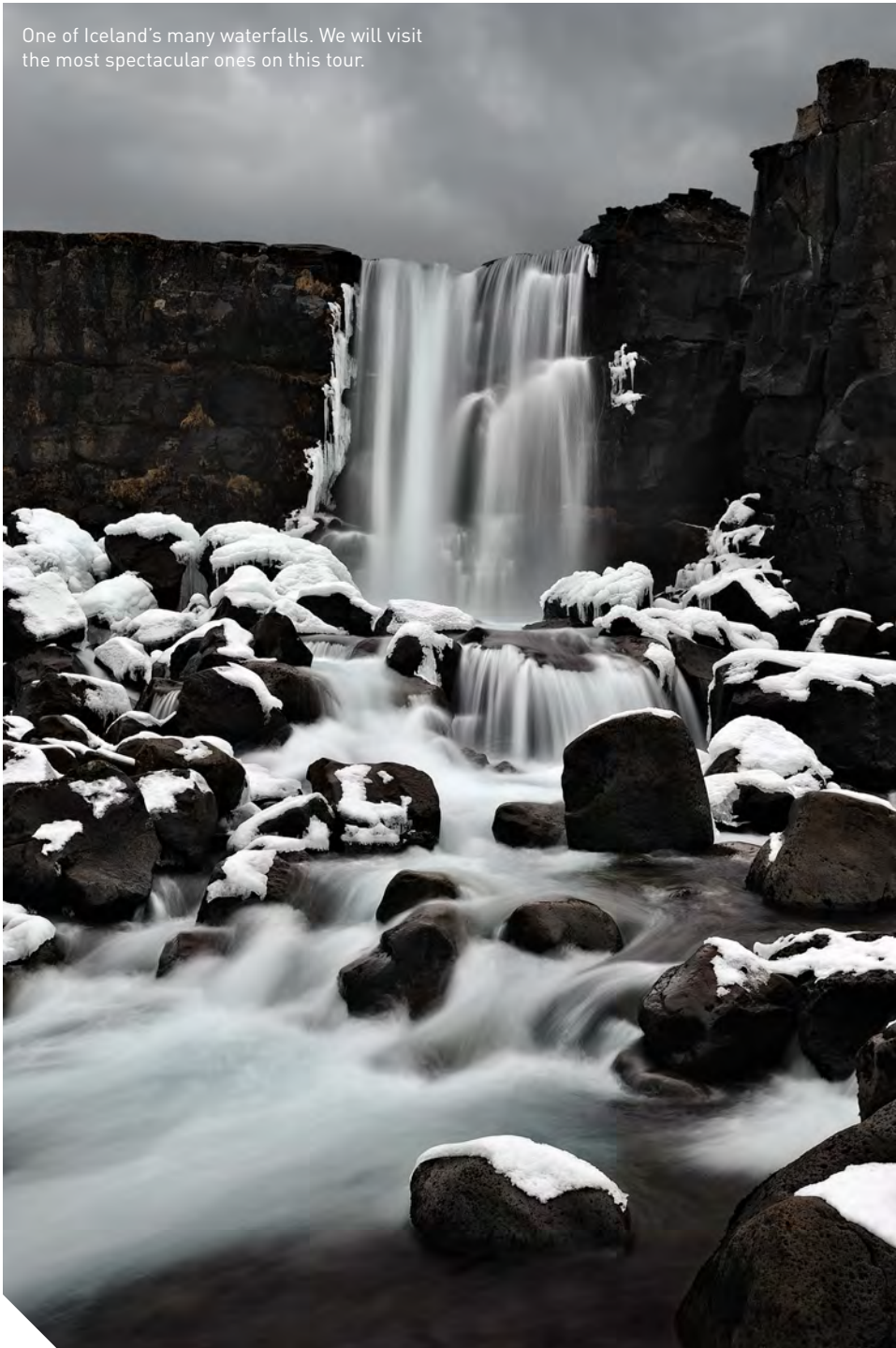
WINTER WILDERNESS

A SQUIVER PHOTO TOUR



Squiver

One of Iceland's many waterfalls. We will visit the most spectacular ones on this tour.



HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Ice cave excursion
- Thingvellir NP
- Northern Lights - we hope
- Gullfoss
- Geothermal fields
- Geysir
- Seascapes
- Vík
- Dyrhólaey
- Basalt cave
- Skaftafell
- Icelandic horses
- Glaciers
- Skógafoss
- Jökulsárlón
- Glacial lagoons
- Lava fields
- Godafoss
- Dettifoss
- Lake Myvatn
- Sellfoss
- Dimmu Borgir

ICELAND'S WINTER WILDERNESS

Dates: 5 - 14 March 2015 (10 days)

Tour leaders: Marsel van Oosten and Daniëlla Sibbing

Fee: 3,250 EURO from Reykjavik, Iceland

Deposit: 1000 EURO per person

Group size: min. 8, max. 12 participants

Level: all experience levels

Iceland is a country of boiling mud pools, spurting geysers, vast glaciers and countless waterfalls. Its breathtaking landscape is even more spectacular in winter. Snow accentuates the black lava fields, and in the evening we may marvel at the dancing lights of the aurora in the night sky. We will photograph magnificent waterfalls, vast glaciers and seascapes, and along the way pass lava fields, craters, volcanoes, and fields of volcanic ash. One of the highlights is Jökulsárlón, the largest glacial lagoon in Iceland with floating icebergs and surreal ice-covered black beaches. This tour offers you more photography and less driving; a chartered plane will fly us to the North for some of Iceland's most scenic landscapes.

Spouses and non-photographing travel companions will also enjoy this amazing trip!

This trip is suitable for photographers of all experience levels. There will be daily briefings, in the field instructions, and image reviews. You'll return with spectacular images!

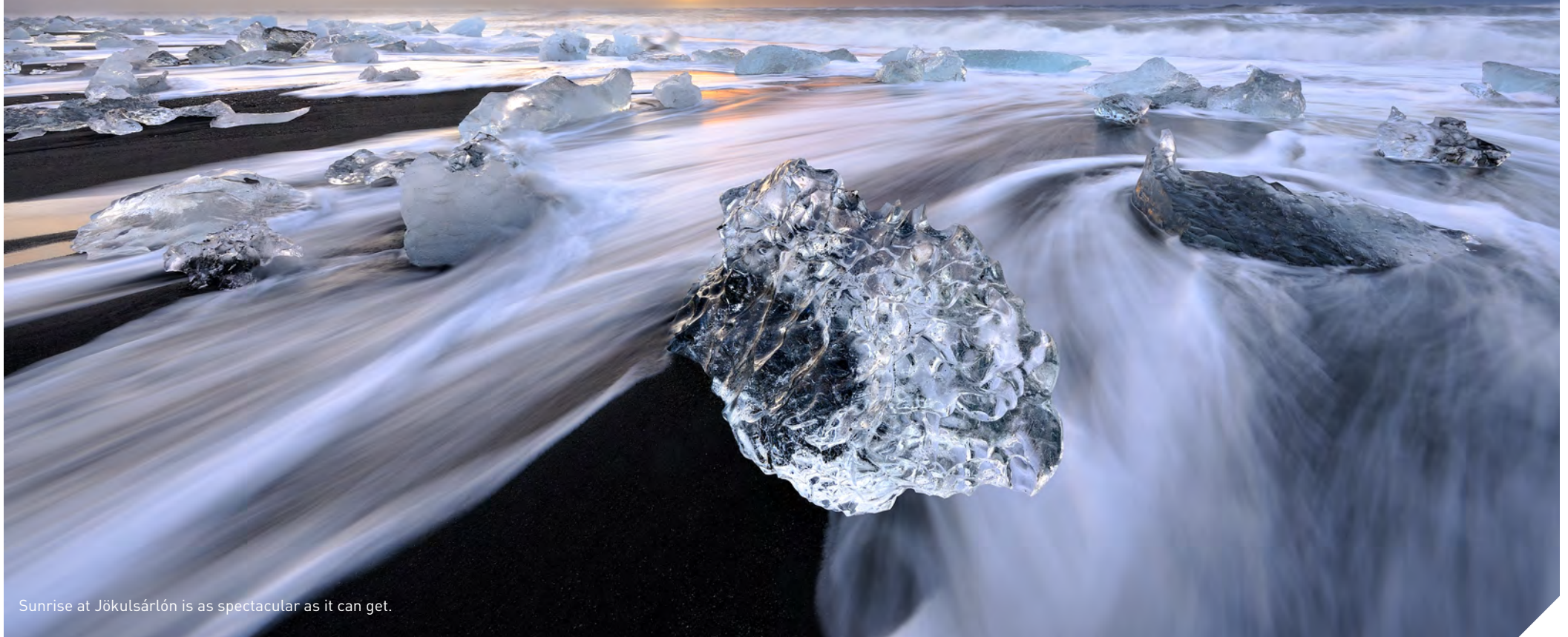
START OF THE TOUR: THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2015

Everyone should arrive in Iceland no later than 4PM. You will be picked up from the airport and taken to Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland. We stay in a apartment hotel in the old city centre. It is a historic building that has been renovated into modern apartments. In the evening we'll have a welcoming dinner in town at a nice restaurant.

When the aurora predictions are good and we get (relatively) clear skies, we will cut dinner short. We already have the perfect location for that scenario, should we get so lucky.

PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS ASKING ME
ABOUT ESKIMOS, BUT THERE ARE
NO ESKIMOS IN ICELAND

//BJÖRK



Sunrise at Jökulsárlón is as spectacular as it can get.

PART ONE: THE SOUTH

We start the roundtrip traveling around the coastal areas of South and South-East Iceland. Our first days are spent in the beautiful South, which is the most developed and densely populated part of Iceland outside Reykjavik. And when they say densely populated, you should know that this is all relative.... The whole of Iceland is 103,000 km² (comparable in size to Guatemala or Scotland and Wales combined) with only 310,000 inhabitants, of which more than two-thirds live in the Reykjavik area. With only 2.8 people per square kilometer, Iceland is one of the least densely populated countries in the world.

The South and South-East can be crowded with tourists in summer, but in winter it is much more quiet. There are huge mountains, some of Iceland's most known glaciers, powerful rivers and impressive waterfalls. Large parts of the Southern region consist of flat farmland that suffers from bad weather though, so have your raincoat ready.

The most famous route in the South is the Golden Circle, which includes Thingvellir National Park, the multi-level waterfall at Gullfoss and the active geyser of Geysir. Although these are highly frequented locations, they are so stunning that they cannot be missed in our tour.

Thingvellir National Park is home to the largest lake in Iceland (83 km²) and one of the prettiest waterfalls in Iceland: Öxaráfoss, named after the river that flows through it, Öxará. In winter the rocks at the base of the waterfall are often covered with snow and ice, making the setting magical.

Skógafoss, one of Iceland's most popular waterfalls.



The Geysir area is rich of thermal pools, bubbling mud pots and furnaces. The main attraction is Strokkur, a geyser that erupts to a height of 20 meters every seven to eight minutes. The water is extremely hot (80 to 100 degrees celsius) and before it pushes the water out, a gigantic turquoise bubble is formed. Iceland is one of the five largest geyser fields in the world, along with Chile, New Zealand, Kamchatka and Yellowstone.

Gullfoss is the most famous waterfall of Iceland. It is huge (Europe's largest waterfall) and consists of three separate levels of falls, making it unique in shape and form. The upper

falls are 11 meters high, the lower 21 meters, and the gorge itself is 70 meters deep.

After the Golden Circle, we continue our journey in the direction of Vík. On the way we will pass a number of smaller but beautiful waterfalls. At one of these photogenic waterfalls you can walk behind the dropping water, resulting in a fascinating perspective. Another one is the magnificent Skógafoss, which drops 60 meters over a green cliff and is fed by melting water from the glacier above it. Looking at the names of the waterfalls, you have probably figured out by now that the Icelandic word "foss" means "waterfall."

The area surrounding Vík is best known for its seascapes. The sea has eroded the 100 meters high lava cliffs into wonderful shapes and there are interesting sea stacks and rock pinnacles poking out of the sea. One of the most photographed rock bridges of Iceland is located in this region: Dyrhólaey, which means "hole in the door". The bridge was entirely formed by wave erosion.

There are also very interesting caves on the beach, surrounded by columnar basalt. We will time our visit with the tides, in order to get there safely. And more importantly: to get back safely.



Dyrhólaey, a natural rock bridge near Vík.

Vatnajökull is the highest glacier in Europe.
In total, 11% of Iceland is covered in ice.

A LOT OF PEOPLE LIKE SNOW.
I FIND IT TO BE AN UNNECESSARY
FREEZING OF WATER

//CARL REINER

PART TWO: THE SOUTH-EAST

The South-East of Iceland is all about glaciers, black beaches and icebergs. We visit Skaftafell National Park, a frozen wilderness of ice, mountains, sand and water. Followed by Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon. Jökulsárlón is a unique place, where the glacier lake is in direct contact with the sea. Icebergs that have broken off the glacier end up in the lagoon. There they melt until they are small enough to be dragged out into the sea with the receding tide. When the tide rises again, the pieces of ice are thrown onto the black beach, a totally surreal sight. The combination of glass-like shapes, the sea and the black sand is a photographers dream!

During our time in this area we will get close & personal with several glaciers. The area is home to Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Europe and the third largest in the world (after the ice caps of Antarctica and Greenland). This glacier is so big, that the different glacier tongues have their own names and are referred to as separate glaciers. Unlike other glaciers that are formed by accumulated and firmly packed snow, Vatnajökull is a remaining piece of the last ice age. Many of the rivers and lakes in Iceland originate from this glacier. There are also lakes beneath the ice, formed by the heat of 7 active volcanoes under the glacier. Of all the glaciers in Iceland, Vatnajökull is receding the fastest; some of the

glacier tongues moved as much as 2 km since 1973. The one at Jökulsárlón as fast as 100 meters a year.

To stand next to a glacier is extremely impressive. The size, the colors, and the sharp shapes with many deep crevices are awe-inspiring. We will visit multiple glacier tongues and their lakes, as the circumstances can vary a lot. Some of them will be frozen with icebergs stuck in the lake, in others the ice will float around, with the huge glacier as a spectacular backdrop for our photographs.

INCLUDED EXCURSION: ICE CAVE

We plan to pay a visit to an ice cave. As glaciers change constantly, the locations of ice caves change constantly as well. In November the outskirts of the glacier tongues are investigated to find ice caves suitable for visiting. Depending on the location, we will drive there ourselves or we will hire 4x4's.

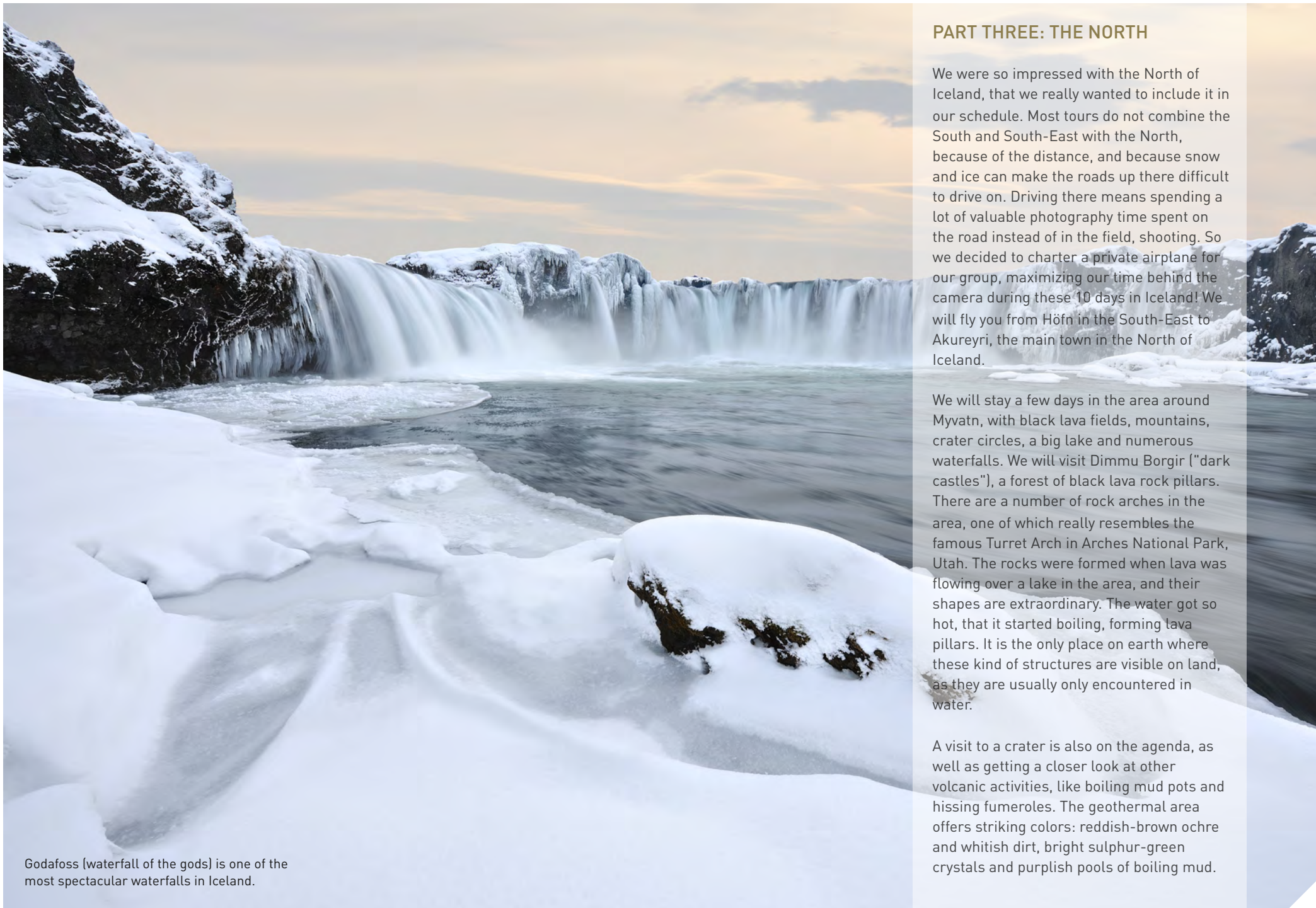
Walking inside an ice cave is a truly amazing experience. In places where rocks and sand have been mixed in with the water, before being pushed together by the pressure of the glacier, that ice is pure black. And in other locations it is glass-like or bright blue. Upon entering an ice cave it is hard to decide where to start pointing your camera!



Northern Lights over a black lava beach in the South-East of Iceland.

IF YOU
THINK IT
IS GOING
TO RAIN,
IT WILL
//CLINT
EASTWOOD

A piece of ice on the black lava beach near Jökulsárlón.



Godafoss (waterfall of the gods) is one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Iceland.

PART THREE: THE NORTH

We were so impressed with the North of Iceland, that we really wanted to include it in our schedule. Most tours do not combine the South and South-East with the North, because of the distance, and because snow and ice can make the roads up there difficult to drive on. Driving there means spending a lot of valuable photography time spent on the road instead of in the field, shooting. So we decided to charter a private airplane for our group, maximizing our time behind the camera during these 10 days in Iceland! We will fly you from Höfn in the South-East to Akureyri, the main town in the North of Iceland.

We will stay a few days in the area around Myvatn, with black lava fields, mountains, crater circles, a big lake and numerous waterfalls. We will visit Dimmu Borgir ("dark castles"), a forest of black lava rock pillars. There are a number of rock arches in the area, one of which really resembles the famous Turret Arch in Arches National Park, Utah. The rocks were formed when lava was flowing over a lake in the area, and their shapes are extraordinary. The water got so hot, that it started boiling, forming lava pillars. It is the only place on earth where these kind of structures are visible on land, as they are usually only encountered in water.

A visit to a crater is also on the agenda, as well as getting a closer look at other volcanic activities, like boiling mud pots and hissing fumeroles. The geothermal area offers striking colors: reddish-brown ochre and whitish dirt, bright sulphur-green crystals and purplish pools of boiling mud.



A mirrored image of the ceiling in an ice cave.

There are several very impressive waterfalls in the North, which we will visit, amongst them are Godafoss and Dettifoss. The first one is circular in shape and can be visited from both sides of the river. Dettifoss is the monster of the North. It is the most productive waterfall in Iceland, as well as in Europe. It is 45 meters high and 100 meters wide. If we are lucky, we can also see reindeer on the deserted plateau.

END OF THE TOUR: SATURDAY 14 MARCH 2015

After our last morning of shooting in the North, we will return to Akureyri, where we have a delicious lunch in the best restaurant in town. A scheduled flight in the afternoon will take us back to Reykjavik, where we will arrive around 17.00 hours. This will sadly be the end of the tour. Depending on your international flight back home, you will be transported from the domestic airport to the international airport (45 minutes). Should your flight be the next morning, we will organize a hotel for you in town (at an additional charge).

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

During this tour in Iceland, we will stay in comfortable guesthouses and hotels. Although the majority of guesthouses

and country hotels are closed in winter, we have managed to find good accommodation. We have chosen them based on their location, but with a good level of comfort in mind.

It is possible to get a single room for a single supplement of 400 Euro during this tour. There is one location where everyone will have to share rooms (in Vík), regardless of having booked a single room on this tour or not. This is unavoidable, since the hotel we will stay in only has 7 rooms in total. The rooms are however spacious and the singles will get the largest rooms available, in order to offer some extra privacy.

Dinner and breakfast is usually in the guesthouse/hotel we stay in or pre-arranged at a restaurant close-by. Lunch is often taken on the road. This can be in the form of a lunch pack when we expect to have lunch on the location where we will be shooting (or where there is nothing else around). Or at a gas station where they serve food or have a restaurant.

PARTICIPATION FEE & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The participation fee for this trip is €3250 per person, based on sharing. The group consists of a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 participants.

The group is led by Marsel van Oosten and Daniëlla Sibbing.

The participation fee includes:

- all accommodation
- all meals
- all drinks (excluding alcoholic drinks)
- local transportation
- 2 domestic flights (one charter, one scheduled flight)
- ice cave excursion
- daily briefings
- in the field tips & tricks
- a lot of fun!

Not included in the tour is transportation to Iceland. And depending on your time of arrival, an additional night in Reykjavik at the beginning or the end of the tour may be necessary. If you like, we can book a room for you in the house we are staying at. It is centrally located in the old city center and is very nicely refurbished.

Internet is available at most locations. Mobile phone coverage is also very good in Iceland. If you plan to do a lot of data roaming, you can buy pre-paid sim cards with a very cheap data plan on it (around 12 euro for 1 GB of data). No reason not to update your Facebook page regularly!

Rock pinnacles are scattered around Iceland's rough coast.



THE YOUNGEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

Iceland is the youngest country in the world, when you look at it geologically. It is a country formed by fire and ice. The volcanic landscape wasn't made millions of years ago like in most other countries. Iceland is in the midst of its own creation. Volcanic eruptions are a fact of daily life; new lava fields and waterfalls are formed constantly. There are 180 volcanoes listed, of which 18 are known to be active. As a result, the landscape looks prehistoric. Mountains are being reshaped, and waterfalls with melting glacier water near the coast make a high drop down, because the land has not yet eroded into gentle meadows, like in older countries.

90% of the rocks Iceland is made of is basalt, which is a black or dark-grey stone formed from rapid surface cooling of magma flows. The columnar basalt is especially beautiful to see. They are in fact vertical crystals formed at the time of eruption - the faster the cooling, the smaller the columns. You can often find these columnar basalt near the coast and near waterfalls.

Iceland has no army. They do have a police force of only 700 officers. They maintain public order and manage law enforcement responsibilities. Because crime rates are so low, the police do not carry guns and lack the sour demeanor typical of their position. They are extremely kind, unless it comes to traffic violations. Icelanders have a president, but he has no real power; he plays the role of national figurehead, not much unlike kings or queens in European monarchies. He or she is however elected for 4-year terms with no limit of terms served. The real executive power lies with the office of the prime minister, who is appointed by the president based on majority party representation after elections.

Fishing has always been Iceland's number-one money-maker until quite recently. Fishing has been limited by law, due to worldwide demising fish stocks. Fish once accounted for 90% of Iceland's exports, but that figure dropped to 50%. But it still is over 1,500,000 tons of fish per year, worth over 1 billion USD.

Tourism accounts for the fastest-growing sector of the Icelandic economy and is now the second-highest earner in the country. In summer there are more foreign tourists than Icelanders, and foreign currency-filled wallets pay about 15% of Iceland's total export earnings.

Around 1% of Iceland's land is considered usable for agriculture. Officially, Iceland produces no crops, because the soil is not fertile enough. There are greenhouses and they are heavily subsidized. Import tariffs on agricultural products are as high as 700% (!), which is why Icelanders do not tend to eat salad. Sheep is Iceland's other white meat. After sheep, dairy farms are most common.

Although humbled by the banking crisis, Iceland remains to be a very expensive country. It ranks number one on the global Big Mac index (the per-capita real costs of a McDonald's hamburger). Iceland has 24.5% VAT, which is the third highest in the world (after Norway and Denmark). And yet, despite these horrific prices, Icelanders enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. Home ownership is high, education levels are high and there is equal distribution of wealth. The one fundamental problem is a high debt. Adult Icelanders are estimated to owe around 25,000 USD in credit-card debt.

The local currency is the Icelandic króna (ISK). But a lot of prices are indicated in Euros. Just to give you an idea: 1000 ISK is approx. 6,5 Euro or 9 USD (April 2014).



THE WATER IN ICELAND IS THE PUREST IN THE WORLD

A lack of air pollution and natural filters of volcanic rock result in very pure spring water, available just anywhere. You can encounter it in the many springs and rivers or in the form of ice, which covers 11% of the country, mostly in the form of glaciers.

The highest glaciers are Vatnajökull, Hofsjökull, Langjökull and Myrdalsjökull. Some pieces of ice date back to the last ice age of 10.000 year ago; others are younger, following periods of warming and cooling in the last millennium. It comes in all shades of white, black and blue.

Glaciers are constantly moving and are either melting or freezing. At the end of glaciers, you can often find lakes, that gather the melting ice and the icebergs that are broken off from the ice's edge, and eventually end up in the sea.

Most water and ice in Iceland arrives in the form of snow, which can fall any month of the year. Because of the constant snowfall on the glaciers, the layers are pressed together and eventually form ice. When it is squashed together so hard that all oxygen is pushed out, it becomes crystal clear.

Iceland is self-sufficient when it comes to indoor water usage. It comes out of the tap in two ways: glacier cold spring water (perfect for drinking) or nuclear hot, as it comes directly from the hot springs. 99% of Iceland's energy is clean. It is either from geothermal or hydro-electric resources. Because it is so easy to make electricity, it hardly costs the Icelanders anything.



Icelandic horses may be small, but they can easily handle the fury of the Icelandic weather gods.



THE WIND

The wind is a major force in Iceland and should be enjoyed as part of the landscape.

The air in Iceland is ultra clean; there is hardly any pollution. Iceland is the only country in the world that has been allowed by the Kyoto Protocol to increase 10% in carbon emissions.

The wind is blowing constantly and can be very gusty. Expect it to be much stronger than you are used to. The warm Gulf Stream seems to be in constant battle with the cold arctic currents and creates powerful air movements, especially in winter. It typically blows North-East, but on the ground the wind seems to change direction constantly. The wind is in fact blowing so hard, that you can count on precipitation falling sideways - be it rain, sleet, snow or hale. The good thing is that the wind changes the weather conditions rapidly. The skies are ever-changing and form incredible clouds.

THE CLIMATE

Iceland enjoys a temperate climate, which means it's not that bad, but also that is not that great. Every day is partially cloudy with a strong chance of anything the skies might throw down at you. In less than an hour it can rain, or there can be sunshine, hail or snow coming down. And then it goes back through the cycle in reverse... That does not necessarily mean that Iceland has bad weather. It simply has weather. Lots of it. Expect everything and you will never be disappointed. There are T-shirt days and there are wool parka days. And they normally are on the same day!

We will also have our fair share of rain, clouds and possibly storms. This is all part of the adventure and adds to the wild landscape of Iceland. We will try and adjust the schedule as much as possible to the weather. The cloudy skies are also a big advantage, because it allows you more hours behind the camera during the day.

NORTHERN LIGHTS (AURORA BOREALIS)

Northern Lights can usually be seen from November through March. Because of the clear skies and the proximity to the North pole, this phenomenon is reason enough to travel to Iceland in wintertime.

Every town in Iceland sells itself as the best location to view the Northern Lights, but the quality of any sighting is completely unpredictable. Other than the amount of solar activity, what matters most is cloud cover during our trip. An optimal view will occur on a cold, clear night, in total darkness.

As predictions for the coming year is that solar activity will still be high, it is very likely that we will get Northern Lights during our tour. Hopefully the weather will cooperate when it happens!

SUNSHINE IS DELICIOUS, RAIN IS REFRESHING,
WIND BRACES US UP, SNOW IS EXHILARATING;
THERE IS REALLY NO SUCH THING AS BAD WEATHER,
ONLY DIFFERENT KINDS OF GOOD WEATHER
//JOHN RUSKIN



Squiver