



THE DOWNS SCHOOL

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October 2016

Dear Parents and Carers

Year 11-13 Geography Iceland Trip - April 2017

The Geography department would like to offer your child the amazing opportunity of joining us on a five day trip to Iceland in the Easter Holidays 2017. This fascinating country with its unique and diverse volcanic, coastal and river landscapes, provides countless opportunities to support their GCSE or A level Geography and Travel & Tourism studies.

It is planned that the trip will depart on Tuesday 18 April and return on Saturday 22 April 2017. As with previous years, we will be using an educational tour company called Rayburn Tours (www.rayburntours.com) who are ABTA and ATOL affiliated. I will be leading the trip supported by 2 other teachers Miss Groves and Mr Jones.

The cost of the trip includes:

- Coach transfers within the UK and Iceland
- Return flights from Gatwick to Keflavik
- 4 nights full board accommodation at the Hotel Ork in Hveragerdi
- A dedicated Field Study tutor to accompany us for the full duration of the trip
- Travel insurance
- All coach trips and entry fees as outlined in the itinerary below to places such as Blue Lagoon and the Geysir Centre

Breakfast and evening meal will be provided at the hotel and they will also provide us with a packed lunch each day. Students will need to provide some money for any other snacks, souvenirs and entry fees to some smaller and/or optional visitor centres. Additionally there will be down time in the hotel. Some of the student's down time will be unsupervised but they will be expected to follow the rules laid out by the School, Tour Company and Hotel. There will be a code of conduct issued which will need to be signed by both student and parent.

Provisional Itinerary

The provisional itinerary of the trip will include the following but may be subject to alteration due to final confirmation of availability by the Tour Operator or weather conditions whilst in Iceland.

We are very excited to be staying again this year at the Hotel Ork (<http://www.hotelork.is/>) in the small town of Hveragerdi, which has a games room, geo-thermal heated outdoor pool and is in a much better location for our excursions reducing travelling time by approximately an hour each day, allowing us more time at each site.

Day 1:

The Blue Lagoon: Coach from The Downs School to Gatwick Airport. Flight to Keflavik airport and transfers to The Blue Lagoon and onwards to Hotel Ork in Hveragerdi. The Blue Lagoon is a man-made oasis in the lava fields of the Reykjanes peninsula, owing its existence to a nearby geothermal power plant. We stop at the Blue Lagoon for approximately an hour for a swim in the warm mineral-rich waters. Curiously enough this trump card in the Reykjanes Peninsula's hand of natural wonders is a by-product of modern technology – development of some of the most powerful geothermal fields in the world for heating and electricity production. The Blue Lagoon is a pool of hot saline, mineral-rich but unpolluted water running off from the Svartsengi power station after heat exchanging. Drawn by its enticing aquamarine colour bathers soon flocked there. Before arriving at the hotel we visit the Krysuvik mud puddles, the iconic Bridge between the Continents and drive through Hafnarfjörður town to Bessastadir, official residence of the Icelandic president, where we visit the 18th century church famed for its stained glass windows.

Once we have checked in at the hotel, there is an outdoor heated pool and a games room for the students to use.

Day 2:

Golden Circle tour: From Hveragerdi we drive over the Mosfellsheiði heath, past Gljúfrasteinn, home of eminent Icelandic writer and Nobel Prize winner Halldór Laxness, to beautiful Þingvellir National Park, a place of tremendous interest as a primary site of both Iceland's geological and historical inheritance. It is here the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates meet. We walk through the fault Almannagjá to the place where Europe's eldest national legislative assembly, the Icelandic Parliament, was established in the year 930 and where it convened, in grandiose surroundings during summer, for nearly 8 centuries. After our walk in Þingvellir the journey continues over the Lyngdalsheiði heath into the fertile farmlands of the south. We visit the most beautiful waterfall of the country, Gullfoss as well as the Geysir geothermal area with its multitude of hot springs, where the most active one, Strokkur, spouts every few minutes.

Day 3:

The capital and Geo-thermal fields: We start the day by walking from the hotel around a couple of geo-thermal sites in Hveragerdi, including a geo-thermal field where students can boil their own eggs in the hot springs and also experience an earthquake simulator. We then take the coach to the Hellisheidi Geothermal Power Station, which has a fantastic exhibition and fully illustrates the amazing impact geo-thermal energy has on the lives of the Icelandic population. We then head into Reykjavik, the capital for some free time and shopping. Reykjavik is the world's most northerly capital, with more than one third of Iceland's population. We will see the old town centre, the Parliament, the Cathedral, the harbour, the National Museum, the Pearl and Höfði house, the summit site of 1986. We drive past the city's salmon river which is an outstanding proof that Reykjavik is a pollution free capital and the Árbæjarsafn outdoor folk museum, which offers an interesting contrast to the modern buildings of the most recent part of Reykjavik.

Day 4:

South Shore Adventure: Drive from our hotel eastwards through small villages and farmlands to the majestic mountains towering over the coast we will have frequent views of mountains, including snow shrouded Hekla, the country's most active volcano and the towering, ice capped strato volcano Eyjafjallajökull, where we visit the locally run visitors centre. Continue through the region where one of the best known of the Icelandic classical sagas, Njáls Saga is set. A stop at the spectacular waterfalls Seljalandsfoss and Skógarfoss. Pass Dyrhólaey, a magnificent rocky headland with sheer cliffs, with a huge wave cut gap in its ocean facing tip to the beautiful sited village of Vík. In the sea just outside the village of Vík are Reynisdranger rocks 66 meters above sea level at their highest. According to legend the Reynisdrangar were formed when two trolls were trying to drag a three-masted ship to land. When daylight broke they turned into a stone. Drive back to the hotel.

Day 5:

Very early morning departure with transfer from our hotel to arrive at Keflavík Airport at 04.15am for departure at 06.20am. Flight to Gatwick. Coach from Gatwick to The Downs School. Approximate time of arrival at The Downs is 12.30pm.

During the trip we are also hoping to include a Northern Lights night trip. These trips may incur a small additional cost locally.

Passports and Insurance

Each student must have their own valid passport. If your child has a valid non-UK passport please check if any visas are required to enter Iceland and let me know. All students will also need a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). These can be obtained free online at the NHS website.

The school has personal accident and travel cover insurance for school trips. Full details of the policy are available from the Business Manager on request.

Cost and Payment

The estimated cost of the trip is £1,013 which provides outstanding value for a trip of a lifetime and full-board accommodation in Iceland. This is based on 30 students. Please note, if there are fewer than 30 students, the trip may become unviable or the cost may rise slightly depending on the number of interested parties.

By booking a place through paying the non-refundable deposit (£300) by Thursday 3 November you agree to pay the full cost of the trip. The trip is popular and places are limited. Places will be allocated firstly to the Sixth Form and then by a random draw of names for remaining places from a hat for Year 11 students. If there are more than 30 Sixth Form students wishing to join the trip, again names will be drawn from a hat and there will unfortunately not be any allocation of places for Year 11 students. If your son/daughter is unsuccessful in gaining a place the deposit will be refunded to you. The school's decision as regards place allocation is final.

Payments to be made in instalments as follows:

Deposit: £300 – payable by Thursday 3 November 3.00pm

Second instalment: £400 – payable by Monday 12 December

Final instalment: £313 – payable by Friday 27 January

We would like to remind those **Year 12 Geography students** considering coming to Iceland that there is a compulsory residential trip this year in July 2017 which forms an integral part of their exam studies. The cost will be approximately £300, depending on numbers, with payments required in instalments.

Payment should be made using ParentPay. Please also tick the permission box. If you do not wish to use ParentPay then please put cheque payments (payable to The Downs School) in an envelope marked "Iceland" with your child's name on the back, taking care to complete and enclose the slip at the bottom of this letter. Your child is then responsible for putting this into the finance office post box. Following the new Government pupil premium funding arrangements, LIFT, FSM, EVER6FSM and Bursary students can receive a contribution of £100 towards the cost of this trip (if they obtain a place). This will be made by adjusting the final January payment. The initial deposit must be paid in full.

Documentation which needs to be completed will be given to the students in an Information Pack when your son/daughter's place is confirmed.

We reserve the right to refuse to take those students whose poor behaviour may tarnish the good name of The Downs or whose actions may put themselves or others in danger. We also reserve the right to withdraw any student whose behaviour at school deteriorates between now and the departure date. In these circumstances the amount of refund will depend on the cancellation arrangements. Refunds may not be possible in the event of a student having to be withdrawn from the trip for the above reasons.

We very much hope that you will be able to support this wonderful trip and encourage your son or daughter to take part. During the Spring Term there will be a parents' information evening for parents of students who have been offered a place and we will be able to answer any further questions you may have. In the meantime please do not hesitate to contact me, should you need any further information.

Yours faithfully

Ms M Burfitt

Tour Leader
Geography Teacher

ONLY TO BE COMPLETED IF YOU ARE PAYING BY CHEQUE TO THE SCHOOL
NB ONLINE PAYMENT VIA PARENTPAY.COM IS PREFERRED!

Year 11-13 Geography Iceland Trip - April 2017

**DEPOSIT PAYMENT FOR A PLACE TO BE PAID NO LATER THAN
THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2016 3.00PM - £300
Cheques made payable to The Downs School**

Student's Name Tutor Group

I would like my child to be entered into the draw for a place on the "Geography Iceland" Trip.

I enclose the non-refundable deposit (unless my child does not receive a place) payment of £300

Signature of Parent/Carer _____ Date _____

Parent/Carer (please print) _____