

Iceland Ring Road Trip Itinerary

July 14-24, 2025



Trip Overview

- **Day 1:** [July 14] Reykjavík - *First night in Iceland's capital*
- **Day 2:** [July 15] Reykjavík → Selfoss - *Golden Circle exploration day*
- **Day 3:** [July 16] Selfoss → Vik - *South Coast waterfalls and beaches*
- **Day 4:** [July 17] Norðurfoss → Höfn - *Glacier lagoon and diamond beach*
- **Day 5:** [July 18] Höfn → Egilsstaðir - *Eastern Fjords exploration*
- **Day 6:** [July 19] Egilsstaðir → Mývatn - *Volcanic landscapes*
- **Day 7:** [July 20] Mývatn → Akureyri - *Northern Iceland's capital*
- **Day 8:** [July 21] Akureyri - *Northern exploration day*
- **Day 9:** [July 22] Akureyri → Ólafsvík - *Snæfellsnes Peninsula arrival*
- **Day 10:** [July 23] Ólafsvík - *Snæfellsnes exploration*
- **Day 11:** [July 24] Ólafsvík → Keflavík Airport - *Return journey*

Top 10 Current Priorities and Decisions

1. **Confirm Rental Car Check-in:** Complete online check-in 7 days before arrival (July 7)

2. **Book Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon Boat Tour:** Popular activity that requires advance booking
3. **Arrange Heather's Transportation to Selfoss:** Bus tickets or alternative transportation needed
4. **Finalize Day 8 Lodging:** Consider extending Akureyri Airbnb or book alternative
5. **Decide on Day 10 Lodging:** Consider keeping Ólafsvík booking vs. returning to Reykjavík
6. **Check F-Road Permissions:** Verify if rental car allows F-road access for Mount Askja
7. **Research Alternative Options for Bad Weather Days:** Indoor activities for each location
8. **Book Whale Watching Tour:** Secure spots in Húsavík or Akureyri
9. **Pre-book Any Special Meals:** Research and reserve unique dining experiences
10. **Create Grocery Shopping List:** Plan for 30% self-catered meals

Pre-Trip Checklist

- Complete rental car online check-in by July 7, 2025
- Download offline maps of Iceland for areas with limited connectivity
- Pack layers and waterproof clothing (even in July, weather can be unpredictable)
- Get Heather's bus ticket from Reykjavík to Selfoss for July 16

Day 1: July 14 - Arrival in Reykjavík

Your journey begins in Iceland's vibrant capital city, balancing urban exploration with nearby natural wonders.

"Iceland is not a destination but an adventure." - Unknown

Driving: Airport to Reykjavík (31 miles, 45 minutes)

Location: Keflavík International Airport → Reykjavík

1. **Highlighted Activity: Mount Esja Hiking Trail** (8km/5 miles round-trip, 3-4 hours, moderate difficulty) - This popular mountain offers spectacular views of Reykjavík across the bay. The trail is well-marked with difficulty indicators, making it suitable for most hikers. The first viewpoint (Steinn) is about 1.7 miles up and makes a good turnaround point for a shorter hike. [Afternoon]
2. **Alternative Activity: Blue Lagoon visit** - Iceland's famous geothermal spa (2-3 hours, \$93-190 depending on package, requires advance booking) [Morning, en route from airport]
3. **Alternative Activity: Walking tour of downtown Reykjavík** - Explore Hallgrímskirkja church,

Harpa Concert Hall, and the Sun Voyager sculpture (self-guided or \$35-45 for guided tour, 2-3 hours) [Afternoon/Evening]

- Alternative Activity: Perlan Museum with observation deck - Learn about Icelandic nature with excellent city views (1-2 hours, \$39) [Afternoon]
- Alternative Activity: Gróttá Island Lighthouse and nature reserve - Peaceful coastal area with birdwatching opportunities (1-2 hours, free) [Evening]

Spontaneous Options:

- Laugardalslaug Swimming Pool - Iceland's largest pool complex with hot tubs
- National Museum of Iceland - Explore Icelandic cultural history
- Reykjavík Maritime Museum - Learn about Iceland's relationship with the sea
- Kolaportið Flea Market (weekends only) - Browse local goods and try hákarl (fermented shark)
- Sunset at Faxaflói Bay - Beautiful views along the harbor

Practical Considerations:

- Driving: Pick up rental car at Keflavík Airport (Confirmation: RVF6FW)
- Groceries: Bonus supermarket (Laugavegur 59) open until 6:30pm
- Fuel: Fill up at Orkan or N1 stations before leaving Reykjavík
- Connectivity: Excellent cell service and WiFi in Reykjavík
- Dining options: Try Icelandic Fish & Chips for dinner (~\$25-30 per person)
- Lodging: Hotel Fron (Laugavegur 22A) - Check-in time: 2pm

Planning TODO:

1. Check if Mount Esja trail conditions are good in July
2. Consider booking Blue Lagoon if interested (often sells out)
3. Plan downtown walking route based on interests
4. Check Hotel Fron breakfast options/times
5. Decide on morning vs. afternoon arrival activities

Day 2: July 15 - Golden Circle

Experience Iceland's most famous natural attractions on this classic route that showcases geothermal wonders, powerful waterfalls, and historical sites.

"The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper." - W.B. Yeats

Driving: Reykjavík to Selfoss via Golden Circle (124 miles, 4-5 hours with stops)

Location: Reykjavík → Pingvellir → Geysir → Gullfoss → Selfoss

1. **Highlighted Activity: Reykjadalur Hot Spring Thermal River Hike** (4.5 miles round-trip, 2-3 hours, moderate difficulty) - This beautiful valley offers a unique experience with a naturally hot river perfect for bathing. The hike takes you through stunning geothermal landscapes with steaming vents before reaching the bathing area. Bring a towel and quick-dry clothes. [Afternoon]
2. **Alternative Activity: Pingvellir National Park** - Walk between tectonic plates at this UNESCO World Heritage site (1-2 hours, \$5 parking fee) [Morning]
3. **Alternative Activity: Geysir Geothermal Area** - Watch Strokkur geyser erupt every 5-7 minutes (30-60 minutes, free) [Midday]
4. **Alternative Activity: Gullfoss Waterfall** - Powerful two-tiered waterfall with viewing platforms (30-60 minutes, free) [Midday]
5. **Alternative Activity: Secret Lagoon** - Less crowded hot spring alternative to Blue Lagoon (1-2 hours, \$25) [Late Afternoon]

Spontaneous Options:

- Kerið Crater Lake - Volcanic crater with vibrant aquamarine water (\$4 entrance fee)
- Fontana Geothermal Baths - Relaxing hot springs with lake views
- Friðheimar Tomato Farm - Lunch in a greenhouse (reservation recommended)
- Faxi Waterfall - Small but charming waterfall with a salmon ladder
- Skálholt Cathedral - Historical church with significant cultural importance

Practical Considerations:

- **Driving:** Leave Reykjavík by 9am to have time for all Golden Circle highlights
- **Groceries:** Krónan supermarket in Selfoss (open until 8pm)
- **Fuel:** Fill up in Selfoss at N1 or Orkan stations
- **Connectivity:** Good cell service throughout most of the Golden Circle
- **Dining options:** Try Tryggvaskáli in Selfoss for dinner (~\$35-45 per person)
- **Lodging:** Country Dream Guesthouse (Langholt 2, Selfoss) - Check-in time: 3pm

Planning TODO:

1. Pack bathing suits and towels for hot springs
2. Check weather forecast for hiking conditions
3. Decide on order of Golden Circle sites based on crowds (early morning is best)
4. Consider lunch options (pack or restaurant)
5. Plan departure time from Reykjavík to maximize daylight hours

Day 3: July 16 - South Coast

Explore the dramatic south coast with its numerous waterfalls, black sand beaches, and volcanic landscapes as Heather joins your adventure.

"The mountains are calling and I must go." - John Muir

Driving: Selfoss to Norðurfoss (106 miles, 2.5 hours without stops)

Location: Selfoss → Seljalandsfoss → Skógafoss → Vík → Norðurfoss

1. **Highlighted Activity: Víkurfjara Black Sand Beach** (1-2 hours) - This less-touristy alternative to Reynisfjara offers the same dramatic black sand and basalt formations but with fewer crowds. Take in views of the Reynisdrangar sea stacks and feel the power of the Atlantic waves. Note: Never turn your back to the ocean due to dangerous sneaker waves. [Afternoon]
2. **Alternative Activity: Seljalandsfoss Waterfall** - Famous waterfall you can walk behind (45-60 minutes, \$7 parking fee) [Morning]
3. **Alternative Activity: Skógafoss Waterfall and hiking trail** - Powerful waterfall with optional hike up the side for panoramic views (1-2 hours, free) [Late Morning]
4. **Alternative Activity: Mount Hekla views and information center** - Learn about one of Iceland's most active volcanoes (1 hour, free) [Early Afternoon]
5. **Alternative Activity: Dyrhólaey Peninsula** - Massive stone arch and puffin viewing spot (1-2 hours, free) [Afternoon]

Spontaneous Options:

- Kvernufoss Waterfall - Hidden waterfall near Skógafoss with fewer tourists
- Sólheimajökull Glacier Viewpoint - Easy access glacier viewing
- Skógar Folk Museum - Traditional Icelandic houses and artifacts
- Gljúfrabúi Waterfall - Hidden waterfall inside a canyon near Seljalandsfoss

- Reynisfjara Beach - The famous black sand beach with basalt columns

Practical Considerations:

- Driving: Allow extra time for photo stops along the south coast
- Groceries: Stock up at Krónan in Selfoss before departing; limited options afterward
- Fuel: Fill up in Vík (last reliable station before continuing east)
- Connectivity: Generally good along Route 1, may be spotty in some areas
- Dining options: Try Suður-Vík restaurant in Vík for lunch (~\$25-35 per person)
- Special note: Heather arrives today - ensure she has transportation to Selfoss
- Lodging: The Barn (Norðurfoss, South Iceland) - Check-in time: 4pm

Planning TODO:

1. Confirm Heather's transportation from Reykjavík to Selfoss
2. Plan departure time from Selfoss to allow for multiple stops
3. Check tide times for beach visits (safer at low tide)
4. Monitor weather conditions for visibility at viewpoints
5. Research dining options between Vík and Norðurfoss

Day 4: July 17 - Glacial Wonders

Witness the breathtaking meeting of ice and ocean at Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon and explore the rugged beauty of Vatnajökull National Park.

"We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure." - Jawaharlal Nehru

Driving: Norðurfoss to Höfn (93 miles, 2 hours without stops)

Location: Norðurfoss → Skaftafell → Jökulsárlón → Höfn

1. **Highlighted Activity: Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon & Diamond Beach** (2-3 hours) - This stunning glacial lagoon filled with floating icebergs is one of Iceland's most spectacular sights. Take a boat tour among the icebergs (amphibian boat: \$55, zodiac tour: \$95, book in advance) or simply enjoy from shore. Don't miss Diamond Beach across the road where ice chunks wash up on black sand. [Early Afternoon]
2. **Alternative Activity: Skaftafell - Svartifoss Waterfall Hike** - Moderate 3.5-mile round trip hike to a unique waterfall surrounded by black basalt columns (2-3 hours, park entrance free) [Morning]

3. Alternative Activity: Fjallsárlón Glacier Lagoon - Less crowded alternative to Jökulsárlón with similar views (1 hour, free) [Afternoon]
4. Alternative Activity: Hoffellsjökull Glacier Viewpoint - Short hike with mountain views (1-2 hours, free) [Late Afternoon]
5. Alternative Activity: Stokksnes Peninsula/Vestrahorn Mountain - Dramatic mountain views with black sand dunes (1-2 hours, \$10 entrance fee) [Late Afternoon/Evening]

Spontaneous Options:

- Fjaðrárgljúfur Canyon - Stunning canyon with walking paths (if accessible)
- Hofskirkja Turf Church - Historic church with traditional Icelandic architecture
- Glacier View Café at Jökulsárlón - Break with a view
- Þórbergssetur Museum - Cultural center about writer Þórbergur Þórðarson
- Höfn Swimming Pool - Relax in hot tubs after a day of exploring

Practical Considerations:

- Driving: Road conditions are generally good on this stretch of Route 1
- Groceries: Limited options; stock up in Vík if needed or wait for Höfn
- Fuel: Fill up in Kirkjubæjarklaustur or Höfn
- Connectivity: Cell service can be spotty in glacier areas
- Dining options: Höfn is famous for langoustine (try Pakkhús, ~\$45-60 per person)
- Lodging: Airbnb in Jökulsárlón/Höfn (Seljavöllum, Höfn í Hornafirði) - Check-in time: 3pm
- Cancellation deadline: July 12 for Airbnb

Planning TODO:

1. Book Jökulsárlón boat tour in advance (highly recommended)
2. Check opening hours for Skaftafell visitor center
3. Decide between morning or afternoon timing for boat tour
4. Check weather forecast for visibility at viewpoints
5. Research dining options in Höfn

Day 5: July 18 - The East Fjords

Traverse the dramatic eastern fjords with their steep mountains, charming fishing villages, and winding coastal roads.

"To travel is to discover that everyone is wrong about other countries." - Aldous Huxley

Driving: Höfn to Egilsstaðir (167 miles, 3.5 hours without stops)

Location: Höfn → Djúpivogur → Petra's Stone Collection → Egilsstaðir

1. **Highlighted Activity:** East Fjords Coastal Drive with Multiple Stops (4-6 hours total) - The drive itself is an attraction with breathtaking views around every corner. Stop at viewpoints, tiny fishing villages, and hidden beaches along the way. Key stops include Djúpivogur village (charming harbor with outdoor sculpture exhibition), Petra's Stone Collection in Stöðvarfjörður (impressive mineral museum, \$15 entrance), and Hengifoss waterfall hike near Egilsstaðir (4.3 miles round-trip, 2-3 hours, moderate difficulty). [All Day]
2. **Alternative Activity:** Hengifoss and Litlanesfoss Waterfall Hike - Beautiful 4.3-mile round-trip hike to Iceland's third-highest waterfall and a stunning basalt column waterfall (2-3 hours, free) [Afternoon]
3. **Alternative Activity:** Atlavík Cove in Hallormsstaðaskógur - Iceland's largest forest with picnic areas and short trails (1-2 hours, free) [Late Afternoon]
4. **Alternative Activity:** Lagarfljót Lake - Scenic lake known for its mythical monster (similar to Loch Ness) (1 hour, free) [Evening]
5. **Alternative Activity:** Wilderness Center Museum - Learn about life in the highlands (2 hours, \$25 entrance) [Late Afternoon, check opening hours]

Spontaneous Options:

- Reyðarfjörður WW2 Museum - Historical exhibits about Allied occupation
- Óbyggðasetur Wilderness Center - Experience traditional Icelandic farm life
- Skriðuklaustur - Historical site and cultural center
- Local hot pots in Egilsstaðir area - Ask locals for recommendations
- Fjarðarbyggð coastal villages - Explore small authentic fishing communities

Practical Considerations:

- **Driving:** Winding coastal roads require extra time and attention
- **Groceries:** Bonus or Nettó supermarkets in Egilsstaðir (open until 7pm)
- **Fuel:** Fill up in Egilsstaðir as stations are less frequent in the East Fjords
- **Connectivity:** Service varies throughout the fjords; download offline maps
- **Dining options:** Try Salt Café & Bistro in Egilsstaðir (~\$30-40 per person)
- **Lodging:** Airbnb - Marianna (Egilsstaðir, East Iceland) - Check-in time: 4pm
- **Cancellation deadline:** July 13 (5:00 PM) for Airbnb

Planning TODO: 1. Plan key stops along the East Fjords route 2. Check opening hours for Petra's Stone Collection 3. Research trail conditions for Hengifoss 4. Decide on dining options in Egilsstaðir 5. Plan departure time from Höfn to allow for scenic stops

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Day 6: July 19 - Lake Mývatn Area

Explore the otherworldly volcanic landscapes, bubbling mud pots, and geothermal features of the Lake Mývatn region.

"The Earth has music for those who listen." - George Santayana

Driving: Egilsstaðir to Mývatn (106 miles, 2.5 hours without stops)

Location: Egilsstaðir → Dettifoss → Krafla → Mývatn

1. **Highlighted Activity:** Askja Caldera Hike (Mount Askja) (7.5 miles round-trip, 4-5 hours, moderate-difficult) - This highland trek takes you around the rim of a stunning volcanic caldera with its milky-blue Víti crater lake. **Note:** Check if your rental car permits F-road access as this requires F-roads. Alternative option is joining a super jeep tour (~\$250-300 per person). [Full Day]
2. **Alternative Activity:** Dettifoss Waterfall - Europe's most powerful waterfall (1-2 hours, free) [Morning]
3. **Alternative Activity:** Krafla Volcano and Víti Crater - Walk around a colorful geothermal area and volcano crater (1-2 hours, free) [Midday]
4. **Alternative Activity:** Námaskarð/Hverir Geothermal Area - Bubbling mud pots and fumaroles (1 hour, free) [Afternoon]
5. **Alternative Activity:** Mývatn Nature Baths - Relaxing geothermal spa with views (2 hours, \$45) [Evening]

Spontaneous Options:

- Grjótagjá Cave - Small lava cave with geothermal water (viewing only, no swimming)
- Dimmuborgir Lava Formations - "Dark Castles" with interesting hiking trails
- Skútustaðagígar Pseudo Craters - Unique geological formations with short walking paths
- Höfði Peninsula - Scenic area with rock formations in Lake Mývatn
- Lofthellir Ice Cave - Guided tours available (requires booking)

Practical Considerations:

- Driving: Check road conditions, especially if planning highland (F-road) excursions
- Groceries: Limited options in Mývatn area; stock up in Egilsstaðir before departing
- Fuel: Fill up in Egilsstaðir and again in Reykjahlið (Mývatn area)
- Connectivity: Can be limited in highland areas; download offline maps
- Dining options: Try Cowshed Restaurant (~\$35-45 per person) or Vogafjós Farm Restaurant
- Lodging: Sel Hotel Mývatn (Skútustaðir 2C, Mývatn) - Check-in time: 3pm
- Cancellation deadline: July 16 (12:00 AM) for hotel

Planning TODO:

1. Verify if rental car permits F-road access for Askja
2. Research super jeep tours as alternative if F-roads aren't permitted
3. Check Dettifoss access (east or west side approach)
4. Consider pre-booking Mývatn Nature Baths
5. Plan hiking options based on weather forecast

Day 7: July 20 - North Iceland

Visit the charming northern capital of Akureyri and experience the region's diverse attractions from waterfalls to whale watching.

"Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." - Neale Donald Walsch

Driving: Mývatn to Akureyri (62 miles, 1.5 hours without stops)

Location: Mývatn → Goðafoss → Akureyri

1. **Highlighted Activity: Goðafoss Waterfall** "Waterfall of the Gods" (1-2 hours) - This horseshoe-shaped waterfall is one of Iceland's most spectacular. Visit both the east and west sides for different perspectives. The easy walking paths make it accessible for all fitness levels. The historical significance (where Iceland converted to Christianity) adds cultural interest. [Morning]
2. **Alternative Activity: Whale Watching in Húsavík** - World-class whale watching with high success rates (3 hours, \$85-100, book in advance) [Morning/Midday]
3. **Alternative Activity: Akureyri Botanical Gardens** - Explore one of the world's northernmost botanical gardens (1-2 hours, free) [Afternoon]
4. **Alternative Activity: Mount Akrafjall Hike** - Choose between 2-hour or 5-hour routes with

panoramic views of Akureyri (2-5 hours, free) [Afternoon]

5. Alternative Activity: Akureyri Church and City Center - Visit the iconic church and explore the charming downtown area (1-2 hours, free) [Evening]

Spontaneous Options:

- Akureyri Swimming Pool - Relax in hot tubs with locals
- Aviation Museum - Interesting collection of aircraft and aviation history
- Christmas Garden - Year-round Christmas shop and decorations
- Kaffi Ilmur - Cozy café with excellent pastries
- Brynja Ice Cream - Famous local ice cream shop

Practical Considerations:

- Driving: Easy drive on Route 1 from Mývatn to Akureyri
- Groceries: Bonus, Nettó, and Krónan supermarkets in Akureyri (check Sunday hours)
- Fuel: Multiple stations available in Akureyri
- Connectivity: Good cell service in and around Akureyri
- Dining options: Try Rub23 for dinner (~\$40-50 per person) or Strikið for views
- Lodging: Airbnb - Hildur (Akureyri, North Iceland) - Check-in time: 3pm
- Cancellation deadline: July 16 (4:00 PM) for Airbnb

Planning TODO:

1. Decide between whale watching in Húsavík vs. Akureyri if interested
2. Book whale watching tour in advance if chosen
3. Research parking options in downtown Akureyri
4. Check opening hours for Akureyri Botanical Gardens
5. Plan timing for Goðafoss visit (morning light is best for photos)

Day 8: July 21 - Northern Exploration

Extend your stay in Akureyri to explore more of the northern region's diverse landscapes and cultural attractions.

"Travel isn't always pretty. It isn't always comfortable. Sometimes it hurts, it even breaks your heart. But that's okay. The journey changes you." - Anthony Bourdain

Driving: Day trips from Akureyri (varies, 1-3 hours depending on chosen activities)

Location: Akureyri → Day trips → Akureyri

1. **Highlighted Activity:** Neðri-Hveradalir Geothermal Area Hike (3 miles loop, 2-3 hours, moderate difficulty) - This scenic hike takes you through a colorful geothermal landscape with steaming vents, mud pots, and hot springs in the Kerlingarfjöll area. The otherworldly terrain offers excellent photography opportunities. Note: This requires a day trip from Akureyri, approximately 2 hours each way. [Full Day]
2. **Alternative Activity:** Tröllaskagi Peninsula Scenic Drive - Stunning mountain and fjord landscapes with small fishing villages (4-6 hours round-trip from Akureyri, free) [Full Day]
3. **Alternative Activity:** Horseback Riding near Akureyri - Experience Iceland on the back of an Icelandic horse (2 hours, \$85-100) [Morning or Afternoon]
4. **Alternative Activity:** Beer Spa at Bjórböðin - Unique experience bathing in young beer while drinking beer (1 hour, \$80-110) [Afternoon]
5. **Alternative Activity:** Laufás Turf Houses - Well-preserved historical farmhouses (1-2 hours, \$10 entrance) [Afternoon]

Spontaneous Options:

- Akureyri Art Museum - Contemporary Icelandic art
- Hrísey Island - "Pearl of Eyjafjörður" accessible by ferry
- Siglufjörður Herring Era Museum - Award-winning cultural museum
- Dalvík for fishing village atmosphere
- Kaffi Kú - Café above a working dairy farm with great views

Practical Considerations: - Driving: Various options for day trips; plan route based on chosen activities - Groceries: Use Akureyri supermarkets to restock supplies - Fuel: Fill up in Akureyri before any day trips - Connectivity: Generally good around Akureyri; may be limited in remote areas - Dining options: Try Greifinn for casual dining (~\$25-35 per person) or Bautinn for traditional Icelandic - Lodging: No booking currently confirmed - Consider extending stay at Airbnb - Hildur in Akureyri - Alternative lodging: Icelandair Hotel Akureyri (~\$190-240 per night)

Planning TODO:

1. Confirm lodging for this night (extend current Airbnb or book alternative)
2. Research specific Tröllaskagi Peninsula stops if choosing that option
3. Book horseback riding or Beer Spa in advance if interested
4. Check weather forecast for hiking conditions
5. Decide on day trip direction based on interests and weather

Day 9: July 22 - Journey to Snæfellsnes

Travel west to the magical Snæfellsnes Peninsula, often called "Iceland in Miniature" for its diverse landscapes.

"Travel makes one modest. You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world." - Gustave Flaubert

Driving: Akureyri to Ólafsvík (211 miles, 4.5 hours without stops)

Location: Akureyri → Hvammstangi → Ólafsvík

1. **Highlighted Activity:** Kirkjufell Mountain and Kirkjufellsfoss Waterfall (1-2 hours) - Perhaps Iceland's most photographed mountain, this distinctively shaped peak paired with the nearby triple waterfall creates a stunning composition. A short walking path takes you to the classic viewpoint. Visit around sunset for magical lighting. [Evening]
2. **Alternative Activity:** Kolugljúfur Canyon and Waterfall - Impressive canyon with multiple waterfalls (1 hour, free) [Midday, en route]
3. **Alternative Activity:** Seal Watching at Hvammstangi - Visit the Icelandic Seal Center and nearby viewing points (2-3 hours, center entrance \$10) [Midday, en route]
4. **Alternative Activity:** Grábrók Crater Hike - Easy 1-mile hike to the rim of a volcanic crater (1 hour, free) [Afternoon, en route]
5. **Alternative Activity:** Erpsstaðir Creamery - Artisanal dairy farm with homemade ice cream (1 hour, cost of purchases) [Afternoon, en route]

Spontaneous Options: - Hvítserkur Sea Stack - Dramatic rock formation resembling a drinking dragon - Borgarvirki Natural Fortress - Ancient Viking fortification with views - Glanni Waterfall - Beautiful falls on the way to Snæfellsnes - Settlement Center in Borgarnes - Learn about Iceland's settlement history - Gerðuberg Basalt Columns - Geometric natural wonder

Practical Considerations:

- **Driving:** Long driving day; leave Akureyri early (by 9am) to allow for stops
- **Groceries:** Stop at Krónan in Borgarnes on the way (open until 8pm)
- **Fuel:** Fill up in Akureyri and again in Borgarnes
- **Connectivity:** Generally good along Route 1; may be spotty on peninsula
- **Dining options:** Try Hraun Restaurant in Ólafsvík (~\$30-40 per person)

- Lodging: Airbnb - Guðmunda (Ólafsvík, West Iceland) - Check-in time: 3pm
- Cancellation deadline: July 21 (3:00 PM) for Airbnb

Planning TODO:

1. Plan key stops along the route to break up the long drive
2. Check seal viewing tide times for best opportunities
3. Research dinner options in Ólafsvík
4. Consider sunrise/sunset times for Kirkjufell photography
5. Plan departure time from Akureyri to allow for stops while reaching Ólafsvík before dark

Day 10: July 23 - Snæfellsnes Peninsula

Explore the diverse landscapes of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, from dramatic coastal cliffs to volcanic craters and black sand beaches.

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do." - Mark Twain

Driving: Around Snæfellsnes Peninsula (75-100 miles, circular route)

Location: Ólafsvík → Snæfellsjökull National Park → Arnarstapi → Ólafsvík

1. **Highlighted Activity: Hellnar to Arnarstapi Coastal Path** (2.5 miles one-way, 1.5-2 hours, easy-moderate) - This stunning coastal trail offers dramatic views of lava formations, bird cliffs, and natural arches. The path is relatively flat and well-maintained. Consider having lunch at the charming café in Hellnar before or after your walk. [Midday]
2. **Alternative Activity: Djúpalónssandur Black Beach** - Dramatic beach with shipwreck remains and strength testing stones (1 hour, free) [Morning]
3. **Alternative Activity: Saxhóll Crater** - Short but steep climb up a volcanic crater with panoramic views (30 minutes, free) [Morning]
4. **Alternative Activity: Snæfellsjökull Glacier Views** - Various viewpoints of the glacier that inspired Jules Verne's "Journey to the Center of the Earth" (varies, free) [Afternoon]
5. **Alternative Activity: Vatnshellir Cave Tour** - Explore an 8,000-year-old lava tube cave (45 minutes, \$30, requires advance booking) [Afternoon]

Spontaneous Options:

- Svörtuloft Lighthouse - Orange lighthouse with dramatic cliff views
- Rauðfeldsgjá Gorge - Narrow ravine you can climb into
- Ytri Tunga Beach - Known for seal colonies, best at low tide
- Bjarnarfoss Waterfall - Beautiful falls with a short hiking path
- Búðakirkja Black Church - Photogenic church on a lava field

Practical Considerations:

- Driving: Circle the peninsula clockwise or counter-clockwise depending on weather
- Groceries: Small grocery stores in Ólafsvík and Hellissandur (limited hours)
- Fuel: Fill up in Ólafsvík as stations are limited on the peninsula
- Connectivity: Can be spotty in remote areas and near glacier
- Dining options: Try Fjöruhúsið in Hellnar for lunch (~\$20-30 per person)
- Lodging: Current booking is Airbnb - Guðmunda in Ólafsvík
- Alternative option: Consider canceling Guesthouse Sunna in Reykjavík and staying a second night in the Snæfellsnes area
- Cancellation deadline: July 21 (11:59 PM) for Guesthouse Sunna

Planning TODO:

1. Decide on keeping Reykjavík booking vs. staying in Snæfellsnes area
2. Book Vatnshellir Cave Tour if interested
3. Check tide times for beach visits
4. Research best viewpoints for Snæfellsjökull glacier based on weather
5. Plan peninsula route to maximize time at key attractions

Day 11: July 24 - Return to Reykjavík & Departure

Make your way back to Reykjavík for your afternoon flight, with time for a few final experiences along the way.

"We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us." - Anonymous

Driving: Ólafsvík to Keflavík Airport (124 miles, 2.5-3 hours without stops)

Location: Ólafsvík → Reykjavík → Keflavík Airport

1. **Highlighted Activity:** Last-minute shopping and lunch in Reykjavík - Spend your final hours picking up souvenirs on Laugavegur shopping street and enjoying a farewell lunch (2-3 hours, costs vary) [Late Morning]

2. Alternative Activity: Krauma Geothermal Baths - Relaxing natural hot springs if time permits (1-2 hours, \$40) [Morning, en route]
3. Alternative Activity: Deildartunguhver Hot Spring - Europe's most powerful hot spring (30 minutes, free) [Morning, en route]
4. Alternative Activity: Walk along Reykjavík Harbor - Enjoy the maritime atmosphere and mountain views (1 hour, free) [Midday]
5. Alternative Activity: Viking World Museum - Near the airport if you have extra time before your flight (1-2 hours, \$15) [Early Afternoon]

Spontaneous Options:

- Hraunfossar Waterfall - Unique lava field waterfall (if taking northern route)
- Settlement Exhibition - Archaeological museum in downtown Reykjavík
- Perlan Observation Deck - Final panoramic views of the city
- Reykjavík Street Art - Self-guided tour of colorful murals
- Kaffivagninn - Iceland's oldest restaurant by the harbor

Practical Considerations:

- Driving: Leave Ólafsvík by 9am to allow time in Reykjavík before airport check-in
- Fuel: Return rental car with full tank; fill up near airport
- Airport arrival: Plan to be at Keflavík Airport 2.5 hours before flight (by 2:20pm)
- Flight details: KEF → DEN (FI 671) at 4:50 PM (Confirmation: 3NEJSO)
- Rental car return: Allow 30-45 minutes for return process and shuttle to terminal
- Dining options: Light lunch in Reykjavík; airport has several dining options
- Tax refund: Process VAT tax refund at airport if eligible for purchases over \$30

Planning TODO: 1. Check rental car return requirements and location 2. Plan route back to Keflavík with potential stops 3. Research parking options in Reykjavík if stopping 4. Set reminder for online check-in for flight 5. Make list of any last-minute souvenirs to purchase

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Budget Breakdown

Existing Bookings: - Rental Car: \$2,148.07 (Suzuki Vitara, automatic 4WD) -

Accommodations: \$2,787.86 (Total for all booked lodging) - **Subtotal:** \$4,935.93

Estimated Additional Costs (per person):

- Food & Drinks: \$700-900 (mix of restaurants and self-catering)
- Activities & Tours: \$300-500 (whale watching, boat tours, entrance fees)
- Fuel: \$300-400 (for complete Ring Road circuit)
- Miscellaneous: \$200-300 (souvenirs, additional supplies)
- **Subtotal per person:** \$1,500-2,100

Estimated Total Costs:

- For Solo Portion (Days 1-2): \$400-500
- For Shared Portion with Heather (Days 3-11, costs split): \$3,750-4,700 per person
- **Grand Total Per Person:** \$4,150-5,200

Note: This budget assumes splitting accommodations, car rental, and fuel costs with Heather from Day 3 onward. All amounts are in USD.