



Your Snowkiting Trip

Updated 14th March 2009

Introduction

To let you all know a little about what to expect, what to bring, and what to do when you arrive for your trip to Iceland we thought we'd put together this brief document as an introduction to your snowkiting adventure.

Flights

Once you arrive in Reykjavik we will take care of everything for you, but getting there and getting back is for you to organise. We have found that it is possible for you to get better deals as a consumer than we can get from the airline ourselves. The only exception is if you are trying to make a very late booking and the prices have gone sky high – sometime we can get a good deal from Icelandair in situations like this. There are two airlines flying to Iceland from the UK and these are Icelandair and Iceland Express.

You must be in Reykjavik on the Friday and you can choose from the following London flights. Return flights must be Friday afternoon or later. You can arrange to stay in Reykjavik for the following weekend and we will organise accommodation for you.

Iceland Express:

Gatwick to Keflavik:

Departure : 11:40

Return: 15:30

Icelandair:

Heathrow to Keflavik

Departure: 13:10 or 21:10

Return: 16:10

Other departure airports are possible but please check the airlines websites for details. Remember, you must be in Reykjavik on the Friday and book a departure flight no earlier than 3:30 on the following Friday.

Luggage

In common with most airlines now you will have to pay extra for snowboards or excess baggage. In our experience the best way is to pay for the snowboard and cram as much as you can into this bag as there is no weight limit on the sports allowance*

SNOWKITER

Phone: 0044 (0) 845 652 0850 / Mail: sales@snowkiter.co.uk
www.snowkiter.co.uk



*please check these details for yourself – we cannot take responsibility for changes of terms with the airlines!

Itinerary

Friday

Everyone is arriving on the Friday, most on the afternoon Icelandair flight into Keflavik airport. Keflavik is about an hour from downtown Reykjavik and the best way into town is using the 'Flybus' that leaves from right outside the terminal. Before you exit the baggage reclaim don't forget to pick up your duty free though, beer and other drinks will be less than half you will pay at the supermarket so it's well worth loading up with what you can. Mobile SIM cards are also available if you plan on making a lot of calls.

When the Flybus arrives at the coach station make sure to ask the driver to drop you at the Hotel Leifur Ericsson. The coach you are on may continue there or you may have to swap to another. Your reservations are all made at the hotel and all you should need to do is give your name when you get there.

The hotel is a small place and if everyone hasn't met already on the way we will easily find each other. Everyone usually takes a bit of a wander around town to check out Reykjavik, and then later we head out for some food and a few drinks downtown (sometimes becoming more than a few...)

Saturday

Come the morning we'll meet as early as possible outside the hotel to load up all of the gear for the long trip out to the glacier. We'll stop en-route for people to pick up any hire boards or skis from the hire shop and also to do the communal shop. We would urge people to have as much sorted as they can, i.e. currency, packing etc, as we are always pushed for time on the Saturday.

We arrive at the cabins and make ourselves comfortable there, light the barbeque, crack open some beers and check the wind reports for the Sunday.

Sunday

After a slap up breakfast its time to load the gear on the trucks and double check that you have all your stuff: boots, gloves, sunglasses, kites etc. When everything is strapped down we begin the journey from Husafell, where we are staying, up to the Langjökull Glacier. The journey time is about 40 minutes driving along dirt tracks across the lava and boulder fields, often having to accelerate to blast across areas of loose snow. At the glacier we park up the vehicles at the edge of the snowline, or, sometimes if the conditions are safe actually on the glacier itself. Kites and other gear are unloaded and a small base camp set up. Most often a few people will muck in to build a snow shelter to resting, chilling out and eating lunch in. Kit is then set up, lines unfurled and kites launched. Before you know it pristine snow is covered in tracks and snowkites are whizzing back and forth.

At the end of a long and tiring day we load up and head back to the cabins where beers are cracked open and preparations made for a that evenings slap up meal.

Monday to Thursday



More of the same!

Friday

Home ;-)



Accommodation

Out near the glacier you will be staying as part of a group of up to 12 people in two or three timber cabins. The exact type and location of the cabin varies, but generally they consist of 3-shared rooms with bunk accommodation and a large communal living area. The cabins are usually located within 20 – 40 minutes drive from the glacier, and about 1 – 1-½ hours from Reykjavik.

Cabins come equipped with large geo-thermally heated hot-tubs (so don't forget your trunks!)

The rooms are shared and there is a bathroom to each cabin. Duvets and pillows are provided but please remember that you need to bring you own sheets, duvet covers and pillows as we are not able to provide these at present.

At the end of the week we have to give the cabins a good clean and tidy up before we leave.

Catering

Food is purchased and prepared on a communal basis on the basis of everyone mucking in however they can. We all make a big shop together on the way to the cabins and we cover the cost of this within the trip price. This does not include beer though – you will have to buy this yourself!

Breakfasts are usually prepared by whoever takes the initiative, and lunch is your own responsibility to prepare and take for the day. Dinner is a much more involved affair and a few people usually opting to take charge of cooking up a bit of a barbeque feast.

The Snowkiting

Lay out your kite and lines on the ground parallel to the wind with some snow piled on the trailing edge, clip into your board or skis and attach the chicken loop to your harness – you're ready to snowkite. Now give the lines a gentle tug and fill the foil with air, the kite will begin to rise as you steer it across the edge of the wind to the meridian position above your head. Bring the kite round in a large 'S', just as in kitesurfing, and point it where you want to go – the kite will pull you to your feet and suddenly your gliding across the snow using nothing but the forces of nature.

Use the edge of the board or skis to take a hard edge in the snow and point yourself upwind, you will find you can take an angle of about 30 degrees. Use this technique to tack and you will be able to travel anywhere.

Take a spare kite on your back in case the wind changes, and with a GPS, compass and shortwave radio in your pocket you are ready to travel anywhere the feeling takes you. Why not take the 15km journey to the summit and stop there for lunch before freeriding back down with your kites in the backpack? Alternatively you can just practice getting airborne, or go for a high speed run and compare maximum speeds recorded on the GPS; speeds in excess of 67kph are regularly recorded, and it is not unusual to clock up 100km distance during a good day.



An eerie silence can penetrate the landscape when you separate yourself from the group, punctuated only by the exhilarating sound of your board edge slicing through the snow and the whistling of the kite in the wind. At the end of a day like this you'll be looking forward to the hot tub back at the cabin to soothe those aching muscles, and believe us you will be aching!

Safety

Rescue services are readily available in Iceland and the tour guides carry radio communication, iridium phones, and GPS in case of emergency.

The Company

Snowkiter[™] have been organizing snowkiting adventure tours since 2004 and know exactly how to provide the ultimate holiday experience.

Einar & Rob will be your hosts and guides for the entire duration of the trip. Not only are they there to guarantee your enjoyment of the trip, but also are both self-confessed snowkiting addicts themselves. More than anything these guys will simply feel part of the group, but with the benefit of all of the local knowledge. Be aware that this is not a trip loosely centred around a kite centre or school, these guys will meet you in Reykjavik and accompany you personally to the cabins and stay with you for the entire week. Clients often end up as close friends and many return the following year.

Einar Garðarsson, an Icelander himself, will go out of his way to make you feel welcome in Iceland, and won't fail to keep you entertained with a limitless supply of crazy stories. Einar rides his beloved blade skis, and would never allow himself to be seen without the very latest offering from Ozone snowkites. Look out for the dodgy one-piece ski suit though.

Robert Brown is your UK contact for snowkiting trips and always available to answer any questions about your forthcoming trip. Rob rides a snowboard and is also an enthusiast of Ozone kites; he is often to be found competing with Einar to see who can be the first to the summit of the glacier and is second only to Einar for the current Langjökull snowkiting speed record.

Vernon Russell, our original resident Kiwi snowkite instructor, has now departed for New Zealand and will be sorely missed. In his place we have Dave Pickup, on hand to provide lessons for those that wish to book them. Dave is IKO qualified and issues a powerkite certificate at the end of your training. He also cooks a great fry up and has been harbouring a plan to build a snowkite buggy for many years now – will 2009 be the year that it appears?

Rob and Einar all have an ambition to be the first people to snowkite across the Vatnajökull glacier in Southeast Iceland. Not only is this the largest glacier in Iceland but also the most deadly; it has an active volcano beneath it! (Note that this is NOT the Glacier we take visitors to!)



Wind & Snow

The wind stats at the **Langjökull Glacier** are generally very good and you can expect 6 - 15 knots on the majority of days. The glacier often generates Katabatic winds, flowing down the glacier toward the barren lava fields beneath it, although prevailing winds will predominate for the majority of the time. The wind is often higher toward the summit, allowing flyers to position themselves wherever they feel comfortable: use the lower slopes to get comfortable with the feeling up being hauled uphill by the wind and then head toward the summit for a real blast. It often takes a couple of hours to reach the summit, but speeds in excess of 70kph have been recorded en-route! Due to the lack of obstacles, and the nature of the Katabatic effect, extraordinarily smooth winds can sometimes be experienced, these are often combined with warmer weather and give rise to the occasional 'perfect session'.

During the summer season the glacier offers vast tracts of soft powder snow. This deep powder is actually very forgiving, and allows for a more comfortable landing than you might think for a glacier.

Wind Statistics

Wind statistics are taken from weather station 892, located to the North East of the glacier.

Month	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Average
Jan	19.6	17.5	19.2	18.1	19.2	20.2	21.0	19.3
Feb	13.6	18.5	17.3	17.7	20.4	20.6	22.4	18.6
March	19.8	17.5	19.4	20.4	13.6	23.1	14.0	18.3
April	14.8	15.4	15.2	12.6	13.4	19.0	14.2	14.9
May	10.5	12.1	15.0	15.7	16.3	18.5	15.0	14.7
June	15.2	13.2	13.8	11.5	15.0	14.0	12.2	13.6
July	15.9	13.0	12.8	12.2	13.4	14.6	11.5	13.4
August	16.9	14.4	14.0	13.8	13.0	8.9	12.1	13.3
Sept	14.8	17.3	18.1	15.2	14.6	8.2	15.6	14.8
Oct	16.3	17.1	14.0	17.1	16.5	8.4	14.8	14.9
Nov	13.8	13.4	11.1	17.5	18.7	14.4	22.5	15.9
Dec	18.7	15.0	14.4	19.2	14.6	14.6	21.4	16.8
Average	15.8	15.4	15.4	15.9	15.7	15.4	16.4	knots

Out and about

Snowkiter' pitch this tour as being predominantly about the snowkiting, but on those days when the wind (or just fatigue) prevent you heading out to the glacier there a number of distractions to choose from:

Simply driving across Iceland's barren backcountry areas is a treat, taking in the incredible bleak expanses of landscape. Explore Thingviller, where the two continental plates meet and also the seat of Iceland's first parliament, or take an excursion and explore some of the cavernous lava caves nearby.



Most evenings are spent back at the cabin, in the hot tub, drinking beers, eating, sleeping, preparing kit for the following day and watching snowkiting videos.

* Day excursions and alternate activities may be at additional cost to cover fuel.

Currency and rate

The now infamous Icelandic Kroner which has dominated the news for some time now. After a wild series of fluctuations the currency seems to have stabilised a bit. Beer is not as cheap for us visitors as it was in the heady times of the original troubles, but it is certainly better than it was. Expect to pay about the equivalent of £3.50 for a beer.

GBP

1 United Kingdom Pound = **160ISK** (approx at time of writing.)

Transfers

Iceland's international airport is Keflavik, regular 'Flybus' transfer coaches connect Keflavik to Reykjavik, with a journey time of 40 to 50 minutes.

Flybus tickets must be purchased from arrivals hall and cost ISK 2200 pr. person at the time of writing.