ICELAND RISK ASSESSMENT
DISCOVER THE WORLD – DISCOVER ICELAND

HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSESSMENTS

Because Local Authority assessment forms are so varied in their construction and many are unsuitable for overseas field study travel we have prepared these notes to cover the most frequently asked questions.

GENERAL

Principal Activities: The primary purpose of the visit is for study/field work and / or experiential learning.

The Providers: While we are the providers in so far as we are a registered Tour Operator the study tour is an overseas visit where UK laws are not in force. We contract out to registered Icelandic providers who all meet and often exceed the requirements with regard to school visits. We only use registered Iceland providers with a proven track record. We also vet all accommodation and have over 26 years’ association with the companies we use.

Accreditations: We are also members of the School Travel Forum and have been awarded the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality badge.

Risk Assessments: These are attached

Qualifications: The Icelandic guides and bus drivers hold the relevant Icelandic qualifications including first aid.

Criminal Records Bureau: There is no equivalent authority in Iceland and therefore we cannot provide clearance for Icelandic personnel.

Staff Training: We do not train the overseas staff. They are guides registered by Icelandic Authorities. All staff are, nevertheless, well qualified for the guiding tasks that they have to undertake.

ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES

Procedures: These are attached. To date we have no incidents to report and the Icelandic providers are not required to do so.

Qualified First Aiders: Icelandic guides and bus drivers are required to have basic first aid by virtue of their licences. We expect that at least one member of the visiting staff has basic first aid training. We also expect that visiting staff will hold all medical details relating to those students under their care as suggested in the medical form to be provided and completed prior to travel.
Equipment Used: We do not provide equipment for the studies involved. The school must bring their own field equipment. Where optional activities are concerned (eg whale watching, glacier walking etc) the Icelandic providers have to meet strict guidelines for their operation. We provide guidance notes, or more specific risk assessments for all of our optional extra activities.

Staff: Pupil ratios: We recommend a ratio of 1:8-10 including the guide.

Responsibilities: The breakdown of responsibility is outlined in our Code of Practice (attached).

Vehicles: All vehicles are road worthy and meet the requirements of the law including seat belt provisions on buses.

Bad weather alternatives: In the event of bad weather we are easily able to alter itineraries on a day to day basis.

INSURANCE

Public Liability: Our Company has public liability insurance of £10 million.

Licences: We hold all of the required travel licences: ATOL (2896); ABTA (V2823); AITO; AITO TRUST (1078); IATA. We are also bonded as required for Package Travel regulations.

Booking Conditions: Our published booking conditions have been provided to the school.

FIRE SAFETY

All accommodation used by us meets the stringent Icelandic fire regulations and is subject to annual Fire certificates
All accommodation has an audible fire alarm system
Most accommodation has smoke detectors connected to the audible fire alarm
Most accommodation is fitted with emergency lighting
All accommodations have emergency exits
Our accommodation does not arrange for fire practices. Visiting staff are requested to advise their students.

BUILDING SAFETY

All accommodation is Iceland has to meet stringent local regulations
All rooms used by students and staff have locks to prevent unauthorised persons entering the accommodation
Electrical facilities, wiring etc is subject to regular checks and repair. No records are made available
Gas is not used in Iceland.

HYGIENE REQUIREMENTS

All accommodation used by us complies with local health and safety standards.
Most of the accommodation used has en suite facilities, however where shared facilities are provided these are generally minimum 1:10 ratio, usually less, and gender specific.
The cold tap water is safe to drink. The hot water may smell of sulphur. This is harmless.
Kitchen facilities meet local Icelandic Environmental Health requirements.
Those preparing food have been approved by the Icelandic authorities.
ACCOMMODATION

All accommodation used by us has adequate facilities to cater for those with disabilities. Facilities are available for students and staff to secure their personal valuables. However, it must also be stressed that clients must also expect to be responsible in their actions.
Most accommodation has a space where groups can be bought together for meetings or writing up their days notes. **If this is a requirement we need to be advised at the time of booking.**
Every person is provided with his or her own bed or bunk. Bunks are provided with safety rails. Bronze scheme students take their own sleeping bags, and a pillowcase. Groups using sheets and pillowcases are provided with freshly laundered linen.
There is ample circulation around each bed/bunk space
All rooms are provided with adequate ventilation – usually windows. Downstairs rooms are generally provided with restriction facility to prevent access from outside.
Upstairs rooms are secured against falling out.
All rooms have curtains or blinds
All rooms have locks. In the Reykjavik Youth Hostel, as well as the rooms, every corridor has a coded keycard for access.
Boys, Girls have separate rooms but generally in the same area of the building for supervision purposes by visiting staff.
Staff are always provided with separate sleeping facilities, but in the same area of the accommodation to oversee behaviour. In certain cases the washing facilities are shared (eg the Reykjavik Youth Hostel).
All rooms have storage facilities for clothing etc

SWIMMING POOLS

The requirements regarding swimming pools are attached in a separate note.

CODE OF PRACTICE

These notes apply to School Visits:

**The Visit:**
The visit has been so designed that the staff of each visiting school will be able to use the unit instruction sheets to run the Geographical fieldwork for their own group. The guides (see below) will direct the group to the sites and we anticipate that the visiting staff will:
1. be responsible for the discipline of their students
2. Organise their students into working groups for each day
3. Oversee the fieldwork during the day
4. Oversee the write-up period at the end of each day

**Tutoring:**
Every group, unless otherwise requested will have a guide assigned to them. The guide is not necessarily a Geographer. The role of the guide is to:
1. Accompany the group while out on tour during the day
2. Maintain effective communication between the group and service providers
3. Make any necessary rearrangements from day to day
4. Ensure the smooth running of the visit
5. Take the group to the appointed field sites
6. Ensure that safety is assured at all times
7. Provide formal and informal advice and information
**Staff/Student ratios:**
We recommend a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 10 students.

**Staff qualifications:**
Our Icelandic guides are very experienced and English-speaking. They are either accredited by the Icelandic Guide Association or with many years guiding experience behind them. They are very knowledgeable about their country and the area within which we work. Most importantly, they are sympathetic to the needs of school groups.

**Insurance:**
It is a condition of booking that each person is adequately insured and with a minimum of £1 million cover for personal liability and £1 million cover for medical, repatriation and other expenses. Your attention is drawn to the section headed Liability within our Booking Conditions. Arctic Experience Ltd holds £10 million cover against public liability.

**Health and Safety:**
The accommodation has to pass strict conditions in Icelandic law before being officially licensed as a residential centre. This covers the accommodation, food preparation and fire precautions. We would however wish to stress the following:

1. No student is to indulge in smoking or the consumption of alcoholic beverages within the accommodation or its grounds
2. No member of any party should leave the grounds without first notifying a member of staff.
3. In the event of fire residents should make their way to the appointed site by the most direct route. **Visiting staff must ensure that their students are aware of the quickest exit routes.**
4. If any resident has a particular allergy or medical condition about which we should be aware this should be notified to us as early as possible.

**Food:**
A typical breakfast will consist of fruit juice, a range of cereals, bread and toast with preserves and cheese, tea or coffee. For lunch we will either provide a range of items for students to make up their own lunches (breads, cheeses, meats, salmon, cucumber, tomato, pastes, fruit etc.) or suggest group purchase at a nearby supermarket. Dinner will always be a hot main meal with a sweet, tea/coffee. Although fish and lamb dominate Icelandic foods we can provide for vegetarians/vegans etc. if given notice. Unless otherwise mentioned it will be cooked on site. We can arrange for the group to eat out on the last night in Reykjavik if desired.

**Transport:**
The buses will be provided by Icelandic bus operators. These vehicles have to be maintained to a standard appropriate to the road conditions. In general they are comfortable, roomy and well heated. All vehicles have a telephone. Where necessary we will use four-wheel drive or fixed wheel vehicles (e.g. in snow conditions or for access to remoter areas that require stream crossings). The drivers are very experienced and will always err on the side of caution.

**Clothing:**
We provide a clothing list with appropriate comments for winter/summer wear. Particular attention is drawn to the reference to the possibilities of cold and wet. Students are expected to arrive with the recommended clothing, as we can not take responsibility for anyone unsuitably clothed. To this end visiting staff are encouraged to contact us in good time for any advice needed. We reserve the right to refuse a student to take part in a particular activity if the clothing is considered to be inadequate.

**Safety:**
Safety is paramount and closely linked to all other aspects of our organisation (e.g. adequate food, ample sleep). While we aim to minimise risk at all times we do also ask that visiting staff assist to enforce the Code of Conduct with their own students. All outdoor environments are potentially
dangerous and some of ours are more dangerous than those to which you will be familiar (e.g. hot springs, geysers, geothermal steam, glacier rivers). However it is solely your unfamiliarity with them that makes them dangerous. Students should be reminded that they have a responsibility (a) to themselves, (b) to those around them, and (c) if called upon, to those who might be called in to help them. Please respect our advice however petty some instructions may seem. They will be given in your best interests.

We will always:
1. Work on the assumption that all visiting staff and students are novices in movement in the field in Iceland.
2. Move at the pace of the slowest
3. Carry a first aid kit on the bus.

Worst case scenarios:
While we will make every effort to point out all potential hazards and appropriate behaviour we do ask that, prior to coming to Iceland, the visiting staff stress the following to their students:

(i) Crossing Roads: Icelanders drive on the right hand side of the road. Caution must therefore be taken when crossing the road, especially in Reykjavik. (see also Codes of Conduct)
(ii) Water: Icelandic rivers are notoriously cold and fast flowing. At no time will a student be asked to enter a stream or river. Stream discharge recording stations will be selected to minimise risk. Similarly the Atlantic swell onto south coast beaches comes uninterrupted for thousands of miles. Waves are large and beaches sometimes steep. Playing dare devil or throwing stones into the sea is not to be undertaken. (see also Codes of Conduct).
(iii) Falling rocks: Students will not be taken into areas where there is a risk from falling rocks. Inevitably there will be much loose material in front of a glacier and visiting staff are asked to reinforce the fact that the moraine can be unstable and can contain large boulders. It may also be underlain by an ice core which can make it slippery. (see also Codes of Conduct)
(iv) Exposure: If our advice as to clothing (see above) has been followed there is no reason why any student or member of staff should suffer from exposure or hypothermia. In most cases our field sites are little more than a few hundred meters from the vehicles and thus prolonged exposure to cold or wet is minimised. (see also Codes of Conduct)
(v) Burns: We make it abundantly clear at all sites that no one should go anywhere other than the route specified by the guide/tutor. The areas around hot springs are not safe owing to thin crusts overlying boiling water. (see also Codes of Conduct)
(vi) Dust in the eyes: Glacierized and volcanic areas can be very dusty in dry weather. The wind can blow grit or students playing around can kick up dust. Sensible behaviour must be stressed. (see also Codes of Conduct)
(vii) Getting Lost: Students may work in groups from time to time but always within close proximity to staff. At no time should any group split up or any individual select to go off without first asking a member of staff. The only place where groups will be more independent is in Reykjavik, which is a very safe city, and the instructions to students are very specific. (see also Codes of Conduct)
(viii) Unforeseen hazards: Considerate and safe conduct must be enforced at all times. For example the throwing of snowballs on slippery ground may cause the thrower to slip and break an arm! (see also Codes of Conduct)

Medical Attention:
You will never be far from one of the principal hospitals for the south of Iceland. These are well staffed and up-to-date. You are advised to have an EHIC card available or online.

First Aid:
We recommend that individuals should bring their own personal First Aid kits consisting of plasters etc. for blisters, cuts etc. We also recommend that each group bring a few central items such as sterile (non-fluffy, non-adhesive) dressing, eye irrigation and a small selection of plasters, antiseptic and bandages. Some dry spray for burns is also useful.
Equipment:
Where necessary we do ask school groups to bring the equipment needed for field study from their own stocks.

Use of equipment: To save time in the field we suggest that visiting staff familiarise their students with the anticipated field techniques before coming to Iceland. This applies especially to the use of clinometers which can be difficult to use under cold conditions.

CODE OF CONDUCT

We do like to keep rules and regulations to a minimum but in the interest of enjoyment & safety, and in the hope that students will gain the most from their visit with us, we expect the following standards of behaviour during their stay:

(a) Prior to the visit:
1. Familiarise yourself with the outline programme.
2. Ensure that you are aware of the field techniques to be used - especially the use of the clinometers, quadrat, flow meter and infiltrometer.
3. If any resident has a particular allergy or medical condition about which we should be aware this should be notified to us as early as possible.

(b) At your accommodation:
1. Familiarise yourself with the various buildings and the most direct route to be taken in the event of fire.
2. Do not indulge in smoking or the consumption of alcoholic beverages within the accommodation or its grounds.
3. Do not leave the grounds without first notifying a member of staff.
4. Remember that this is also the home of your hosts and that the usual home courtesies are expected.

(c) In the field:
General Safety: Remember that you have a responsibility (a) to yourself, (b) to those around you, and (c) if called upon, to those who might be called in to help you. Please respect our advice however petty some instructions may seem. They will be given in your best interests.

Crossing Roads: Icelanders drive on the right hand side of the road. Caution must therefore be taken when crossing the road, especially in Reykjavík.

Water: Icelandic rivers are notoriously cold and fast flowing. At no time should you enter a stream or river. Similarly the Atlantic swell onto south coast beaches comes uninterrupted for thousands of miles. Waves are large and beaches sometimes steep. Playing dare devil or throwing stones into the sea is not to be undertaken.

Falling rocks: There is much loose material in front of a glacier and this can be unstable and contain large boulders. It may also be underlain by an ice core which can make it slippery. Extreme care should be exercised. Stones should never been thrown in any situation.

Exposure: There is no reason why any student should suffer from exposure or hypothermia. In most cases our field sites are little more than a few hundred meters from the vehicles and thus prolonged exposure to cold or wet is minimised. (see also Equipment)

Burns: The areas around hot springs are not safe owing to thin crusts overlying boiling water. Only walk where directed by your course tutor/guide. Should your foot go into boiling water (a) say so, (b)
remove boot/sock & keep foot off ground, (c) apply cold water and d) sterile (non-fluffy, non-adhesive) dressing.

**Dust in the eyes:** Glacierized and volcanic areas can be very dusty in dry weather. The wind can blow grit or students playing around can kick up dust. Sensible behaviour must be stressed. Should you get something in the eye (a) say so, (b) do not rub it, (c) request eye irrigation if necessary from the First Aid kit.

**Getting Lost:** At no time should any group split up or any individual select to go off without first asking a member of staff. The only place where groups will be more independent is in Reykjavík, which is a very safe city, and the instructions to students are very specific.

**Unforeseen hazards:** Considerate and safe conduct must be enforced at all times. For example the throwing of snowballs on slippery ground may cause the thrower to slip and break an arm!

**First Aid:** While we carry a First Aid on the bus, it is your responsibility to carry your own basic kit of plasters etc. for blisters, cuts etc.

**Clothing:** We publish a clothing list. It is absolutely essential that you are prepared for cold and wet. We reserve the right to refuse a student to take part if the clothing is considered to be inadequate.

**IPods and MP3 players:** We do not consider it to be safe practice to use these in the field. Please keep them inside the bus or accommodation.

**Sleep:** The days will be long and demanding. We ask that students should be in their rooms by 2300 and sufficiently quiet so that those around them may sleep.

**Food:** The days can be long and demanding. Do not skimp on your food and be sure to make up a balanced food box each day.

**Conservation:** All of the fieldwork units contain an environmental element and we expect students to be conscious of the fragility of the Icelandic environment and the risks that they bring to it by using it in large numbers. We try to minimise this impact and urgently request your co-operation in this.
RISK ASSESSMENT: SOUTH COAST DAY

This assessment refers specifically to the risk of volcanic eruption under the Mýrdalsjökull or Eyjafjallajökull icecap. There is no immediate risk and there will be plenty of warning in the event of an eruption taking place. The situation is thoroughly monitored and the area controlled by the Civil Defense and Police.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN: Risk Scale: 0 (Low) – 5 (High)
Should an eruption occur the potential risk would be as follows:

- Seljalandsfoss waterfall 0
- Skógar Folk Museum 1
- Skógar Waterfall 1/2
- Sólheimajökull glacier 4/5
- Dyrhólaey coastline 3
- Reynishverfi coastline 3
- Vik village and coastline 3

Basis of risk assessment:
1 – Risk of ash fall depending upon wind direction
2 – As for 1 plus risk of some increase in stream discharge
3 – As for 1 and 2 plus risk of being cut off because the bridge over the Fullilækur stream has been washed away. No risk to life.
4 – As for 1 – 3 plus risk of glacier surge and flooding in glacial snout area (group on higher ground).
5 – As for 1 – 3 plus risk of glacier surge and flooding in glacial snout area (group in front of glacier)

Proximity to risk:
The Selfoss is approximately 100km west of the Mýrdalsjökull icecap beneath which the volcano Katla is situated. There is no danger of risk unless in the immediate area to the south of the icecap where the glaciers descend towards the coast. Should an eruption occur there would be a lot of meltwater, which will burst out at the glacier margins. It is likely that the glaciers themselves may surge forward as well – perhaps by several hundred meters. Katla has not erupted since 1918 and there have been a number of false alarms since then. In the last 200 hundred years there has not been a fatality directly related to a volcanic eruption in Iceland.

The volcanic risk only applies to one of the scheduled days.

Insurance:
Our Volcano charter details the customer protection available to schools in Iceland

The School’s Role:
It is our responsibility together with the guide to advise you of the situation in so far as this can be foreseen at the present time. Should you feel that, after consultation with our staff, the risk is too great to operate the South Coast day then please advise us. Rest assured that our staff in Iceland are very aware of the situation, are well aware of the procedures, and are very safety conscious. Under no circumstances would we operate the day if we felt that it did not merit the risk.

Reduction of Hazard:
1. The hazard cannot be eliminated

2. Check daily with Icelandic Meteorological Service (who co-ordinate earthquake and eruption monitoring) and seek their advice as to current situation. Check also on wind directions and weather forecast. This is the Guide’s responsibility.
3. (a) If the risk is assessed as **High (4 – 5)** then move the activity from Sólheimajökull to another area which is free of the volcanic hazard. Note that the Civil Defense, who co-ordinate evacuation, and the police will close the road in the event of high risk.

3. (b) If the risk is assessed as **Medium (3)** then do not enter the pro-glacial zone at Sólheimajökull. Drive to the west side of the bridge and view the glacier from a distance. If time come back via Gigjökull OR switch the entire day to Thjórsárdalur (low risk)

3. (c) If the risk is assessed as **Low (0 – 2)** Proceed as normal but with constant awareness and re-assessment of risk.

4. Keep all participants informed of the situation and assessment and ensure that every individual knows what will be done in the event of a heightened risk. This is the responsibility of the Guide.

5. Ensure that there is someone at base who will be in touch with the I.M.S. and who can liaise with the tour bus. This should be arranged by the Guide.

6. Ensure that vehicle radio is kept open throughout the visit (the buses have GSM telephones). Inform base when the group is about to enter the risk zone. Guide and bus driver to liaise.

7. In the event of being cut off, because the bridge has been damaged, make for the village of Vík. Evacuation will be coordinated from there. However, if the risk has been assessed as high the evacuation procedures will have already been set in motion and the group is unlikely to have even reached this situation.

**MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY**

If there is a need for hospitalisation for any reason then you guide would immediately be in touch with their head office, and our emergency 24 hour telephone +44 (0)7793 267510. Your guide and emergency services would sort out the situation in conjunction with the Group leader.

We would recommend that a member of staff accompany the student. The medical and rescue services in Iceland are very good and Iceland is a very safe place.

Take your own mobile with you and log in our emergency telephone number before you arrive in Iceland.

Another safety measure is to keep with you a card for every student onto which is printed all contact details and any medical information that might be needed.

This can then be kept with each persons EHIC European Health Insurance card and given to the emergency services.
**The Duty Manager** must have details of all school groups while on duty (Name of School, Home Agent, Tel. Numbers, and Email Addresses via Travelink or Travelbox when instigated)

**It is stressed that:**
1: For insurance purposes the police or medical authorities need to be notified and a report received.
2: Our offices must be notified immediately there is any incident so as to quickly establish a chain of communication

**The BUS COMPANY** will notify Banstead office. If this is out of hours our two Emergency Telephone Numbers will be used:

Banstead**: (00-44) 7793 267 510
('0' dropped when calling from abroad)

The BANSTEAD OFFICE will notify the school's Home Agent, whose name will have been lodged with schools and Groups Department and stored on Travelink (Travelbox when instigated)