



CRUISING ICELAND WITH SILVERSEA CRUISES

Written by Sandy Bornstein

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Silversea Cruises, recognized for its personalized small ship experience, all-suite cabins, and noteworthy butler service, is the ideal ship for cruising Iceland.

After decades of booking cruises on ships with 2,000 to 3,000 passengers, my husband Ira and I opted for cruising Iceland with Silversea Cruises. This all-inclusive Iceland voyage on the Silver Whisper, with a capacity of 392 passengers and the ability to navigate smaller ports, seemed to have the best potential to maximize our Iceland experience. Most of our other options did not offer a Reykjavik to Reykjavik itinerary. If we wanted to concentrate on Iceland, it was counterproductive to spend extra days traveling to other countries to visit ports that were not our top priority.



Walking Behind the Cascading Water Near Reykjavik. Photo by Sandy Bornstein



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Silversea Cruises is widely recognized for its personalized small ship experience, all-suite cabins, and noteworthy butler service. With only one scheduled sea day and a wide selection of active adventure excursions, we were not overly concerned about the lack of onboard entertainment or a smaller number of dining options.

We looked forward to staying in a spacious 345-square-foot cabin with a bedroom, sitting room, full bathroom, separate bath and shower, and a veranda. However, we still wondered how a luxury boutique ship experience, with less than 400 passengers, would compare to a much larger ship sailing.

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Packing for Cruising Iceland

Years ago most cruise lines significantly modified their dress code for dinner. We were surprised to read that Silversea maintained strict decorum. Since I rarely have the opportunity to dress up, I chose to pack some of my favorite dresses. While most people conformed to the stated policies, we did not see anyone denied entry to the dining room for wearing inappropriate clothing.

The forecast called for a preponderance of rain and temperatures hovering in the low 40s to the 50s. We packed layers of clothing and protective gear—waterproof shoes, rain pants, rainproof coats, hats, and gloves. Knowing that temperature fluctuations are always possible, we also included a few short-sleeve tops.



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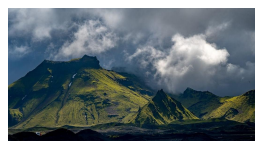
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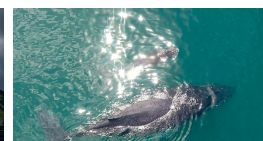
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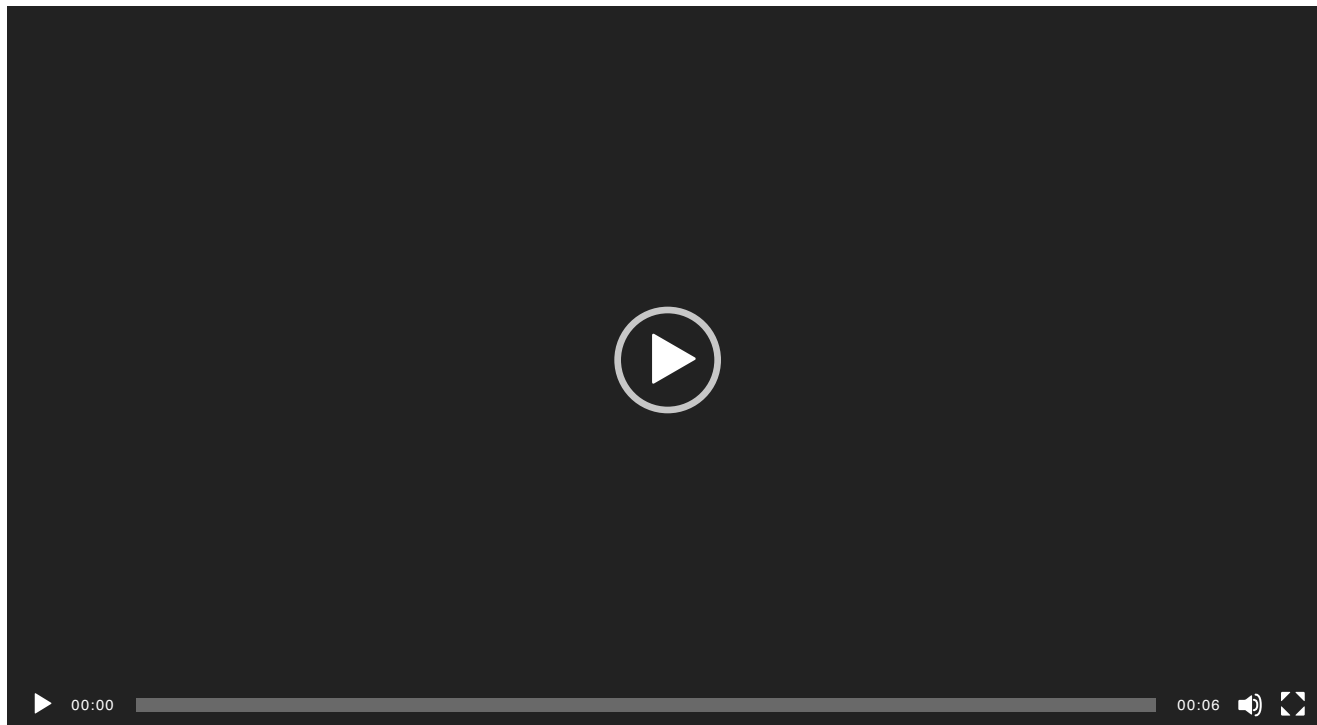


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Reykjavik—Pre and Post When Cruising Iceland

Since this was our first time in Iceland, we arrived two days early and took advantage of the post-cruise day included in our package. Our full-day excursions—a South Shore Adventure and a Golden Circle tour included popular attractions near the capital city. Our favorite spot was Seljalandsfoss, a UNESCO Global Geopark. We had the unique opportunity to walk behind a cascading waterfall and exit by scrambling through a series of slippery boulders. We could sample some of the city's popular restaurants in the evenings. Luckily, we love fish and sushi. Reykjavik restaurants capitalize on this prime coastal resource.



On Board-Our Deluxe Veranda Suite

On a previous vacation, we enjoyed The Retreat aboard [Celebrity Cruises](#)' Edge class ships. I was eager to see how our deluxe veranda suite compared to our previous stays in Celebrity's Sky Suites. While both offer considerably more room than a standard balcony cabin, the configuration and décor differ. While we never used the curtain separating the traditional sitting area from the bedroom, it is a wonderful feature for couples who do not share the same sleep schedule. Both suites provide enough space for two to occupy the well-appointed bathroom simultaneously. Our deluxe veranda suite had a long, narrow walk-in closet that adequately addresses storage on longer sailings. If you prefer traditional European décor over modern, you will feel at home on the Silver Whisper.



Deluxe Veranda Suite aboard the Silver Whisper. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

Our attentive butler catered to our needs, including cleaning off our muddy hiking boots. Room service was a memorable event. The table in the sitting room was expanded and then covered with a white tablecloth. Everything was presented as if we were eating in a dining room. Our butler miraculously found tables at our preferred times when we could not make a specialty dining reservation online.

Dining While Cruising Iceland

We had four options for dinner—The Restaurant, La Terrazza, The Grill, and La Dame. We dined in the first three restaurants but opted not to pay the \$60 per person charge for La Dame. Unfortunately, our reservation at The Grill coincided with a turbulent and chilly night at sea. For our safety we could not use the lava stone rock for cooking our food, but we enjoyed our selections prepared by the chef. The Italian menu at La Terrazza offered a welcomed change from the choices available at The Restaurant.



Artichoke Heart Capaccio with celery, capers, and chives with a balsamic dressing. Photo by Sandy Bornstein



Shore Excursion Highlights While Cruising Iceland

Our 10-day Reykjavik to Reykjavik Iceland itinerary included one sea day plus eight ports of call—Patreksfjordur, Siglufjordur, Akureyri, Husavik, Seydisfjordur, Djupivogur, Runavik in the Faroe Islands, and Heimaey. Rainy days and cool temperatures did not disrupt our exploration of Europe's most sparsely inhabited country boasting a population of fewer than 400,000.



Arnarejordur Countryside near Patreksfjordur. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

Layers of clothing and rain gear kept us warm and dry as we visited volcanoes, glaciers, geysers, waterfalls, natural hot springs, black sand beaches, mountain ranges, and museums. Since many destinations had less than 1000 full-time residents, it was necessary to take a tender to reach smaller ports. While we were looking forward to exploring the Faroe Islands, adverse weather conditions prevented our ship from docking in the harbor.

Patreksfjordur

We left the ship carrying an oversized insulated picnic bag filled with a large assortment of sandwiches, snacks, fruit, and beverages for our full-day excursion. While we spent a considerable amount of time on the bus, Ira and I successfully captured digital images that reflect the diversity of the terrain of one of Europe's most westerly points and enjoyed our visits to the Vatnsfjordur Nature Reserve, Bardastrond Beach, Reykjafjardar, the [Sea Monster Museum](#), and our trek to the Dynjandi Waterfall.



Looking up at Dynjandi Waterfall near Patreksfjörður. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

At Dynjandi, we had slightly more than an hour to climb uphill to a spectacular, 99-meter-high waterfall, the largest waterfall in the Westfjords. While time did not permit a complete ascent, we stopped periodically to take amazing photos of the fast-moving stream and smaller waterfalls adjacent to the rocky path.

Siglufjörður

From our balcony we watched thick gray clouds consume the snow-covered, jagged mountain peaks surrounding Iceland's northernmost town. From the pier, we walked in a driving rainstorm to the award-

winning [Herring Era Museum](#), Iceland's largest maritime-themed museum.



Birds Flocking Adjacent to Live Herring Demonstration in Siglufjörður. Photo by Sandy Bornstein



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Our two-hour-guided tour offered insight into the town's success as a leader in the herring industry in the early part of the 20th century and how the centralization of the fishing industry led to a crisis for small boat fishermen and the town. By using artifacts, photos, and reenactments, we could understand how herring was Iceland's most valuable export in the 1930s. The town has recently been reenergized by tourism.

Akureyri

Our large motorcoach weaved its way through [Iceland's Capital of the North](#). It then exited the city limits so we could experience an assortment of Iceland's natural wonders—endless lava fields, fertile valleys, bubbling hot geothermal fields at Namafjall, pseudo craters at Skutustadagigar, unique rock formations at Dimmuborgir, and the Godafoss Waterfall.



Unique Rock Formations at Dimmuborgir Near Akureyri. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

From the top of Godafoss Waterfall, a local chieftain in 1000 CE threw the community's statues of pagan gods into the water when he mandated the acceptance of Christianity.



Godafoss Waterfall near Akureyri. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

A Stop in Husavik While Cruising Iceland

In the whale capital of Iceland, [Husavik](#), Ira and I put on the protective insulated gear and participated in a whale watching tour that explored Skjalfanda Bay. Spotting wildlife is always a hit-or-miss proposition. Our hopes were higher than normal as the boat crew hyped the frequency of whale sightings. While our morning adventure included one whale we followed around the bay, the afternoon tour had better luck.

On our way back to the ship, we took a self-guided tour at the Husavik Whale Museum, one of the few museums in the world devoted to whales.



Inside the Whale Museum in Husavik. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

A Hike in Seydisfjordur While Cruising Iceland

With hiking boots and a raincoat, we joined a Hiking Chasing Waterfalls tour. It began at a trailhead identified as Haubakkar. We passed small groups of sheep as we climbed to the Selbrekkufoss Waterfall. As intermittent rain muddied our wildflower-sprinkled path, we periodically stopped to admire additional waterfalls. We also glanced backward to appreciate the waterfalls that are the focal point of this lush fjord terrain.



Multiple Waterfalls on the Hiking Chasing Waterfall Hike near Seydisfjordur. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

Djupivogur

To appreciate [Djupivogur](#) we strolled behind a local guide who provided bits and pieces of information about the area. We passed a modern statue recalling the life of a freed African slave who became a notable merchant in the town. On our way to the town's black sand beach, we learned about local vegetation and indigenous birds flying overhead.



Black Sand Beach at Djupivogur. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

As a storm rolled in, we headed to a protective shelter where we tasted homemade kleina, a popular local baked good, and astarpungur, or love balls, a round fried ball resembling a donut.

Heimaey

In 1973 the eruption of the Eldfell Volcano had a devastating effect on this town located on the largest island in the Vestmanneeyjar Archipelago. As we trekked up the volcanic rock trail to the top of the volcano we had a birds-eye view of the town below and the harbor. Our tour guide shared his recollections of the day his family was forced to evacuate the island.



View from the top of Eldfell Volcano, looking down on the Silver Whisper in the Heimaey Harbor. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

Inside [Eldheimar](#), a Volcano Museum of Remembrance, we saw partially excavated homes buried in lava and video footage of the eruption and evacuation. Other exhibits provided information about Surtsey, a nearby island listed as a natural wonder on the UNESCO Heritage list.



Inside the Eldheimar Volcano Museum in Heimaey. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

Coping with Turbulent Seas & Extra Sea Day

As we headed to the Faroe Islands the captain warned the passengers and crew that the journey might be rougher than usual. While many could not sleep as the boat vigorously rocked back and forth, we slept without any issues. By morning we learned that visiting the port would not be possible. Anchored in a protected area we enjoyed an extra sea day. The dining room service was curtailed for a few hours, and we were advised to remain in our cabins. Our butler brought us breakfast.

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Overall Impression of Cruising Iceland with Silversea Cruises

By embarking on the Silver Whisper and [cruising](#) Iceland, we accomplished our goal to explore a cross-section of Iceland's coastal attractions without having to visit other countries or spend too many days at sea. While the bus tours were larger than anticipated, with more than 40 people, and occasionally did not provide sufficient time to explore the terrain, most of our tours provided an excellent introduction to Iceland. The perks associated with the Silversea brand added a special layer to our journey. It also opened our eyes to the advantages of a boutique luxury cruise ship experience. When planning your next cruise to Iceland, the Caribbean, or somewhere else in [Europe](#), let Wander with Wonder be your guide.

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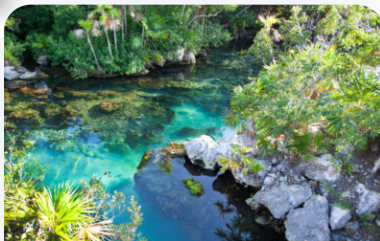


Written by Sandy Bornstein

Sandy Bornstein is a Colorado-based, award-winning travel and lifestyle writer who focuses on active adventure, food and beverages, history and culture, cruises, luxury boomer travel, family travel, health and wellness, worldwide Jewish culture, and the importance of embracing life when faced with an incurable cancer diagnosis. After living as an expat international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy wrote *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life: A memoir as a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle*. In the fall of 2022, Sandy's second book, *100 Things to Do in Boulder Before You Die*, will be published by Reedy Press. Connect with Sandy at TheTravelingBornsteins.com and SandraBornstein.com.

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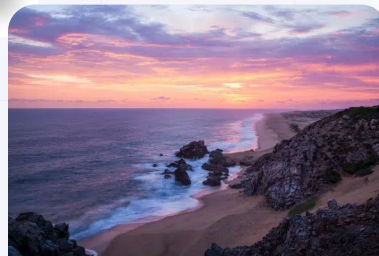


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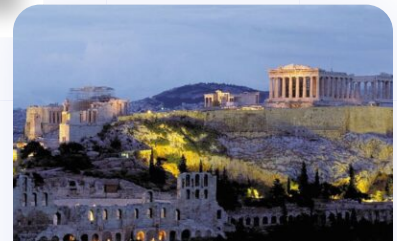


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