ICELAND
Fire and Ice: The Convergence of the Elements and the Arts
August 9–19, 2011
Preliminary Day-by-Day Itinerary
With Cornell Architecture Professors Andrea Simitch and Val Warke and Peter Armannsson ’90 of the Icelandic Academy of the Arts

DAY 1
August 9 ~ T U E S D A Y
Fly from JFK Airport to Reykjavik, Iceland.

DAY 2
August 10 ~ W E D N E S D A Y
Arrival transfer with a stop at the Blue Lagoon

Arrival at Keflavík International Airport, where the guide meets the group. From there we’ll go straight to the Blue Lagoon for a unique spa experience in otherworldly lava surroundings. We’ll spend an hour enjoying the luxurious comfort of the warm lagoon water while we sip a special Blue Lagoon cocktail.

Continue to Reykjavik for check-in.
Hótel Borg in Reykjavik ~ Four Stars

Hótel Borg is a four-star hotel with character and style. Located in the heart of old Reykjavik, it combines old-time elegance with modern style. Built in 1930 and restored to its original Art Deco style in 2006, its modern amenities include flat-screen satellite TV and high-speed Internet connections.
Discover Reykjavík – sightseeing by coach and walk in Reykjavik city center

Reykjavik is certainly among the smallest capital cities in the world. As you approach it, you’ll notice the clean lines of modern buildings and fresh bright colors, with the number of traditional buildings increasing as you get closer to the old town center.

This tour starts with a drive through the city’s main recreational and sports area of Laugardalur. We’ll pass an Olympic-sized open-air swimming pool filled with geothermal water – a prime example of the seemingly endless supply of naturally hot water to which Iceland has access.

We’ll then head to the charming open-air museum of Árbær, where old houses from Reykjavik and other parts of the country have been relocated. During a pleasant walk, we’ll visit an old turf church from northern Iceland and a turf farm building.

After a drive back to Reykjavik past modern housing developments, we’ll enjoy a nice walk through the small streets of the city center, stopping at various locations to learn about Icelandic culture, old and new. At one of the charming cafés, we’ll enjoy a coffee or tea and a real Icelandic Kleina or Pönnukaka.

The highlight of the tour is the visit to the National Museum of Iceland, featuring Iceland’s cultural heritage from its pioneering settlement in 874 to the present. We’ll then continue to Reykjavik’s charming midtown with its colorful houses, the parliament, and the Catholic cathedral, before we head back to the hotel.

Welcome dinner at Vio Tjornina – walking distance from Hotel Borg

Vio Tjornina’s owner and chef, Rúnar Marvinsson, is known for innovative dishes made from a variety of rare fish and shellfish.

DAY 3
August 11 ~ T H U R S D A Y

Golden Circle by coach and Skáiholt
Today we’ll follow a circular route to Skálholt – Gullfoss – Geysir and lunch – Þingvellir – Reykjavík.

Skálholt in Biskupstungur is one of Iceland’s most important historic sites. Christianity was made the state religion of Iceland in the year 1000 A.D. The country’s first bishop, Ísleifur Gissurarson, ordained in 1056, settled at Skálholt, which was the Episcopal See of south Iceland and a center of culture and education for 700 years.

At the middle of the sixteenth century, Icelanders, under Danish rule, converted to Lutheranism. One of the best known and most influential bishops of Skálholt after the reformation was Brynjólfur Sveinsson, highly respected for his learning. He had a wooden church built at Skálholt, even bigger than the twentieth century cathedral.

This day tour encompasses the “Big Three” of the Golden Circle – Gullfoss, Geysir, and Þingvellir – some of the scenic wonders for which Iceland is justly renowned. The Circle covers the most historical sites in the country, spouting geysers, hot springs, glacial river waterfalls, greenhouse industry, and stunning scenery. At Geysir you will see hot springs in abundance as well as the famous geyser Strokkur, which spouts every few minutes, shooting a column of piping hot water up to 20m (60 feet).

At Gullfoss (Golden Waterfall), you will discover one of the most impressive waterfalls in Europe, where thousands of tons of icy water thunder majestically down in a double-fall into a deep gorge.

Þingvellir National Park, situated by Þingvallavatn, the biggest lake in Iceland, is the site of the world’s oldest democratic parliament, founded in the year 930. The beautiful canyon running through the park is the meeting point of two of the Earth’s tectonic plates. The area’s combination of natural phenomena and historical significance make it inseparable from the fabric of Icelandic national life. In 2004 it was inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List.

Lunch at Hotel Geysir

The restaurant offers dining on two floors overlooking the famous Geysir area. The buffet consists of local food of south Iceland. The restaurant’s aim is to preserve and uphold local traditions in food production in the spirit of the international Slow Food Association.

**DAY 4**

August 12 ~ F R I D A Y

**South shore by coach and glacial walk at Sólheimajökull**

In the morning, we’ll depart by bus, driving over the mountains to the southern lowlands. South Iceland is a region of lush farmland, striking waterfalls, sandy coastline, glaciers, and quaint towns and villages. It is also where the famous Icelandic Saga of Njáll took place. The main attractions of the Icelandic Saga Centre, 100 km from Reykjavik, is the Njáls Saga and Viking age exhibition. From there we’ll go to the remarkable Seljalandsfoss waterfall, where you will have the opportunity to stand behind the waterfall!

We’ll continue to the southernmost town in Iceland, Vík where we will view Dyrhólaey, a large natural sea arch named the “Blow Hole” by British fishermen, as well as the endless black sandy beaches of the
south coast. We will also see Sólheimajökull glacier, and, if road conditions allow, we will stop at the glacier's edge. Then we’ll head back to Reykjavík, with a stop at the beautiful Skógafoss waterfall.

**Dinner at Við Fjörurborðið – by the seaside**

The Seashore Restaurant in the village of Stokkseyri is an enchanting place.

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**DAY 5**

**August 13 ~ S A T U R D A Y**

*Scheduled flight Reykjavík – Akureyri*

Departure from Reykjavík airport for a 40-minute flight to Akureyri, on board a Fokker friendship airplane, seating 50 passengers.

**Hotel KEA in Akureyri ~ Four Stars**

Located in the heart of Akureyri, gateway to the rich natural splendor of northeast Iceland, Hotel Kea has been welcoming guests since 1944 with the same high standards of elegance, quality, service, and comfort.

We’ll walk with a guide in Akureyri, the largest settlement in the north of Iceland with a population of approximately 15,000 inhabitants. Surrounded by mountains, it is a town where urban and rural life mix easily, and where a proud community spirit prevails.
You can enjoy Akureyri’s wonderful geothermally heated outdoor swimming pool or just relax in town.

**Dinner at Greifinn restaurant**

Without doubt one of the most popular restaurants in town.

### DAY 6

#### August 14 ~ Sunday

**Dalvík – Ólafsfjörður – Siglufjörður – Hólar in Hjaltadalur**

In the early morning we’ll depart from Akureyri to the community of Dalvíkurbyggð, which was formed in 1998 by the merger of three districts of the outer Eyjafjörður: the town of Dalvík and the rural districts of Svarfaðardalur and Árskógur. The logo of Dalvík shows three mountains, signifying marriage. With a population of nearly 2,000, the local economy of Dalvík is mostly based on fisheries and fish processing. Dalvík harbour is a large fishing and commercial port. Árskógssandur comprises the villages of Hauganes and Árskógsandur, each with a population of under 200, for which fishing and fish processing are the main occupations as well. The farmers of the Svarfaðardalur valley and Árskógsströnd are mainly engaged in dairy farming.

From Dalvík we’ll head to Ólafsfjörðu. The area of Fjallabyggð is situated on the magnificent peninsula Tröllaskagi, which, with its high mountains and deep fjords, is perfect for hiking and bird watching and renowned for its beauty.

Onwards to Siglufjördur, an historic fishing town where fame and fortune has always been linked to the ebb and flow of the fishing industry. A tiny shark fishing village in 1900, Siglufjördur soon became one of the largest towns in Iceland and the undisputed capital of herring fishing in the Atlantic. Although the herring has disappeared, the town bears the distinct imprint of “the Herring Era.”

On the way back to Akureyri we will drive through Hólar in Hjaltadalur with the option to have dinner there. One of Iceland’s principal historic, cultural, and ecclesiastical sites, Hólar has been a place of learning through the ages. The Saga Trail takes you through Hólar’s colorful history in less than an hour by foot. We’ll see Iceland’s first printing press, set up around 1530 by Catholic Bishop Jón Arason, who was later beheaded for his refusal to further the progress of Lutheranism in Iceland. We’ll see the oldest and smallest stone church in Iceland, built in 1763, and visit various excavations sites of what once were schoolhouses and residences.

**Lunch at the new restaurant Hannes Boy Café at Siglufjörður**

A brand new restaurant at Siglufjörður that has been rebuilt in a classical old house.

**Dinner at Hólar**

### DAY 7

#### August 15 ~ Monday

**Goðafoss – Mývatn by coach**

Leaving Akureyri, we will view what remains of the old town before crossing the fjord and heading on to Safnasafn and the Icelandic Folk Art Museum. Consisting of paintings, sculptures, drawings, watercolors, embroideries, books, dolls, toys, and tools, the collection presents an interesting and informative view of folk art, as well as modern art and what inspires it. It includes over 3,000 works by outsider and folk artists and close to 200 works by modern artists. Yearly the museum displays 16 exhibitions of diverse character, mixing folk art and modern to create a surprising rendezvous of ideas and show in one place. The museum also offers a superb library with books on art, architecture, outsider art, gardens, cars, and more.
After a stop at the impressive waterfall Goðafoss ("Falls of the Gods"), we'll drive to the beautiful area of Mývatn, a breeding area for a great variety of ducks. The surroundings of the lake are of tremendous geological interest. At Mývatn we'll explore the field of Dimmuborgir on foot, a landscape of rugged crags and peculiar lava formations. We'll then visit the boiling mud pools and boiling Solfataras at Námaskarð. The area around Námaskarð is the most volcanically active in Iceland. From Námaskarð we'll drive past a geothermal power plant to the magnificent volcanic area of Krafla, where the so-called "Krafla Fires" took place in the years from 1975 to 1984, which left this area with wide black lava fields. After a refreshing walk in Krafla, we will have dinner and then head back to Akureyri for the night.

**D A Y 8**

August 16 ~ T U E S D A Y

**Skagafjörður – Stykkishólmur**

Depart early this morning from Akureyri to Skagafjörður. The Fjord Skagafjörður a well-known area in the Saga Grettissaga for the island Drangey, which is to be seen from this area. The turf church Vídimyri, built in the eighteenth century, is in the traditional turf roof style dating back to the beginning of Christianity in Iceland (eleventh century). Not far from the Vídimyri Church is Glaumbaer Museum in Skagafjörður, a site well-known for its beautiful turf buildings, an example of the way Icelanders lived throughout the centuries. A monument by the sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson in memory of Gudrídur Thorbjarnardóttir and her son Snorri Thorfinnsson has been placed there. Gudrídur and her husband were a part of the group led by Leif Eriksson, who discovered Vinland, North America, in the year 1000 and settled there. While in Vinland she gave birth to their son Snorri, the first child of European descent to be born in North America. When the Vikings abandoned their attempt at settlement, she crossed the Atlantic and made a pilgrimage to Rome before going to Iceland to spend her last days with her husband and American-born son, making her the most widely traveled woman in the world then and one of the first-ever transatlantic travelers.

As we continue to the northern part of Snæfellsnes peninsula, we will pass some fishing villages on the northern part of the peninsula, and the uncountable islands of Breidafjördur Bay.

**Lunch at Áskaffi at Glaumbær**

**Dinner at Narfeyrarstofa – Stykkishólmur**

Narfeyrarstofa restaurant is located in Stykkishólmur in a beautiful house built in 1901-1906. The restaurant offers a selection of ingredients derived from the surrounding area.
Hótel Stykkishólmur

Hótel Stykkishólmur is located on the northern part of Snæfellsnes peninsula, at Stykkishólmur village.

Stykkisholmur town is often called the capital of Snaefellsnes. The township has put great effort into restoring to their original state the old landmarks and houses owned by Danish traders and merchants at the close of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The renovated Norwegian House is now the local folk museum. There are nearly 2,700 small islands on the bay north of Stykkisholmur and popular cruises feature take in unusual rock formations and the bird life paradise.

**DAY 9**

*August 17 ~ W E D N E S D A Y*

**Best of Breiðafjörður Bay with nature and bird watching tour and fresh scallop tasting**

The tour starts off as a standard adventure, but also gives passengers the option of going ashore on the highest island of the bay to explore the island and its bird life.

Then on to some fresh scallop tasting! The seafood delicacies are served with dips and white wine. After more nature and bird watching, it is time for lunch on-board.

Next we visit Flatey Island, a paradise for nature lovers. The timber houses in the old center date from the island’s former prosperity, and most of them have been restored in their original style. Nowhere else in Iceland has the atmosphere of the past been so faithfully preserved in an urban setting.

**Dinner at Hotel Flatey**
Day 10

August 18 ~ THURSDAY

Snæfellsnes Peninsula – Reykjavík

The landscape of Snæfellsnes is diverse and magical. The peninsula is about 90 km long and graced by a magnificent mountain range of high rugged peaks formed by volcanic activity and shaped by the grinding force of the glacier. At the far end of the peninsula, Snæfellsjökull glacier, one of the most beautiful mountains in the country, towers over National Park. Jules Verne made the glacier popular in his classic novel, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. Other prominent mountains and volcanoes also grace the area.

On the way from Stykkishólmur we’ll make a stop at Helgafell (the “Holy Mountain”), which is very prominent in Icelandic literature and history. The hill apparently retains some of its magic; those who follow some simple rules while climbing the 73m hillock are entitled to have three wishes granted.

We’ll stop at Djupalonssandur and take a short walk on pebbles to the shore of the Atlantic Ocean. (Notice the sound when you walk!) Many stories and sagas are connected to this area, which makes the place even more mysterious. After a short drive past the cliffs of Londrangar, we’ll arrive in the tiny fishing village of Arnarstapi. The idyllic setting boasts many interesting lava formations and an abundance of bird life. After a walk, we’ll head for Budir, famed for its beautiful surroundings of black lava and one of the few yellow sand beaches in Iceland. We’ll enjoy exploring a little of the area and also pay a visit to the Budakirkja, a little church with a big history. We’ll lunch at Hotel Búðir, renowned for its seafood dishes and heavenly desserts, before continuing on to Reykjavík with the possibility of photo stops on the way.

Day 11

August 19 ~ FRIDAY

Departure Transfer to Keflavik Airport

Departure approximately 2.5 hours prior to the departing flight. A 40-minute drive from your hotel in Reykjavík to Keflavik airport (The Leifur Eiriksson International Airport).