

Conference tour – September 13th

The conference tour will start from Icelandair Hotel Reykjavik Natura at 11:45 and take us through the beautiful scenery of Western Iceland. We will visit different sites related to grazing in Iceland; (1) Heiðarbær - a sheep farm close to Þingvellir, (2) Uxahryggir - degraded landscapes, (3) Lundaarreykjadalur - agricultural landscapes and (4) Bjarteyjarsandur – mixing sheep farming and tourism. Our stops are marked on the map and each stop is described in more detail below. We will return to hotels in Reykjavik by 22:00.



Heiðabær – Visit to a sheep farm

Heiðabær (Fig. 1) is a traditional sheep farm on the west side of lake Þingvallavatn. Here we will be greeted by the farmer, Jóhannes Sveinbjörnsson, who is also a professor at the Agricultural University of Iceland. Jóhannes will inform us about sheep farming in Iceland. Afterwards we will enjoy specialities from Icelandic farmers in the open (if weather permits). After leaving Heiðabær we will make a short stop at Þingvellir, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Fig 1. Heiðarbær. In the background: Lake Þingvallavatn and Mt. Skjaldbreiður which produced much of the lava at Þingvellir. (Photo: https://farm9.staticflickr.com/8324/8103765210_c53d8fffe5_b.jpg)

Uxahryggir - Grazed to the bone

Uxahryggir is one of the old routes between South and West Iceland (Fig. 2). Uxahryggir is on the western border of a large desert around the glacier Langjökull. This area used to be inhabited, but was turned into a desert during the middle ages. Settlements at Hvítárnes on the eastern side of the glacier were abandoned around 1100 AD and Geitland, the last farm on the west side of the glacier, was abandoned around 1600 AD.



Fig. 2. Uxahryggir, the glacier Langjökull in the back (Photo: Christian Bickel https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Uxahryggir_1.JPG)

Lundarreykjadalur - The beauty of grazing

Lundarreykjadalur (Fig. 3); being on much lower elevation than Uxahryggir, shows how areas with better environmental conditions are more resilient to grazing than the fragile highland areas. Here we will enjoy the lush and beautiful agricultural landscapes of Lundarreykjadalur. Coffee break will be at the Guesthouse Brautartunga.



Fig 3. Lundarreykjadalur (Photo: Gunnar Ingimarsson <https://www.flickr.com/photos/igi69/22403618677>).

Bjarteyjarsandur

Bjarteyjarsandur (Fig. 4) is one of the Icelandic farms mixing farming and tourism. On the farm, sheep and horses are raised, and you can come across free running, cats, dogs and special wool rabbits. We will have dinner and entertainment at the close by restaurant Hernámssetrið before we head back to Reykjavik, where we should arrive at 22:00.



Fig. 4. Bjarteyjarsandur. Wondering at the just sheared wool (Photo: <http://www.farmholidays.is/asset/7900/runingur-ull-medium.jpg>)