

It's no-so QUIET

Exploring Iceland on a solo trip doesn't mean going it alone, finds **Andrew McQuarrie**

Within 24 hours of meeting my fellow travellers, we were all naked – and 10 minutes after that, fresh from the showers, we were bobbing around in a hot spring and chatting like we had known each other for ever.

Although I embarked on this Intrepid Travel tour as a solo traveller, I returned home a week later with 11 new friends. Never did I expect I would one day clamber behind a roaring Icelandic waterfall alongside a 70-something ophthalmologist from Manhattan – but there we were, getting soaked in the process and basking in the thrill of it all. Escapades such as this are where lasting bonds are forged.

Our group was a mix of ages, occupations and nationalities. Of my 10 fellow travellers, the US contingent

was made up of three medical professionals, one of whom grew up in the Philippines, plus a retired nurse, a biology professor, a photographer and a retired leather flooring fitter. From Australia, there was a change management consultant and an HR manager, while from the UK there was an entrepreneur. The youngest of the group was 28 and the oldest were over 70.

This made for engaging conversations at mealtimes and showed travel's unique quality to bring together people of all backgrounds.

Across eight days in Iceland, we visited some of the most spectacular landscapes on the planet and learned about their formation through our brilliant tour guide Kristján E Karlsson. Lava fields, waterfalls, glaciers, hot springs, volcanoes and

Intrepid Travel offers an excursion to Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon



PICTURE: Intrepid Travel/Ryan Ballon

sheer cliffs were among the most striking natural features – and at least one of these seemed to appear at every turn.

Experiencing them with a small group added to the enjoyment – and not only because of the ready supply of photographers able to capture your silly poses and cheesy grins.



Andrew McQuarrie

Iceland and the Fosshotel Glacier Lagoon – the tour's 'feature' accommodation, which even came

with a pair of hot tubs offering views of the mountainous terrain shielding Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull.

A morning dip in the hot tubs proved to be the ideal way to reflect on our northern lights sightings

the night before – and the perfect preparation for another day of exploring with newfound friends.

Book it: Premium Iceland in Winter starts from £3,375 land-only, including accommodation, transfers, activities, some meals and tips. intrepidtravel.com/uk ■

Group comforts

Perhaps one of the reasons this tour brought together such a mix of travellers was that there was never a sense of having to 'rough it'. We stayed at the Hotel Reykjavik Centrum, the Landhotel in south

The group above Reyniskirkja Church in Vik



Selling points of solo tours

- ★ Everyone has an interesting story to tell, so solo travellers need not worry about making conversation with others in their group
- ★ You will always have a dining companion if you want one, either on included meals or when dining independently, as travellers typically choose to eat together
- ★ Clients have free time to visit their must-see attractions or places of interest
- ★ There are plenty of stops when you're out on the road, allowing for comfort breaks and the opportunity to stock up on snacks
- ★ An experienced tour guide will take time to get to know everyone individually and can recommend activities tailored to your clients' interests