

Rescuing Pufflings on the Westman Islands

Atlantic Puffins are seabirds found around Iceland, Greenland, and several other areas in the North Atlantic.

Most of the year, they live out on the ocean, diving for food; you can recognize them by their rapidly flapping wings. But in late spring, they head to seaside cliffs to lay a single egg.



The Westman Islands

The eggs hatch in the summer; the adult puffins raise the birds for 6 weeks or so. But once the baby puffins ("pufflings") are big enough, the parents stop feeding them, and they are on their own. The babies fly toward the water and begin their life at sea.



Except ... sometimes they don't. The pufflings have an instinct to head toward light to get to the ocean: the moon, I think?

But the lights of civilization confuse them, and they end up lost and lonely on land.

Every year, children of the Westman Islands (off the south coast of Iceland) have a job—saving these misguided pufflings. The kids get to stay up late, since the pufflings head out of the burrows under the cover of night. Armed with flashlights and cardboard boxes, they find lost pufflings and keep them safe

overnight.

The children bring their pufflings to the Sea Life Trust Aquarium the next day; there they keep records of how many pufflings have been found. As long as the pufflings are healthy, the children take them to the ocean and set them free, this time facing the right direction.



The puffling season is in late August or early September. It's tough to plan a trip around this, since the timing varies each year. But if you happen to be heading to the Westman Islands around this time, make sure to bring a flashlight, and let the kids stay up late!



Above: The beautiful Westman Islands, as seen from a hiking trail made of lava.

For more information, see our post about rescuing pufflings: [IcelandWithKids/rescuing](https://www.IcelandWithKids.com/rescuing)

If you want to plan a trip to Iceland, we're happy to help! E-mail me: Eric@IcelandWithKids.com

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