

Year 13 Iceland Geography Trip

During the Easter holidays, a group of Year 13 students and three teachers went on a geography trip to Iceland. After arriving in snowy Keflavik on 3 April, we met our coach driver and tour guide who took us to Sandvík, where we walked over the Leif Eriksson bridge between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates. We also went to Stampar Crater and then to the geothermal area of Krýsuvík with boiling mud pools at Gunnuhver. Here, we had the opportunity to experience geothermal power in a natural setting with boiling mud springs surrounding the world's largest blowing steam vent. We then returned to our hotel in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital and largest city, for the night.



The next day, our first stop was at Þingvellir, which is home to Iceland's ancient Viking parliament and is a UNESCO world heritage site. Here, we walked between the Eurasian and North American plates at the only place on the planet where the mid-Atlantic ridge (formed by the two continental plates moving apart at this constructive plate boundary) surfaces above sea level. Next, we went to the

famous Gullfoss waterfall, and then we visited the Geysir Hot Springs area, where the Great Geysir is located; this was the first geyser described in a printed source and has lent its name to hot springs all



over the world. Geysir is now mostly dormant, but nearby Strokkur (one of Iceland's most famous geysers) erupted several times during our short visit to the area. We also saw Konungshvur, which is the largest hot spring in the area but does not erupt. After this, we drove to Faxi waterfall located on the Tungufliót river, and then went to Kerið, a 6500-year-old volcanic crater lake which was frozen when we visited. The final destination of the day was the Blue Lagoon, a geothermal spa located in a lava field in Grindavík. We spent a couple of hours in the lagoon, which was very warm at 38°C, and also got free smoothies and silica mud masks.



On our third day, while en route to our first destination, we drove alongside Eyjafjallajökull (E15), the volcano responsible for the April 2010 eruption that caused enormous disruption to air travel across western and northern Europe. While in Iceland, we also saw a number of other volcanoes including the 'Angry Sisters': Hekla and Katla. Hekla, nicknamed the 'Gateway to Hell', is one of Iceland's most active volcanoes and has produced one of the largest volumes of lava (around 8km³) of any volcano in the world



in the last millennium. Katla is one of the largest and most famous volcanoes in Iceland, and can be regarded as one of the most powerful volcanoes in the world. Our first stop of the day was at



Skógafoss waterfall, one of the largest waterfalls in Iceland, and then we visited Sólheimajökull, a glacier between the volcanoes Katla and Eyjafjallajökull. We walked on the glacier, which was still covered in ash from the 2010 E15 eruption, and discovered a number of small ice caves.



Next, we went to the southernmost village in Iceland, Vík í Mýrdal, where we shopped for souvenirs before walking along the black sand beach, formed from the remnants of basalt lava from previous volcanic eruptions. We then drove to Reynisfjara beach, another black sand beach, where we saw the Reynisdrangar (towering, spiky basalt sea stacks jutting out from the ocean) and went inside the Halsanefshellir cave which was surrounded by geometrical basalt columns. After this, we went to the Seljalandsfoss waterfall that stands at the roots of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, and then visited the nearby Gljúfrabúi waterfall which is partially hidden inside a narrow gorge.

We then returned to the hotel where we had dinner and prepared for our Northern Lights tour at 10pm. Unfortunately, we did not get to see the Northern Lights, but still had a memorable evening thanks to the beautifully clear, starry skies, and the tales of Icelandic folklore our tour guide told us on the coach journey.



We returned to the hotel just before 2am, and the following morning we got up early to go to Keflavik airport from where we flew back to Heathrow. Everyone had an incredible time on the trip, and we all found our visit to Iceland to be a very enjoyable, educational, beautiful and fascinating experience.



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