

Iceland 13-16th February 2018

Day 1

EasyJet arrived at Keflavik* airport at 18.30; everyone lands in one piece apart from Lovor's bag which stayed at Gatwick! * *Vik means bay.*

We met our amazing guide Katy at the airport where she immediately flew into action to find Lovor's bag!

Waiting patiently at the other side of security was Dori; Iceland's most fearless driver. The snow was falling hard, the road was icy, the wind was blowing at 10 meters per second across the mountain pass but Dori calmly drove us past the ditched and abandoned tourist cars to get us to Selfoss.



Selfoss is 50Km south east of Reykjavik. It has a small population of 6500 people. It lies along the Ölfusá river. Despite "foss" meaning waterfall in Icelandic it has no waterfalls. However, in 2008 it experienced an earthquake of 6.3 on the Richter scale.

When we arrived at the Selfoss Hostel at 10.00pm a lovely dinner of wraps was waiting for us.



Geographers relaxing after a long day of travel!

Day 2

It's a white out! Due to extremely strong winds of 20m/s most of the major runs were shut to ALL traffic. As the winds blow the snow off the mountain across the roads it makes travel extremely dangerous. However, Dori The Invincible drove us, Ice Road Truckers style, up the mainroad to the local supermarket. Like all good supermarkets this one had a earthquake museum!

Hveragerdi is a small town that principally grows tomatoes! This is due to the geothermal activity supplying heat to enormous greenhouses. This proves an odd sight when standing in an Arctic environment.

The town experienced an earthquake in 2008, *apparently* there are signs of the earthquake's destruction throughout the town, however due to the zero visibility caused by the wind and snow we had to take Katy's word on that and stick to the museum.



*Trinitarians standing across two continents.
In a supermarket!*

Due to the area being prepared for earthquakes through drills and earthquake proofing their homes and businesses minimum damage was caused. However, Miss Adnitt and Mrs McLaughlin were distressed to see that the local wine shop had been completely destroyed; the owner had to dodge the falling bottles as they smashed around her and was lucky not to be injured by the glass.

The rest of the morning was spent searching the supermarket for local "delicacies" included salted liquorice and hakarl (Icelandic fermented shark meat.... Google it!). Most of us stuck to hot chocolate and doughnuts!

Day 2 continued.

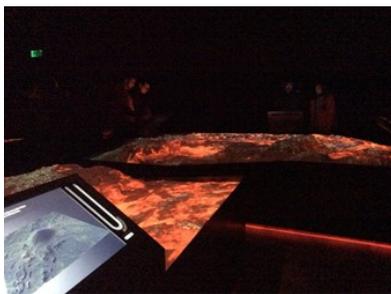
The weather had promised to clear by 1pm but sadly it continued to storm and the roads stayed shut. Proving the “hilarious” Icelandic joke of “if you don’t like the weather wait five minutes!”, wrong!

Plan B was to drive the short but dramatic distance to the brand new interactive national lava museum.



Tricky driving conditions but Dori took it in his stride..

The interactive displays included an amazing floor to ceiling volcanic plume demonstrating how Iceland was situated on a volcanic hotspot.



We shared the museum with good company.



Mr Soleyn with ex England footballer Dion Dublin at the lavemuseum.

We also saw lots of children dressed up singing in the shops and museums. It is tradition on Ash Wednesday for children to dress up in fancy dress and visit local businesses. They get rewarded with sweets and a day off school! This tradition is known as öskudagur, in Icelandic.

Day 2 continued

Despite the promise of a storm free afternoon the weather continued to howl so we made the decision to turn back and head to the local geothermal pool. In this public swimming pool pupils got to experience swimming outside in a naturally heated pool with snow capped mountains for a back drop. For the brave amongst them there was the cold plunge tub!



Marco studying the maps in order to write the hardest question possible!

After a dinner of couscous the evening was spent in intense competition as pupils competed to have the best geography knowledge! 40 questions written by the pupils proved tough but the results were close at 20, 21, 21 and 22 as the winning score by Patrick’s team.

Day 3



A breakfast of champions. Waffles, chocolate spread, syrup, jam and honey. Third helpings were not uncommon! Lunch consisted of sandwiches and snacks made up before getting ready for the day.

Day 3 continued

Unbelievably we woke up to bright blue sky. Katy said that in her 13 visits to Iceland this was the most spectacular she had ever seen it; with the beautiful blue sky against a crisp white background of snow covered fields and peaks.

First stop was the Secret Lagoon.



We had the secret lagoon all to ourselves for 30 minutes, apart from local celebrity chef Ymir Björngvin Arthúrsson who had bought along two customers as part of his Icelandic gourmet tour.

This area of geothermal activity has served as a natural bathing area for the local population of Hveraholmi since 1891. Again the juxtaposition between the icy cold exterior (-10°C) and the heat of the pool made for a sensational once in a lifetime dip.

From Hveraholmi we moved to the world famous area of Geyser (not an old man....yes Katy we heard it already!).



Fissures and cracks in the crust allow hot water and steam from the volcanic activity below to rise up causing some dramatic sights as the ground bubbles.

Day 3 continued

From Geyser we travel to Gullfoss (The golden waterfall). A double tiered waterfall. We got to experience the impact of tourism as Dori had to negotiate around some careless tourists who used the main road as a carpark! Is Iceland managing mass tourism was a question we asked.



The frozen two tier Gullfoss waterfall. In the summer the spray makes a rainbow that stretches across the bottom tier.

From Gullfoss we logically, in -10°C, drove to a nearby dairy farm for icecream! The Efstidalur II farm shows how rural businesses have to diversify to make money. The farm has been in the same family since 1850 and has been a dairy farm since then; but it now offers ice cream, a top end restaurant, cooking classes, horse riding, stables, BnB and tour guides.



Eating the homemade icecream at Efstidalur farm.

Day 3 continued

From the farm we moved on to Þingvellir - literally "Parliament Plains" - which is not only an area of rifts between the Eurasian and North American Plates but also the site of the first recognised Parliament in 930.

As we walked down in the snow covered rift we could see plenty of signs of tectonic activity in the geology.



Trinity's attempt to recreate the first Parliamentary meeting between the Viking Clans in 930!

As we missed out on one waterfall the previous day Katy took us to hidden waterfall off the tourist trail. With a small hike up an icy path we came to a spectacular frozen waterfall. The power of nature to freeze water in time is evident everywhere!



Frozen waterfall in the National Park.

After a long day it was an evening of dinner, a snowball fight and bed.

Day 4

Pupils had to pack up their bags and say good bye to the hostel staff. Mr Soleyn ensured that the rooms were tidied to a military standard.

First stop in the day was the On geothermal energy plant where volcanically heated water is used for energy and hot water supply.



Geographers studying minerals at the Geothermal power plant. 30% of the energy in Iceland is geothermal the rest is hydroelectric.

In the distance we see the pods that are being used to experiment with carbon capture.

From there we head back to the city of Reykjavik. 70% of Icelanders live in Reykjavik and the surrounding areas; this is a population of 230 000 people so very small in comparison to the 9.1 million Londoners. The pavements are heated using hot water pipes under the surface. This ensures the ice and snow is melted and the roads stay open.



The Hallgrímskirkja church in the background is designed to look like a volcano. The use of nature in Icelandic design is common place.

Day 4 continued

After a shopping stop we progressed to the governmental hall and onto the frozen duck pond.



Small children play on the ice and build snowmen.

A short bus ride from downtown Reykjavik we stopped at the harbour front.



The sun voyage statue is meant to represent progress, freedom and hope! The backdrop of snowy mountains and fishing boats is certainly very tranquil despite this being the capital city.

Next stop was Katy's favourite building. The Harpa concert hall. The Harpa Hall construction was started in 2007 just as the economic recession started. When the economic crash happened the building work stopped until private and public finances were found. It was eventually finished in 2011.

Day 4 continued



The columns represent Basaltic rock formations.

Another short bus ride we reached the Perlan. A former hot water storage area which is now a very popular museum of Iceland and viewpoint over the city.



The last stop on our way to the airport was the an absolute highlight; the Gunnhver Hot Springs followed by the Bridge Between Two Continents.



Th Gunnhver Hot Springs the ground literally bubbled and smoked around our feet.