

Iceland 2023 – Year 11, 12 and 13

On October 23rd, 2023, we journeyed into Iceland—the land of fire and ice, famous for its extraordinary range of rugged landscapes formed from volcanic eruptions' aftermaths, captivating scenery highlighting various geographical features, and vast glacial formations that cover 11% of the country's land area. Over these four days, we visited various stunning locations across the South of Iceland, from which we took with us new knowledge of Icelandic culture and history, as well as many unique experiences to treasure.

After our two-hour flight from Liverpool Airport, we made our way to meet our tour guide on the coach. The school made the decision to have a local guide who was born in Reykjavík, therefore very well informed on the history of the country she grew up in, rather than choosing an English guide that wasn't local. This was a great idea as we learned so many details that can only come from local experience. After a very scenic coach journey through lava fields and crater rows, we made our first stop at the Bridge Between the continents; a 15m footbridge between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates. We then moved on to our second destination - the Fagradalsjfall lava flow, meaning “beautiful valley's mountain” following the 2021 volcanic eruption. For me this was the highlight of the trip, as we got to walk on molten rock still hot from its previous eruption. We then quickly moved on to our final stop: Seltún Hot Springs. Here we explored the geothermal landscape, coloured by multi-hued mineral deposits. After board walking among bubbling mud pools and columns of steam, it was time to go to our hotel following a busy day of sightseeing.



On the following day, we woke up bright and early in preparation for another busy day, making our first stop at the Kerið crater lake, which was formed in an explosive eruption. We visited this volcanic lake at sunrise, making it a stunning viewpoint for us. Our second destination was the Þingvellir National Park. The site straddles the mid-Atlantic ridge, and we had the opportunity to walk through the middle of the Eurasian and North American plates, which was an amazing experience. Thereafter we visited the site of Geysir, a spouting hot spring erupting every 8 minutes- with a height of up to 30m. Not far from the Geysir was Gullfoss; a magnificent two stage waterfall, where the water plunges 33m into a mile-long gorge- a fantastic experience for any student. We then stopped off at a geothermal greenhouse where they specifically grew tasty tomatoes as well as maintaining eco-friendly standards- certainly a contrast to our previous visits! Our final destination for the day was Seljalandsfoss. This waterfall's plume spills 60m over a former sea cliff. Due to the nice weather conditions, we had the opportunity to walk behind the waterfall which was a mind-blowing experience.



On the third morning, we got up early and set off on a 2½ hour drive towards the southeast coast of Iceland. Along the way we made stops at the Eldhraun lava field and Skaftafellsjökull - a beautiful glacier encircled by water. My personal highlight of the day was when we arrived at our location Jökulsárlón and embarked on a 40-minute boat trip around the glacial lagoon. We had the chance to sail amongst icebergs whilst soaking in breathtaking views. On our journey back to Vík, our guide took us on a unique detour to 'Yoda Cave' which is a cave—as suggested by the title—shaped like Yoda. Unfortunately, the wind was very strong at our next location but this did not disrupt our fun as we walked along the black volcanic beach and sat on top of the basalt columns for our final activity of the day!



To begin the fourth day, with an ice axe in hand and crampons attached to our boots, we explored the Sólheimajökull glacier with a very informative guide. It certainly was an experience like no other as we hiked through the ice and jumped over crevasses - we even had the opportunity to drink fresh glacial water! We then arrived at our next location, one of Iceland's most impressive waterfalls: Skógafoss. We were set the challenge of hiking the 527 steps which lead right to a fabulous viewpoint of the 60m high waterfall. My legs certainly were tired

after the morning's activities! In the afternoon, we headed west for the final destination of our trip: Reykjavík. Our first stop in the capital was Flyover Iceland, a virtual experience which “flew” us over all of the places which would have been impossible to reach on a school trip. It was a very enjoyable experience. After our flight we had the chance to explore the city in which we bought souvenirs and visited the enormous church: Hallgrímskirkja. Next, we had the opportunity to see molten lava flow in Reykjavik- at the Icelandic lava show of course. We learnt all about the history of Icelandic volcanoes such as Katla whilst feeling the heat from real life lava. Following the show, we ate a delicious dinner at the Hamburger Factory and arrived at our accommodation. To top off an already amazing trip, the northern lights made an appearance on our last night. They really were astonishing to see.



To summarise: our short—but certainly eventful—excursion around Iceland created many once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and memories, enlightening us with viewing landscapes plucked straight out of a geographer’s dream! A big thank you to the geography department for organising this wonderful trip.

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Year 11