



Icelandic Volcanoes

The Vikings were originally from Scandinavia but soon settled in Iceland. They appear to have reached the volcanic shores of Iceland in the 9th century. Even though they were used to the cold and rugged terrain of their home countries, Iceland was tougher than anything they had encountered before.

Iceland was a volcanic island with lots of active volcanoes, and the Vikings had to learn to live with spontaneous eruptions. Today, people are better prepared for the eruptions, but it is still a very volcanic place. In fact, the frigid temperatures combined with these active volcanoes give Iceland its nickname - the Land of Ice and Fire.

There are approximately 130 volcanoes scattered across Iceland's rocky landscape. Around 30 of these are still active. They create vast fields of lava that shape the very structure of the island.

Some of these volcanoes erupt slowly, such as the volcano known as Fagradalsfjall. Fagradalsfjall began erupting on March the 19th, 2021, at around 21:30. The volcano is on an important stretch of land called the Reykjanes Peninsula. This peninsula connects the capital city of Reykjavik with its international airport, so it is quite an important area of Iceland.

Tens of thousands (53,000 were recorded, in total) of small earthquakes had shaken the region in the weeks leading up to the eruption. Those who lived close by knew that this was a sign of what was to come. When the volcano finally erupted, it wasn't a giant explosion, like the ones you might see on TV, instead the land ripped apart in a fissure. It was about 700 meters long and covered over a square kilometre.

Before this eruption, Fagradalsfjall had been dormant for 6,000 years. This just goes to show that a dormant volcano in Iceland doesn't mean that it will never erupt again! The last eruption on the peninsula was 800 years ago, so it came as a bit of a surprise to many people.

Luckily, Fagradalsfjall is located in an uninhabited valley and is sheltered



from the local communities. This means that the disruption has been minimal despite the fact that lots of people travel from across the world to see the eruption. As of the end of June 2021, Fagradalsfjall is still slowly erupting!

Fagradalsfjall is in the open and isn't covered by a glacier. This means that the amount of ash created was very small. When another Icelandic volcano erupted in 2010, this wasn't the case.

When Eyjafjallajokull erupted in 2010, the result was completely different to Fagradalsfjall.

Eyjafjallajokull is known as a glacier volcano, which means that the volcano is covered by a vast glacier. When it erupted, it caused ash and gas clouds so massive that airplanes were grounded across Europe - it was too unsafe to fly through most of the region.

Unfortunately, Eyjafjallajokull is paired with another, even bigger volcano, called Katla. If Katla were to erupt, the disruption would be even greater because it is under even thicker ice. Unfortunately, any eruption at Eyjafjallajokull is usually followed by one at Katla within a decade. Keep an eye out for that!

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. When did the Vikings reach Iceland?
2. How many active volcanoes are there on Iceland?
3. When did Fagradalsfjall erupt last?
4. Which volcano could be more damaging than Eyjafjallajokull, if it erupts?
5. What type of volcano is Eyjafjallajokull?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- I** Why is Iceland nicknamed the Land of Ice and Fire?
- V** Which word tells you that the Viking's homeland was rocky and tough?
- S** Why was the eruption of Fagradalsfjall surprising?
- S** Why were many people prepared, despite it being a surprise?
- V** Find and copy a word that tells the reader that the disruption from Fagradalsfjall hasn't been very big.