

Iceland 2022



FIELD TRIP
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
M.A.



Visit Iceland

Page 26

Page 30



Hotel Cabin

Page 5



Page 26



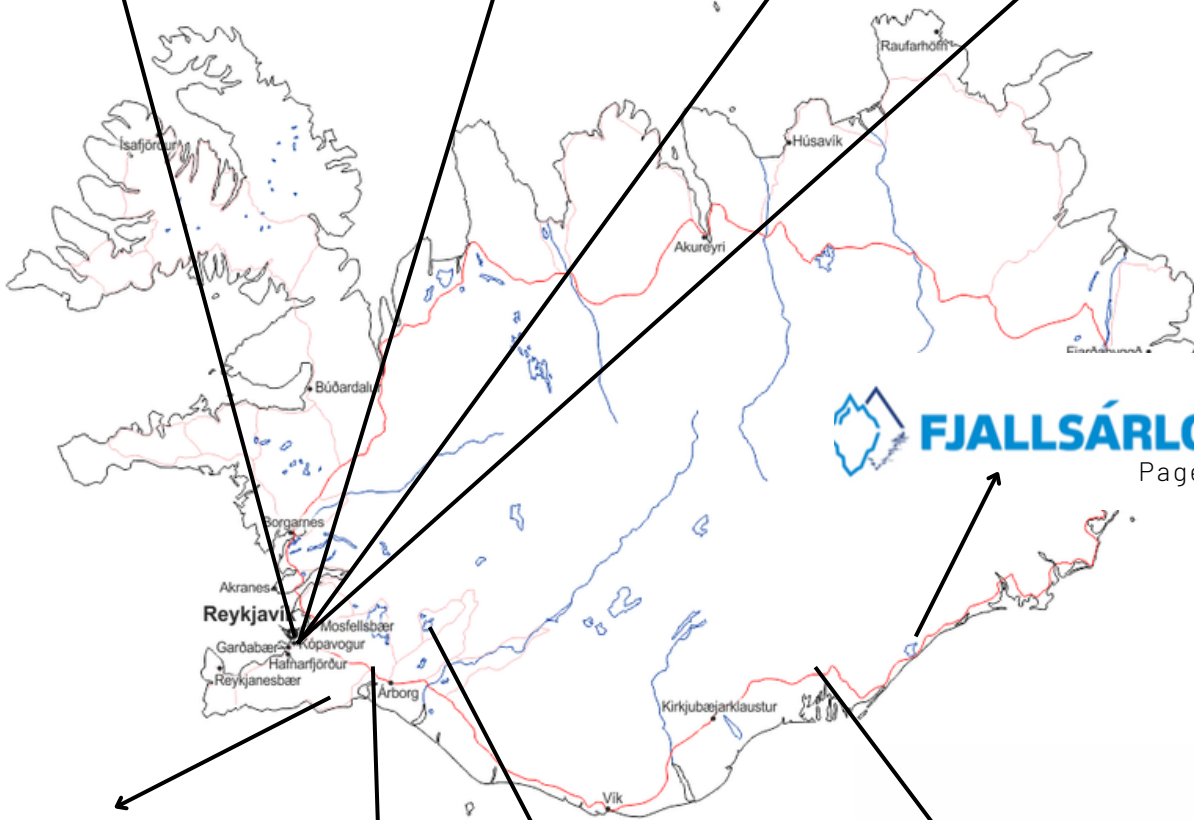
arctic adventures

Page 26



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Page 26



FJALLSÁRLÓN

Page 14



Page 22



Page 9



Page 16



Page 9

#ICELANDICPLEDGE

THE ICELANDIC PLEDGE CONTAINS EIGHT RULES TO FOLLOW DURING A VISIT IN ICELAND. YOU CAN DISCOVER THEM ON YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH OUR BROCHURE. HAVE A SAFE TRIP!

Preface

Iceland: mystical island of fire and ice. Fascination, adventure, northern lights, trolls and fairies - there are a multitude of descriptions that apply to this country. For the master students 'Tourism Development Strategies (TDS)' of the University of Applied Sciences Stralsund, the objective was to get to know and analyze the tourism strategy of this impressive country.

Through a variety of discussions with companies and institutions, at the University of Iceland and through their own observations, we enabled our students to build up an understanding of the destination and to reflect comprehensively on each individual program point.

Whether it was the Ministry of Tourism, an event agency, a hotel chain or the national park management - the perspectives our master students were able to experience were comprehensive, diverse and enriching. In addition to their professional competence, their social and multicultural skills were especially sharpened, as students from 6 nations went on this excursion just 3 weeks after the beginning of their studies. The days spent together in Iceland allowed them to grow together quickly and laid a perfect foundation for their further master's studies.

Bringing theory into practical contexts and applying it, that's what the excursions in our TDS Master's program stand for and sustainable learning is realized through own experiences.

After their experiences on site, our students continue to research the destination at our University. They will present their findings in-depth group presentations at the end of the semester, thus closely linking theory and practice.

At the same time, the supervisors also used the excursion to provide added value and a special highlight for master's students in the coming years. Within the framework of an Erasmus cooperation, master's students will be able to spend a semester abroad at the University of Iceland in the future. This will give them the opportunity to broaden their horizons, experience international perspectives and spend exciting months in the land of volcanoes and geysers.

Prof. Dr. Jan Pierre Klage
Head of Tourism Development Strategies

Steffi Schnierer
Program Management



Day one

08/10/2022

After only two weeks of preparation, with a completely new group of people, we were ready to take off for Iceland. In addition, none of us had been to Iceland before. This contributed to our high expectation and excitement.

And off we went.

On the 8th of October 2022 we started our excursion to Iceland. At 06:50 am we departed from Stralsund and drove by bus to Berlin. For some of us it was the first time flying from the new BER-Brandenburg airport. Arrived in time at 05:15 pm we made our way to the bus and started our drive to Reykjavik. The weather was, how we were expecting it, rainy and sunny.

During the drive we got a proper introduction to our tour guide Thilo, a TDS alumni, specialized in the Icelandic culture. On the way to the Icelandic capital, we drove through lava fields and collected some first facts about Iceland.

Thilo told us that Iceland is famous for its green and cheap energy, which is due to the thermal heat. The cheap energy supply causes high energy consuming industries to settle in Iceland to make use out of it. So, we passed an aluminium melting factory, which is considered controversial by Icelanders. We also learned that Iceland is the land of elves and trolls who house in rocks. This is considered when new roads are built, so that the course of the road is often adjusted to avoid rocks that are inhabited by elves.

At 06:00 pm we arrived in Reykjavik, where two thirds of the whole Icelandic population live, as Thilo told us. We stayed in the Hotel Cabin for the night and had a first group meeting at 06:30 pm in a seating area of the hotel. After a short introduction to the upcoming plans, we went to a burger restaurant for our first group dinner in Iceland.

The restaurant was called Hamborgarafabrikan and we all ordered delicious hamburgers. So, the first day in Iceland came to an end. We were all very excited about what would await us in the next few days.



#ICELANDICPLEDGE

BE A RESPONSIBLE TOURIST AND TAKE THE ICELANDIC PLEDGE. ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS TO DO THE SAME.

Day two

09/10/2022

On the second day of our trip, we got to know the extreme weather of Iceland. Already during breakfast, we could see strong winds through the windows. Weather reports were warning of wind gusts up to 90 km/h for later that day. For that reason, we started our day early and hopped on our bus, that would bring us to all the sights and appointments the following days. As we were driving through the different suburbs of Reykjavik we were told interesting facts about the history of Iceland.



The first stop of the day was indeed on a very important historic sight: the Alping in Þingvellir. It is one of the points of interest of the Golden Circle, the most famous tour in Iceland. In the magnificent natural backdrop, which by the way was the scenery for a Game of Thrones scene, the first Icelandic parliament – the Alping – was established. From the year 930 until 1798 the assembly met for two weeks annually. Þingvellir is now a National Park and is placed on the World Heritage List, since it has deep historical and symbolic significance for Iceland.





#ICELANDICPLEDGE

I PLEDGE TO BE A RESPONSIBLE
TOURIST.



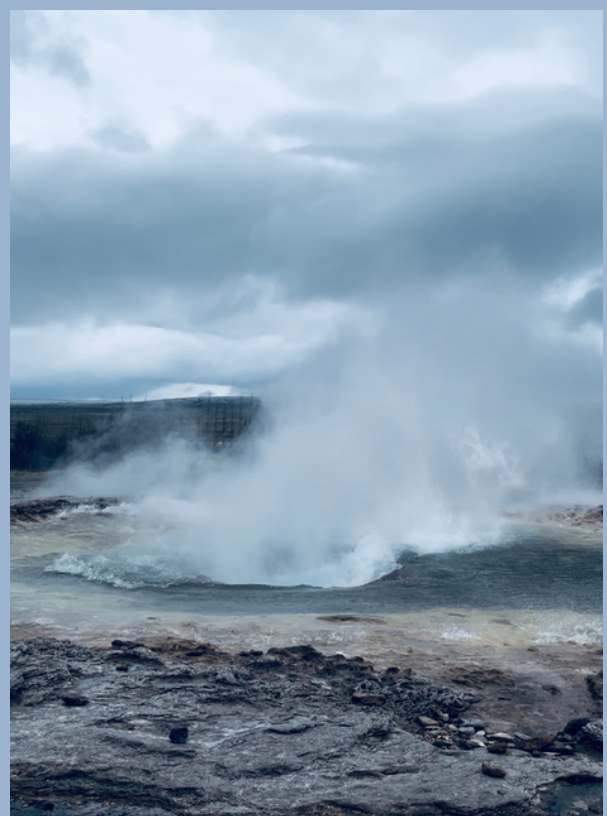
With strong winds and snowfall, we were all happy to be back in the warm bus, in which Gunnar, our bus driver, was already awaiting us.

The next stop was a company visit with Secret Lagoon. The founder Björn told us about the history of the Lagoon and the business. The Gamla Laugin, which is the original name of the geothermal pool, is the oldest swimming pool in Iceland. In the year 1947 the usage was stopped and in 2014 it was reopened for the public. The warm water comes from hot springs and reaches temperatures of 38-40 degrees Celsius all year round. The family business is now in the second generation and is successfully running a smaller and quieter alternative to the famous Blue and Sky Lagoon. After an informative meeting we got the chance to relax in the hot water ourselves. What a great experience!



On our way back to the Golden Circle we made a small stop at the canyon Brúarhlöð in which impressive blue glacier water runs.

One of the most popular tourist destinations in Iceland is the waterfall Gullfoss, which we visited on our next stop. It cascades in two parts, one which is 11 meters high and the other one with 21 meters height. After taking in the breathtaking view, we departed to our last sight of the day, the Great Geysir. Although it is rarely active these days, it lends its name to hot springs all over the world. The Strokkur Geysir next to it however is very active, it sprouts hot water 30 meters into the air every 10 minutes. With this very impressive last spot of the day, we left for our hotel, Hotel Örk, located in the town of Hveragerði, where we could recap on all the fascinating impressions of the second day.



Day three

10/10/2022



On Monday, we were on the track again, going from Hveragerði further East towards Kirkjubæjarklaustur. On our route, we passed some pillow lava fields, the city of Selfoss, the village of caves named Hella, and the door to hell - according to local beliefs and tales, where the Swedish saying "go to Hekla" instead of "go to hell" arose. The 1491 meters high and 6600 years old volcano named Hekla stretches over about 40 craters. Even though nearly every volcano on the island is measured, this one is specifically tracked by its magma chamber and the amount of magma in it as well as by the rise of the ground, since it is one of the three most active volcanos in Iceland.



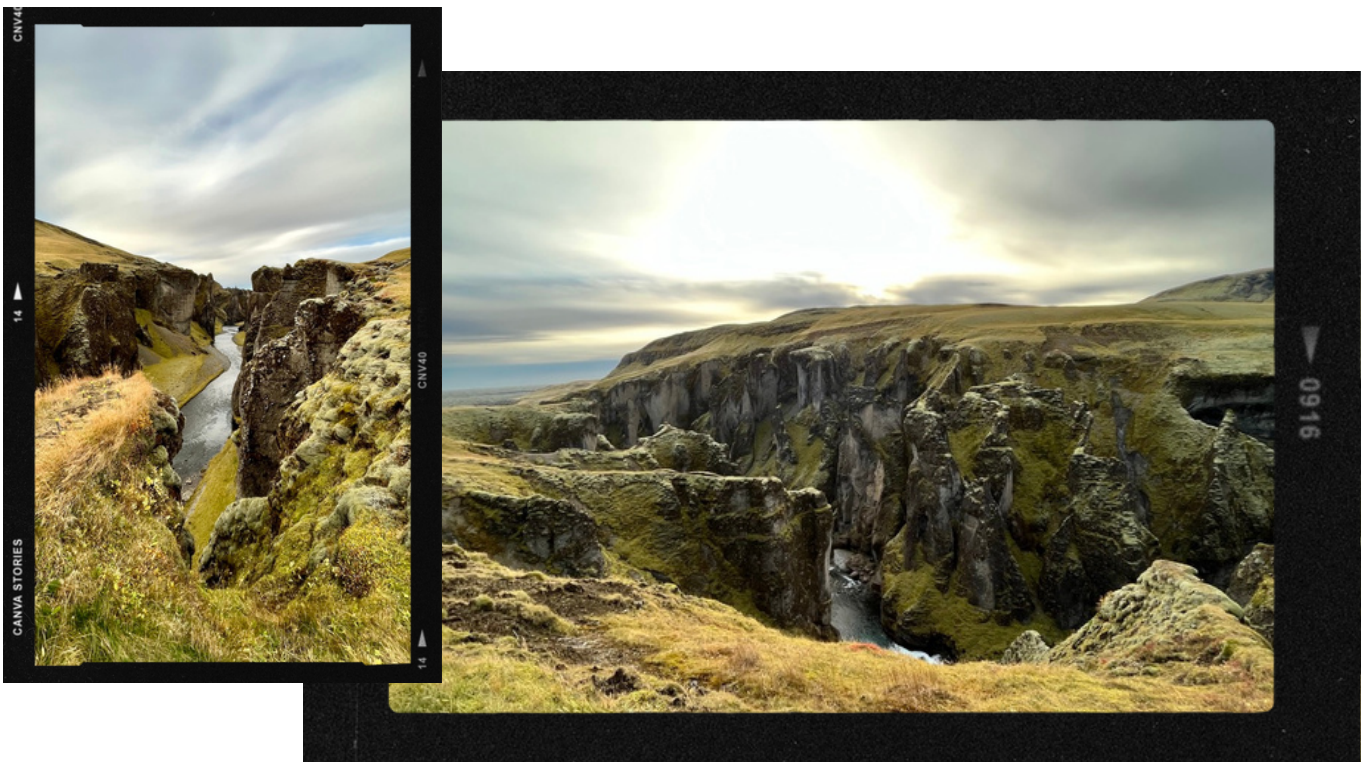


#ICELANDICPLEDGE
WHEN I EXPLORE NEW PLACES,
I WILL LEAVE THEM AS I FOUND THEM.



On our way, we learned some Icelandic including “ðetta reddast” (everything will work out), but also the pronunciation of the volcano Eyjafjallajökull [hey y’all forgot a yoghurt]. We visited several gigantic waterfalls like the Seljalandsfoss Waterfall – here it is even possible to go behind the waterfall when the pathway is not too frozen, or if the tourists ignore the warning signs – and the Skógafoss Waterfall, whose water is coming from the glacier on top of the volcano Katla. Other places on the way included the town of Vík í Myrdal with its black sand beach and the opportunity to make a rest and grab some snacks or drink coffee, plus the black sand beach Mýrdalssandur and the close-by Hjørleifshöfði Cave, where one settling clan chief was murdered by two of his Irish slaves, the so-called “Vestmenn” (West men) living on the Westmen islands (Vestmannaeyjar), living from fishing. The locals had a rough time, facing the attack by the Algerian corsairs (“Tyrkjaránið”) or several eruptions of the volcanos nearby.





If Katla for example would erupt again, Mýrdalssandur would be underneath of 20 meters of water.

Thereafter, we passed by the Eldhraun lava field which is the largest lava field worldwide. Due to one of the most catastrophic volcanic eruptions, namely of the crater Laki in the late 18th century, a 25 km long gap was formed, through which volcanic rocks were pushed to the outside. It is covered nearly completely by moss with an area of 565 square km.



Before finally arriving to the Hörgsland Cottages near Kirkjubaejarklaustur, the last stop was the Fjaðrárglúfur Canyon that was closed for over a year. Hereby, the time was used by rangers to repair the damages provoked by tourists when, for example, stepping on the moss or edges of the canyon. As for successfully concluding the day, breathtaking polar lights could be seen right above the cottages. A once in a lifetime experience.

Ray Long
11/10/2022

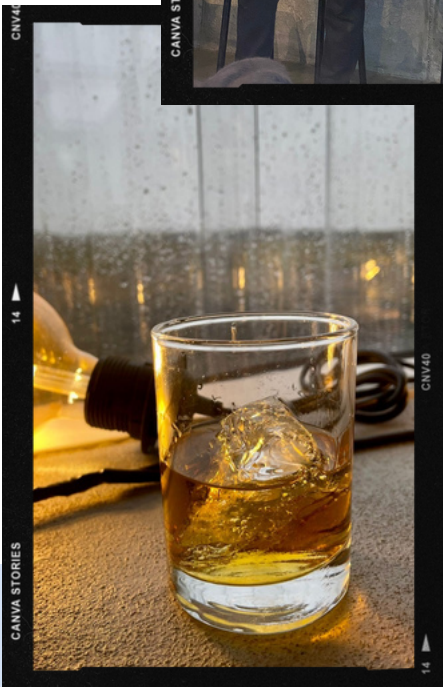
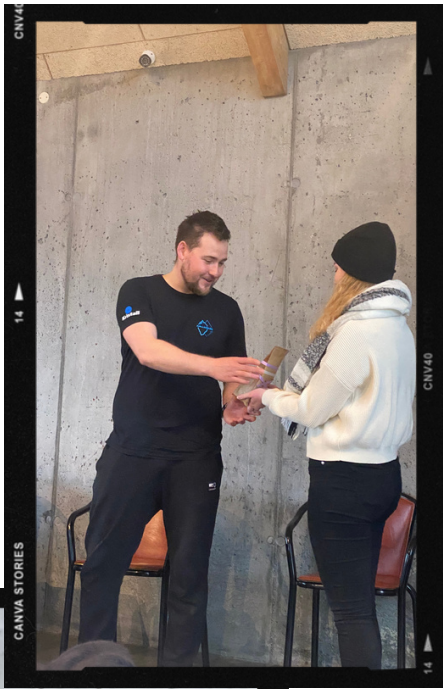
#ICELANDICPLEDGE

I WILL TAKE PHOTOS TO DIE FOR,
WITHOUT DYING FOR THEM

On Tuesday we headed towards the Glacier Lagoon Fjallsárlón. The lagoon is located at the bottom of the glacier Vatnajökull, the biggest glacier in Europe. There, we all received waterproof and warm gear so that we were ready for the first activity of the day: a boat tour on the glacier lagoon.



On the boat, we had the chance to come close to the icebergs and the glacier itself. Our guides told us a lot of interesting and sometimes frightening facts about the glacier, including that it shrinks about 50 meters every year and that some of the icebergs floating on the lagoon are up to 700 years old. After the tour, we had a meeting with the manager of the Fjallsárlón Iceberg Lagoon Boat Tours, the only business operating the boat tours there. He told us how the company started their operations in 2013 without any infrastructure, facilities or electricity.



Over the past years, the company has been able to enhance their service and build a building accommodating washrooms, storage for gear and even a restaurant. We further learned about their struggles with seasonality, weather dependency and finding employees in such a remote area. Most of their staff are international seasonal workers for which the company provides accommodation. Despite being the only company operating tours on the Fjallsárlón glacier lagoon, they still have competitors touring the much bigger glacier lagoon Jökullsárlón close-by.

To conclude this outstanding experience, our tour guide brought whisky and juice which we drank on glacier ice.



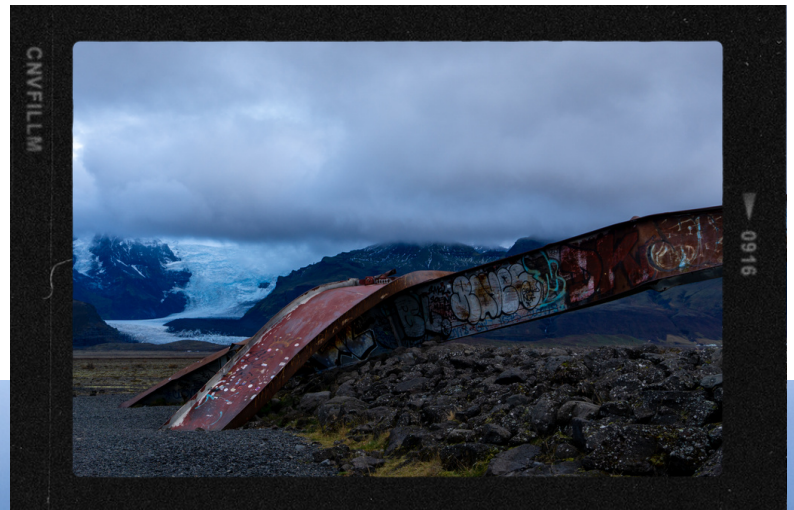
After the meeting, we drove further towards Jökulsárlón. Where the lagoon is connected to the ocean, ice is washed up on the black sanded beach. The so-called **Diamond Beach** was our next stop of the day. We used the fascinating spot to take some pictures with the icebergs and afterwards visited the glacier lagoon itself. We could even spot some seals in the water. Jökulsárlón was the most eastern stop on our trip along the south coast.

On our way back towards our accommodation, we stopped for the second meeting of the day, at the **Visitor Centre of Skaftafell National Park**. There, we met a ranger who talked to us about the development of the national park as well as his work as a ranger. Skaftafell national park was founded in 1967 and has been part of the **Vatnajökull National Park** since 2008. The visitor centre offers visitors information on hikes and activities as well as the history of the area. During the summer about 4000 people visit the **Skaftafell Visitor Centre** every day. Even more people enter the National Park. Thus, rangers are needed to preserve walking trails and visitor infrastructure in the park as well as the nature which is unfortunately often damaged by inconsiderate visitors. During the summer season, about 30 staff members work in the National Park who mostly live in nearby staff housing. Most of the rangers are Icelanders. One reason for this may be that training for rangers and government requirements for the national park are mostly written in Icelandic. On the other hand, only about ten percent of the park's visitors are Icelanders.

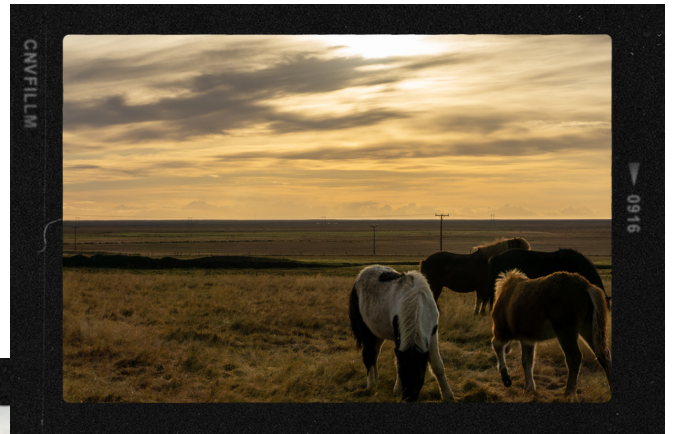


Our last stop of the day was the Skeiðará Bridge Monument. There, we saw a piece of a former bridge crossing the Skeiðará glacier river. The bridge was built in the 1970s and was the last piece missing to complete the ring route around Iceland. It was destroyed in 1996 by a large glacier run. A glacier run is caused by volcanic activity underneath the glacier which melts the ice and leads to a flood of glacier water flowing down the mountain. On the day of our visit, there were even reports about a high possibility of a glacier run but unfortunately we were not able to experience this natural event.

In the evening we returned back to the huts in Hörgsland, ate dinner together and drank mulled wine we brought from Germany.



Day five
12/10/2022



On the morning of the 12th October we woke up in Hörgsland again, it was the first time we stayed at a place for two nights. After a nice breakfast we left the cabins at 9am and had the shortest drive to a photo stop in history. After approximately 10 seconds in the bus we stopped again, because on the other side of the road there were Icelandic horses right at the fence and we had not taken pictures of them up-close so far. So whoever was interested went outside for some quick photos. On the way to the next stop we learned something interesting about the horses. "Tölt" is a way of walking that is unique to Icelandic horses. It is a fast but also gentle speed. So "tölt" is believed to have been invented by the Vikings, so they would have still been able to drink beer while riding their horses.

Furthermore, we were told that by now the northern lights are one of the main attractions of Iceland. While summer season is quite busy there are still less tourists in winter season. But advertising the northern lights and offering special tours helps keeping up the touristic interest in the country even during the winter month. It was also explained to us how the northern lights emerge.

After a 45 min stop in Vík í Mýrdal to grab lunch and buy some souvenirs we were on our way to the **Reynisfjara Black Sand Beach**, where we arrived in the sunshine and left in the rain, most of us with soaked clothes. About half an hour later and not completely dry yet we stopped at the **Dyrhólaey Lighthouse**, a place where it is possible to stay overnight if you know who to ask. There, we walked around the place, enjoying the view and the nice weather after the rain.

Once we left the lighthouse we went on our way to the **Sólheimajökull Glacier**. Probably for everyone the highlight of the day and also for many of us the highlight of the whole trip, was the Glacier Hike that we were able to do at that stop. After receiving the crampons, being split into two groups and getting an introduction of the equipment we started our 15min walk to the bottom of the Glacier. From there we spend about 2.5 hours on the Glacier with the highest point being at 1.500 meters. While being on the hike it was finally sunny again and some of us took the opportunity to drink some Glacier water.



#ICELANDICPLEDGE

I WILL FOLLOW THE ROAD INTO THE
UNKNOWN, BUT NEVER VENTURE OFF
THE ROAD

Needless to say, we also intensively discussed the challenges of the global warming that the glacier is facing and the essential role of sustainable strategies.

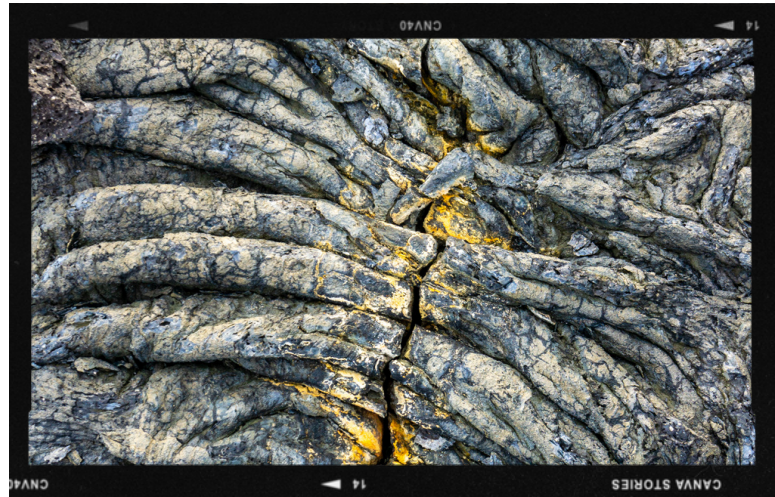
During the bus drives we always got some stories and lessons about the tourism industry in Iceland or about the country itself. On this day we got information about the whaling industry and how alcohol used to be forbidden by referendum and then became legal again. Additionally, we learned something about sagas and the microbreweries of Iceland. At the end of the day we got back to Hotel Örk in Hveragerði.





Day six

13/10/2022



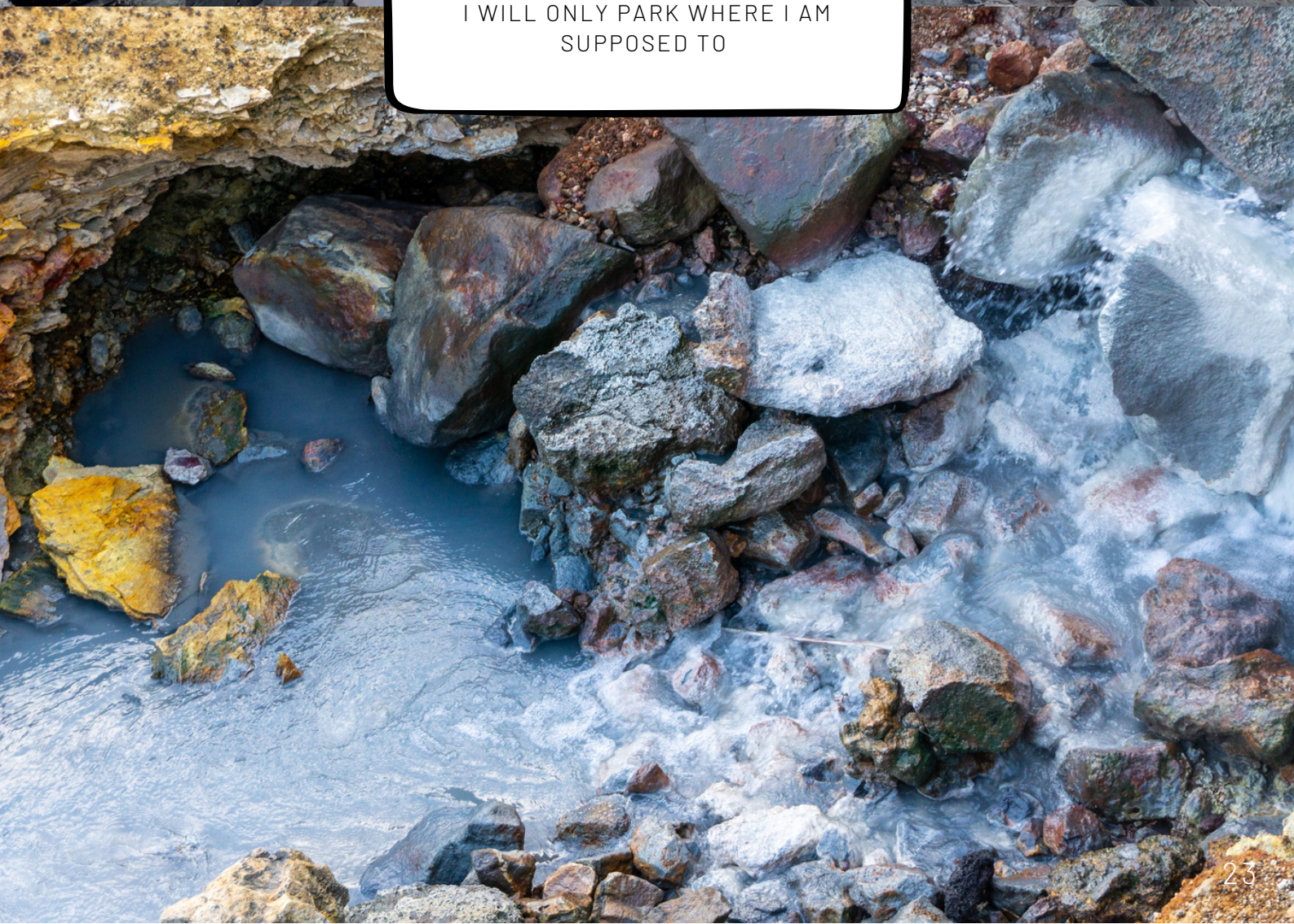
October 13th began with us getting on the bus at 09:30am, a little later than usual, already tried and tested and off we went. Stop 1, the lava tunnel or lava cave Raufarhólshellir, one of the longest and most explored lava tunnels, was only 15 minutes bus ride away. But what is a lava cave and how is it formed? Due to its tectonic position in the Western Volcanic Zone under water, Iceland is characterized by volcanic eruptions. When a volcano erupts, a crust forms on the surface, under which the magma initially remains liquid and can thus slowly form the so-called veins or tunnels. These veins can cover a distance of up to 60km. As soon as the eruption stops, after some time the veins empty and become tunnels through which it is possible to walk. Only when a tunnel collapses is it discovered and can be entered. Without a collapse, the tunnels remain invisible underground.

After a short get-together with our guides, in which we could clarify many interesting questions such as the estimated number of undiscovered tunnels (probably more than 600 known and more than 1000 still unknown within all Iceland) we went into the tunnel itself.



#ICELANDICPLEDGE

I WILL ONLY PARK WHERE I AM
SUPPOSED TO



Our guide David led us safely through the tunnel and explained exciting facts, such as that the tunnel is estimated 5200 years old and the accessible part is about 1.4km long. According to expert research, this lava tunnel has been flowing for more than 3 years and needed 30-40 years to cool down. Only since 2017 this tunnel has been equipped with tourist infrastructure, such as road and tour guides and may only be entered with trained tour guides. Tours are held all year around but it can be very icy during wintertime. After 1.5 hours of an exciting and extraordinary tour, we got back on the bus and continued our journey.

As we were heading back to Reykjavik, the second half of the day was devoted to the exploration of the Reykjanes Peninsula. This peninsula off Reykjavik offers some highlights which are often overlooked by tourists.

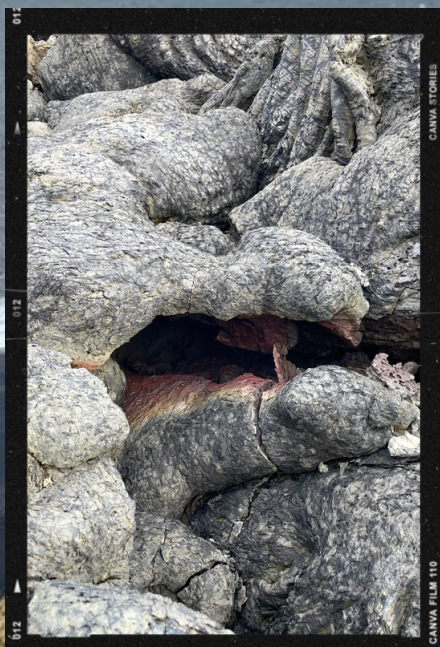
Fun Fact: The name Reykjanes literally means Smokey Peninsula, due to its high density of geothermal springs. Smoke can be seen everywhere on the Peninsula. On the peninsula we first made a lunch stop in the fishing village of Grindavik. On this occasion we could also discover a typical fishing village of Iceland.



Stocked with sandwiches we went to the lighthouse Reykjanes, standing 29 meters (95ft) tall, 69 meters (226 ft) above sea level with a magnificent view over the coast and the mountain landscape of the peninsula. After that, there was another little highlight of the day: Icelandic delicacies, namely fermented shark and Icelandic liqueur to wash down the – let’s call it – interesting tasting of shark and at best taste nothing more.

With a bit of a churned stomach and another liquor shot, we continued on to an old lava pool, right by the sea and a short walk to the Lava Stream of the volcano that erupted a year ago. The still steaming lava there is an impressive picture and is also called paheuheu lava.

As a crowning and odor-intensive conclusion we made a detour to the Selgun hot springs, which smelled neatly of rotten eggs and gave off minerals in all colors and bubbled. We then made our way back to Reykjavik to check in again at the Hotel Cabin and to prepare for the appointments which were awaiting us the next day.



14/10/2022
Day seven



On Friday we stayed in Reykjavik and went to several appointments, including talking to the Sales and Marketing Manager in 'Hotel Klettur', learning about the different concepts, the communication and the future improvements of their three hotels (Hotel Klettur, Hotel Cabin and Hotel Örk). He openly shared current numbers and the issues they faced during the Covid pandemic.

Before the second appointment with Maria Reynisdottir from the Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs, we made a short stop to see the 'Solfar', a statue of Viking ship. In the Ministry, we learned about the actual situation regarding the infrastructure and managing tourism of Iceland. We are thankful for the honest insights into their challenges and how they are learning to cope with them.

After that, we visited 'Arctic Adventures', a sales platform as well as an operator, offering various tours with a focus on different locations, activities, schedules, and durations. We were very pleased to meet three professionals, who shared their impressive knowledge and experience with us. We got an insight in the life of a guide as well as in the daily routines taking place within the company.

Before undertaking a small city tour, we went to the 'Haskoli University of Iceland' to learn from Benjamin Hennig about the study programmes and one of its focuses on tourism and geography.

During the evening, some of us enjoyed a beer and a disco night at the "Lebowski Bar" and on the way back to the hotel had the opportunity to see very strong northern lights.

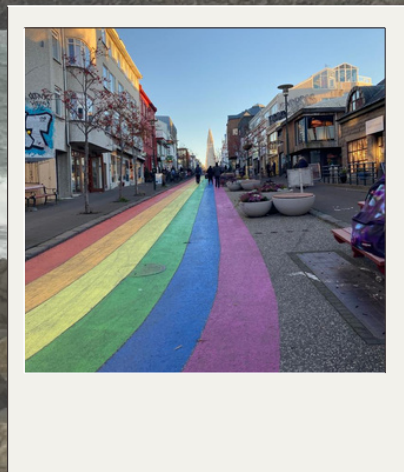
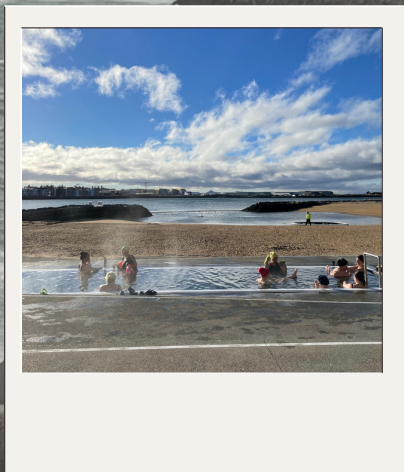


15/10/2022
Day eight

#ICELANDICLEGE
WHEN NATURE CALLS
I WILL NOT ANSWER THE CALL ON
NATURE

On Saturday, we enjoyed a day off on our last day in Iceland, visiting Reykjavik, the most Northern capital in the world. We went shopping, we tried traditional dishes, and we made it all the way up the church Hallgrímskirkja to get the view from above the city. We visited the beach with its small lagoon, as well as we went to buy souvenirs to bring home.

Reykjavik itself is home to 37 % of the Icelandic inhabitants, holding the opportunity to study at the university or to visit several theatres, museums, or the harbour.



16/10/2022
Day nine

On the 16th of October we had to say goodbye to beautiful Iceland. It was a very early start of the day. The bus to Keflavik airport drove off at 04:45 am. We arrived at the airport with enough time for checking in and finding our gate. Finally, at 01:35 pm German time we landed at BER airport and at 06:30 pm we arrived in Stralsund. It felt good to be back in Stralsund after a very adventurous and educational week.

Now it was time to process all the impressions we collected during this great excursion.



10th of November

As we hadn't had the possibility to get in contact with 'Visit Iceland' during our stay in Reykjavik, on the 10th of November, we met online with Þórdís Pétursdóttir, the Area Manager of 'Visit Iceland'.

She showed us their responsibility to market Iceland, especially after the pandemic and other recent global impacts since tourism is increasingly evolving in the country. Their mission is to develop distinct branding for Iceland and Icelandic export industries through real-life stories.

Business Iceland

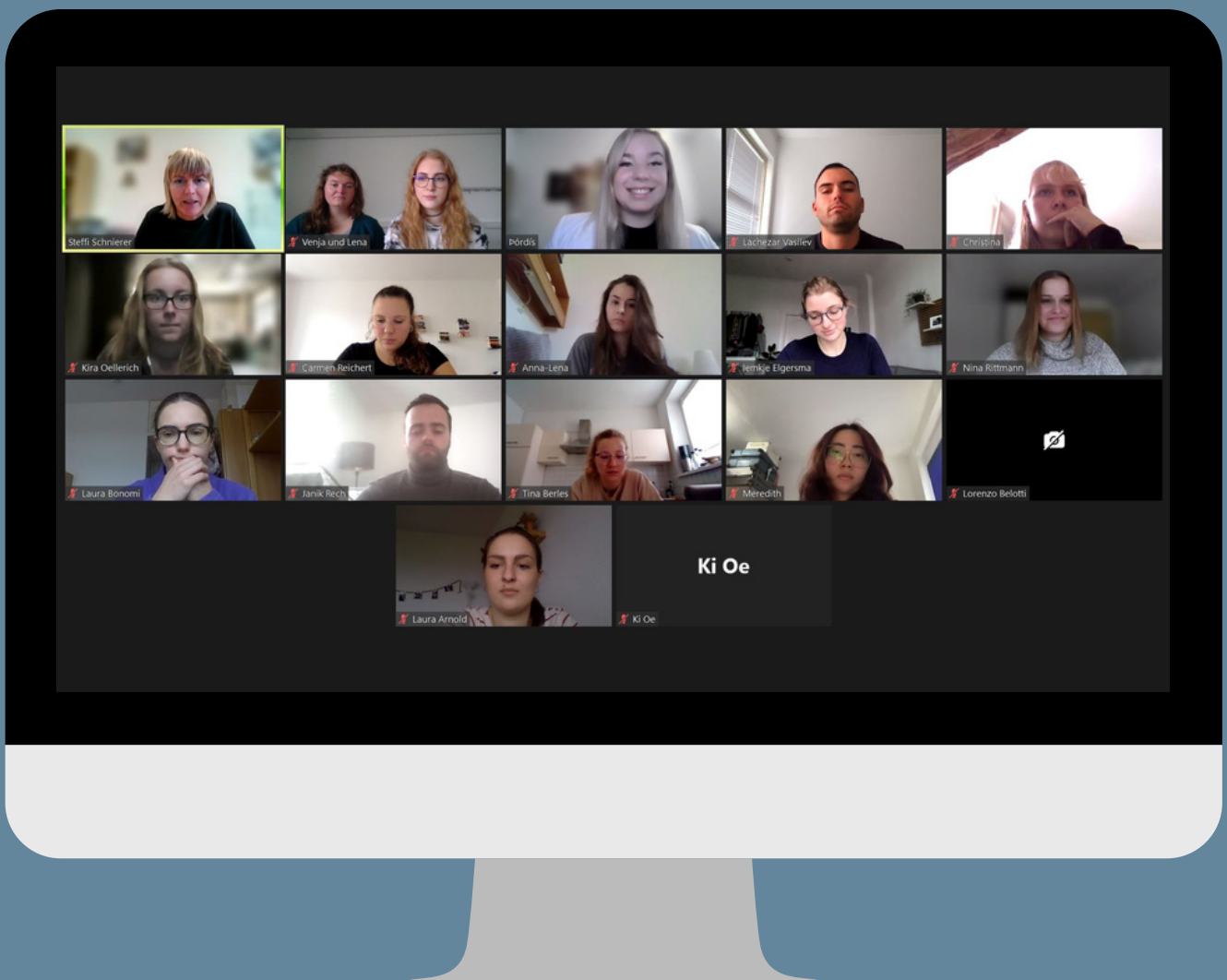
Business Iceland is a public-private partnership, promoting Iceland internationally for trade, tourism, foreign direct investment, and culture.



They developed various marketing strategies including the 'Ask Gudmundur' campaign, where it was possible to talk directly to an Icelandic local when looking for information, the 'Let it out' campaign, where the world connected by screaming all their (negative) feelings, or the 'OutHorse your email' to disconnect from work while enjoying the vacation in Iceland.

One of their major focus is being sustainable, and besides all the efforts already made, some improvements are planned towards having electric cars only or electric domestic flights.

With this meeting we concluded our field trip experience and we are now ready to start applying what we have learnt.



This trip to Iceland has been for sure a moment of pleasure and enjoyment, and we enjoyed every single minute. Let's summarize the educational objectives of our excursion.

First of all, we got to know each other better and created a more cohesive team, considering that we are a new group of students ready to study together for the next year.

Then we had the opportunity to link the theory we studied - and will study - to the practise: meeting various realities and understanding how they all manage the difficulties of living and working in such a challenging environment in different ways has been very inspirational.

We learnt that the tourism industry needs, more than many other industries and even more in Iceland, to be very adaptive and resilient and to innovate quickly to keep up with the fast-changing world. At the same time the industry itself has the role of educating those tourists to preserve and respect the places they visit, if we want to have them available also for future generations.

Learning Outcomes





In other words, we learnt that this industry is made of a lot of completely different stakeholders, which may have little in common and it is essential to make them all interact and let them express their opinions and needs: the work of people in the offices is as relevant as that of people on the field, who are directly in contact with tourists every day. For the benefit of the environment, tourists and businesses it is therefore essential that all parties communicate.

Finally, we learnt that working in a multicultural and multilingual environment is not only possible but also valuable for the business itself: most of the Icelandic businesses employ foreign workers, as there are not enough Icelanders to cover all the job opportunities and this can become a resource when it comes to innovate and understand the needs of international tourists.

Overall, it has been a wonderful and enriching experience that we will always remember.

Special thanks to

Visit
Iceland



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HÓTEL
KLETTUR


Hotel Cabin



Ministry of Culture and
Business Affairs




VATNAJÖKULSPJÓÐGARÐUR
NATIONAL PARK



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

We created a guide to help you to be a responsible tourist in Iceland.

Come and have a look!



TAKK FYRIR MIG OG SJÁUMST Á ÍSLANDI!

(THANK YOU AND SEE YOU IN ICELAND!)





tourismmaster_stralsund



www.hochschule-stralsund.de/tds/