

Fire and Ice – May 1 – 18, 2021 -- Iceland

I can't help myself. Even though we saw the Ice and then the Fire I couldn't pass up the opportunity to borrow a Pat Benatar song title for my own blogging title. So, some pictures of Fire and Ice in reverse order of the song.

Even though we were traveling Iceland in early May and everyone was telling us how lucky we were that the weather was so great we still saw lots of ice and drove through rain, hail and snow on two different days.



This is Dettifoss Waterfall. If it looks like it is moving in the photograph it is the waterfall. Pretty much everything else is ice including the ice on the other side of the railing and the icicles on the railing. Roughly a two-mile round trip going down and then back up that includes 240 stairs and rocks covered with snow or ice. Nancy was the smart one and after about five minutes turned around to save her legs for the remainder of the day. I on the other hand not being smart made the trip down just so I could experience the freezing waterfall mist blowing into my face while trying to take a photograph.



The Vatnajökull Glacier or at least the section we hiked to. The glacier is receding due to global warming at about 100 yards/year but still covers approximately 8% of Iceland. Receding a hundred yards may not sound like much until you remember the average thickness of the glacier is 1250 ft thick and the circumference is measured in hundreds if not several thousands miles.



Glacier Lake is part of the Vatnajökull Glacier and is about a 90-minute drive from where we hiked to the glacier.



As the glacier's icebergs reach the ocean, they break up with some washing onto the beach. With the right direction of the sun the ice sparkles like diamonds and therefore the beach is called Diamond Beach.

A week later we arrived at the Lava Tube Adventure Center. We have walked through at least one and I believe two other lava tubes; interesting but not an adventure. Leave it to Iceland to create an "ice walking" adventure. I knew something was up when besides the customary helmets we were given ice crampons.

A lava tube is created when the molten lava top creates a crust and the lava beneath the crust continues to flow out leaving a tunnel. What made this an adventure is water now seeps into the tube creating ground up icicles.



Yes, those are reverse icicles we are walking over, around and through and most of the walk is on a thin layer of ice. I found it amazing I didn't fall and no one else fell.



Nancy is looking for the least likely "fall" path through the icicle.

Now for the fire. Iceland's latest and on-going volcano eruption began on 19 March 2021 and is named Fagradalsfjall or for those of us too lazy to learn Icelandic, the "F" volcano. It is currently fountaining or blowing molten rock 1,000 to 1,500 feet into the air about every 7 to 10 minutes. The "F" volcano and associated vents have discharged roughly 105,9440,000 cubic feet of lava.



Some of my photographs are from the helicopter, some from where they landed us, and not in a consecutive sequence.











“Iceland formed by the coincidence of the spreading boundary of the North American and Eurasian plates and a hotspot or mantle plume – an upsurge of abnormally hot rock in the Earth’s mantle. As the plates moved apart, excessive eruptions of lava constructed volcanoes and filled rift valleys (on the ocean floor).”

There are several items that make Iceland a unique country to visit. One is how everyone tells past events in relationship to a volcano eruption. “Oh, that happened eight years ago. No, wait a minute that happened the same year XYZ volcano erupted so it was nine years ago.”

So how did we end up in Iceland? We were sitting in our Casablanca hotel room trying to find a country that would let two Americans in and not make them quarantine. Nancy says something along the lines, “Iceland is letting vaccinated Americans in and here is a road trip we could take”. Two days later we have gone from an eight-day visit to 17 days. Then we had to add a day because there were no flights to Cape Town on our original planned leave date. And like almost every country we have traveled we wished we had stayed longer.