

Beer, Butts and Bathing Suits

Great! At least we have a plane. Looks like we'll make it on time. Then comes the announcement—"Folks, we have clear enough weather to fly, we have a plane, but the only thing we don't have is a crew. If the crew for this flight is anywhere in the concourse, please come up to the podium". So we sit with the other couple of hundred people and wait another half hour until we see a pilot show up. OK, one down, a few more to go. Finally after almost an hour, the rest of the crew comes walking into the terminal area to the cheers of all the passengers around.

It's going to be close in New York, folks. Thank goodness I've been upgraded to seat 2A, so I'll be one of the first off the plane. The plan is, if it's feasible at all to catch the flight to Iceland, I'll dart off the plane and run to the next gate to keep the door open until the rest get there. The plane lands thirty-five minutes before our Iceland plane takes off.

OK—doable. We taxi toward the gate... and stop... and wait... another five minutes gone. We move again... yes, I see the gate approaching. Then a hundred yards before the gate... we stop. After another long minute the pilot comes on and says we are waiting for the ground crew to come out and park us. Another few minutes go by but we finally get to the gate. It's now fifteen minutes before our Iceland plane leaves (and they generally close the doors ten to fifteen minutes ahead).

So off I go! Fortunately, we arrived at gate B33 and Iceland leaves at gate B20, so at least we are in the same concourse. Maybe... just maybe. So after a few minutes of full-out run with my backpack on my back, I do indeed arrive at the gate... only to find out they have not even started boarding. So... the moral of the story... just keep pushing on—it all might work out.



Nat and Frances join Carol and I at the

Blue Lagoon

Our plan is to rent a car and spend seven days driving the ring road that circles the island of Iceland. Starting in Reykjavik, the capital city on the east coast, and driving counter-clockwise. So we pick up our Hertz rental and head out. The temperature is a pleasant fifty-two degrees and the first stop is the famous "Blue Lagoon". Iceland processes lots of thermal activity and hot springs owing to

the fact that it's basically a grouping of volcanoes. The Blue Lagoon is the best known and most popular of these. Many people make this a stop either on the way to or from the airport. I've even heard of people making a run to the lagoon between flights while passing through the airport. As a result, we see all kinds of interesting attire... a man arriving in a

full three-piece suit... another arriving wearing a heavy coat on his top and nothing but a speedo below almost covering a robust bottom. So they lounge around the hot springs in fifty-some degree weather drinking ice-cold beer. Welcome to Iceland.

Today as we drive across the southern part of Iceland we encounter all kinds of terrain. There are vast areas of very flat, desert-like spaces with low scrub growing. Then we round a corner and come across tall mountains on the left and the North Sea on our right and we may feel like we are in New England someplace. Then it's on to the green, green pastures with sheep grazing which reminds us of Scotland. Then, in another section of the landscape we feel we are on the moon. Large fields of lava rocks and lava flows are visible as far as you can see. In certain sections these are bare lava rocks and in others the rocks are completely covered in thick layers of green moss making this one of the most unusual landscapes I've ever seen.



Along this drive we stop various times to hike to thunderous waterfalls, take pictures of the thousands of acres of purple flowers, visit the earthquake and volcano museum, and enjoy some wonderful soup for lunch. Now it's time to find our hotel for the night and we rely on our car's trusty GPS which of course takes us off the main road onto a secondary road up past the school, around the bend, up the hill, unto the dirt road and up another hill until the

dirt road ends at a group of barns and buildings none of which has our hotel's name on it and none of which look anything like the picture we have of the hotel. Hum... There is another guest house near there, so we ask them and of course they know exactly where our hotel is. Just twenty-two kilometers in the other direction. So much for the GPS!



We laugh through it all. After all, if you stop and think about it, the most memorable moments of traveling and those you talk about for years to come are usually about things that did not go perfectly or things that you did not expect.

So today has been a wide variety of sights and sounds and I had a very hard time deciding on a title for this blog. I finally zeroed in on the Blue Lagoon and called it—Beer, Butts and Bathing Suits!



Notice the basalt columns on the cliffs beside this black sand beach



These large pipes transport very hot water from the geothermal areas to the cities. All the heating of buildings is done by this geothermal energy