

THE GROWTH OF TOURISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PROTECTED AREAS OF ICELAND

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Abstract: Iceland or the land of fire and ice has been a great attraction for many tourists in recent years. Every year thousands of tourists visit the country with more than 360,000 inhabitants. Interest in the country began to grow approximately ten years ago. In April 2010, when Eyjafjallajökull, a volcano in southern Iceland, began spewing several kilometres of volcanic ash into the atmosphere. The cloud of ash forced the greatest airspace closure since World War II, cancelling nearly 100,000 flights and disrupting the travel plans of tourists and business travelers alike throughout northern Europe. The island had traditionally held little appeal to international tourists and most of the country's GDP came from its fishing industry. Then, in 2008, the financial crisis sent the world's economy into a tailspin which triggered a series of hardships that threatened to destroy the country's reputation. The Icelandic Krona depreciated significantly as Icelandic banks were unable to repay their short-term debt, and over the course of a few weeks Iceland garnered more media attention than it had had in the previous two decades. Although the number of tourists in 2019 was lower than in the previous year, there are still so many. In addition to increasing economic growth, this trend of increasing tourism has a negative impact on the environment in the country. In this paper we focused on the most visited protected areas and their perception by tourists from an environmental point of view. We evaluate the impact of tourism and its impact on the landscape. Part of the work is a questionnaire survey focused on tourists, their national composition, length of stay in the country and regions that they traveled during their visit and so on.

Keywords: Iceland. Tourism. Protected areas. Thingvellir. Vatnajökull. Snæfellsnes.

1 Introduction

The continuous development of tourism helps to create and develop a wide-spectrum phenomenon, which is also a recreational urbanization, ie building a new material and technical base infrastructure. The consequences of the phenomenon are now more evident in the negative sense as in the positive sense. Just the original specifics of natural and the socio-economic conditions of the territory are disturbed by tourism. Recreation the use of the landscape also brings back influential sites through recreation itself and activities associated with it. Paradoxically just uniqueness and the peculiarity of the country, which is the primary impulse for the development of tourism is under the influence of tourism gets into the background. Through tourism occurs functional change of territory from the original resident function to the tourist function, taking the effects of recreational urbanization itself manifest themselves as on individual elements of the landscape structures, as well as local residents (Boltižiar, Chrastina, 2018). Analysis of the impact of tourism on the landscape and protected areas in the border regions Jakubcová, Grežo, Petrovič (2015), Petrikovičová, Krogmann, Fialová and Svorad (2019), Cottage, Veselovský (2018), Krogmann, Bilic (2010).

Iceland is a country of many contrasts. Its unique nature attracts more and more tourists every year. They discover the distinctive beauty of the island in the form of geysers, hot thermal springs, but also glaciers, waterfalls, volcanoes and craters, volcanic black beaches or lava fields. Up to 83% of all foreigners visit Iceland because of this unique interplay of natural elements (gamma.is, 2017). However, the number of tourists began to multiply the number of inhabitants. In 2018 there were 7 times more tourists in Iceland than the total population. This rush of tourists has resulted in the country coming out of the economic crisis ten years ago, and Iceland has begun to flourish. They built hotels, opened new pensions, camps, hostels. Souvenir shops, restaurants, cafes, but also new roads, car parks and public toilets have been opened to meet all the needs of tourists. However, this high increase in visitors to the island was negatively carried by

nature. Some places have started to charge (even for the locals) and close the most visited ones so that nature can regenerate again. In the article we deal with island tourism in recent years, the national composition of tourists, the most visited places on the island in individual regions, protected areas in Iceland and the impact of tourism on protected areas.

2 Methodology of work

We used several methods. The first was field research, where we personally met the owners of selected travel agencies in Iceland and marketing representatives of the Airbnb company in Iceland, which mediates accommodation. Meetings were conducted to gather information about tourists staying on the island. We also used the questionnaire method. It was intended for tourists and concerned first of all general information about the visit to the island, but we were also interested in their attitude to protected areas in Iceland and the impact of tourism on them. It was implemented in April 2019 and was filled by 123 respondents from 26 countries. Thanks to the questionnaire surveys we were able to process the statistical data and to base it on writing the work. Another method was to collect literature, using both print and electronic resources. The print sources were books borrowed from libraries in Reykjavik and in Hafnarfjörður. Regarding electronic resources, we mainly worked with data from the Statistical Office in Iceland and the Ministry of Environment of Iceland. We used the method of system analysis and mathematical - statistical method, which we used for data evaluation and their concentration into tables and graphs.

3 Tourism in Iceland

Tourism in Iceland has experienced a huge increase over the last decade. The number of visitors to Iceland began to rise in 2009, when tourism took the country out of the economic crisis. This resulted in a decline in the Icelandic currency, making the country much cheaper for foreigners than before. Foreigners' interest in this country began to increase significantly, especially since 2010. The tourism sector has expanded, creating a lot of jobs and not only tourists but also people who have decided to live and work in the country. Tourism is also a major benefit of money and has a beneficial impact on the local economy, the labor market and the construction industry, but is also becoming a problem that can have devastating consequences. Locals were not prepared for such flushing visitors, but also pay higher prices for services and housing, which have risen by 25% in the last 12 months (Þórrsson, 2017 In Dysková, Šolcová, 2019). Tab. 1 shows the number of tourists in Iceland between 2010 and 2019.

Table 1: Number of tourists in Iceland in 2010 - 2019

| Year | Number of tourists |
|------|--------------------|
| 2010 | 488 600 |
| 2011 | 565 600 |
| 2012 | 672 800 |
| 2013 | 807 300 |
| 2014 | 997 300 |
| 2015 | 1 289 100 |
| 2016 | 1 792 200 |
| 2017 | 2 224 600 |
| 2018 | 2 343 773 |
| 2019 | 2 013 190 |

Source: Statistics Iceland, Icelandic Tourist Board, 2020; elaborated by authors, 2020

The number of tourists has risen steadily since 2010 until 2019. In 2019, the Icelandic Statistics Office has dropped by more than 330,000 visitors compared to last year. The beginning of 2020 - January and February (before the outbreak of world epidemic) - has also seen a decline in tourists. One of the main reasons for the decline was the crash of one of two Icelandic airlines - WoW Air (Icelandic tourist board statistics, 2020).

3.1 Nationality of tourists

At work, we decided to zoom in to the most visited period throughout the year - summer, as shown in Tab. 2. In the summer of 2019, 678,080 tourists visited Iceland, with almost 30% being American tourists. Germany, France, China, Great Britain, Canada, Poland, Spain, Italy and Denmark are also among the top ten nationalities. However, in all countries except China and Denmark, we are seeing a decline in visitors compared to last year. According to the table, we can see that the number of visitors is decreasing compared to last year. Over the last 12 months, more than 35% of American tourists have lost. There is also a greater difference for Canada (-23.4%) and the United Kingdom (-19.7%). There is an increase in visitors from China (11.5%) and a smaller increase in Denmark (0.5%).

Table 2: Nationality of tourists during the summer of 2019 (June - August) and comparison of the number of visitors last year

| Country | Number of visitors in % | Number of visitors | Change from last year |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. USA | 27,8 % | 188.552 | -35,7 % |
| 2. Germany | 8,4 % | 57.148 | -2,8 % |
| 3. France | 5,8 % | 39.494 | -2,0 % |
| 4. China | 5,0 % | 33.751 | 11,5 % |
| 5. Great Britain | 4,9 % | 33.492 | -19,7 % |
| 6. Canada | 4,2 % | 28.677 | -23,4 % |
| 7. Poland | 4,2 % | 28.439 | -1,2 % |
| 8. Spain | 3,6 % | 24.258 | -5,3 % |
| 9. Italy | 3,2 % | 21.687 | -0,5 % |
| 10. Denmark | 2,6 % | 17.608 | 0,5 % |
| Total | - | 678,080 | -15,6 % |

Source: Statistics Iceland, Icelandic Tourist Board, 2020; elaborated by authors, 2020

3.2 Most visited places in Iceland by region

According to the administrative breakdown, Iceland is divided into eight regions (Fig. 1). In this work we devote to the most visited regions of Iceland and closer descriptions of the most interesting places in each region.

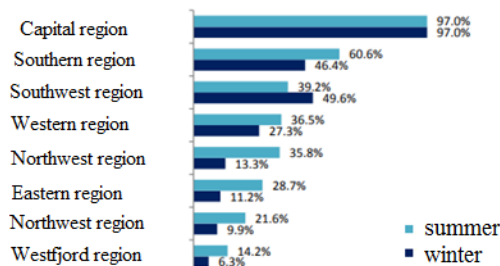
Fig. 1: Administrative division of regions in Iceland



Source: icelandregions.com, 2010; elaborated by authors, 2020

Chart 1 shows that the most visited region in both winter and summer is the capital region, which is visited by 97% of Iceland's visitors in both seasons. The second most visited region in the summer is the southern, and in winter the south-western region. The western region can be described as the third most visited. Others are the northwest region, the east and northeast regions. Lastly, the region of the western fjords is hard to reach.

Chart 1: Iceland's most visited regions in 2015



Source: Óladóttir, 2015; elaborated by Dysková, 2019

1. Capital Region ('Höfuðborgarsvæðið')

This region is formed by the agglomeration of the northernmost capital in the world - Reykjavik. The region has a population of more than 227,030 (2018), meaning that more than 60% of the island's population lives in the region. The most visited places include the Hallgrímskirkja Church, which, with its height of 74.5 meters, is the second tallest building in Iceland. In the capital there is a concert hall "Harpa" (Fig. 2), which is covered with basalt crystals, typical for Iceland. In the capital is also interesting glass dome "Perlan", National Museum, or Viking ship "Solfar" (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2: Concert hall „Harpa“



Source: Dysková, 2018

Fig.3: Viking ship „Solfar“



Source: Dysková, 2018

2. South-West Region ('Suðurnes')

The South West region is one of the most visited, mainly due to the Blue Lagoon, which was visited by 40.6% of all visitors in winter 2015 and 31.5% in the summer. Nearby is the geothermal area "Krysuvík", known for its sulfur fields, boiling springs, colorful hills and volcanic openings (Figures 4 and 5).

Fig. 4: Krysuvík geothermal area



Source: Dysková, 2018

Fig. 5: Krysuvík area



Source: Dysková, 2018

In this region, on the Reykjanes Peninsula, there is also the Gunnhver Geopark and the well-known bridge between the two continents, which imaginarily connects the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates (Fig. 6 and 7).

Fig. 6 and 7: Bridge between two continents



Source: Dysková, 2017

Source: Dysková, 2017

3. Southern Region ('Sudurland')

The southern region is very popular with tourists. There are many waterfalls, black sand beaches, moss fields, glaciers, geysers and geothermal areas. The largest city in the region is Selfoss with a population of 7 616 (2018). Almost the whole area is formed by the Katla UNESCO Geopark (Fig. 8), which is named after the famous Icelandic volcano - Katla, located under the Mýrdalsjökull glacier. This Geopark is located in Iceland's most volcanically active area, where the Eyjafjallajökull, Katla and Grímsvötn volcanoes are located. The region is therefore characterized by central volcanoes, eruptive craters, cracks, lava fields, table mountains and basalt cones (Katlageopark.is, 2018).

Fig. 8: Delimitation of UNESCO Geopark Katla territory



Source: katlageopark.is, 2015; elaborated by authors, 2019

In the Geopark there is the famous Black Beach in Vík (Vík is the southernmost village in Iceland with approximately 300 inhabitants) called "Reynisfjara", which National Geographic declared in 1991 as one of the ten most beautiful non-tropical beaches of the world (guidetoiceland.is, 2017). On the beach there is a cave consisting of basalt columns (Fig. 9, 10).

The southern region is known for its numerous waterfalls. The most famous are the Skógafoss, Seljalandsfoss, Háifoss, Hjalparfoss or Svartifoss waterfalls. A great attraction in the region is the Vatnajökull National Park, but also the Þingvellir National Park, which is part of the so-called. "Golden Circle". It is formed by the Gullfoss waterfall and the geothermal area of Haukadalur, where there are two famous geysers - "Geysir" and "Strokkur". There is another known geothermal area in the region - in the village of Hveragerdi. North of Hveragerdi there is a 3,000-year-old crater Kerið. It is 55 meters deep and 170 meters wide (Fig. 11). A unique feature of the southern region is the largest glacial lagoon on the island, Jökulsárlón (Fig. 12), created by the melting of the Vatnajökull glacier. After heating the ice massive pieces float towards the ocean through the lagoon. The largest pieces, which can be more than a thousand years old, are 20 to 30 meters in size. This lagoon never looks the same and its appearance can change completely during the night. It depends on the temperature of the air, water, currents and wind. Only one kilometer from the lagoon is the famous Diamond Beach (extremeiceland.is, 2018).

Fig. 9: Reynisfjara beach in Vík



Source: Dysková, 2019

Fig. 10: Basalt columns



Source: Dysková, 2019

Fig. 11: Kerið crater



Source: Dysková, 2019

Fig. 12: Glacier in Jökulsárlón lagoon



Source: Dysková, 2019

4. Eastern region ('Austurland')

The eastern region belongs to a quieter, not very popular tourist area. The largest city is Egilsstaðir with a population of 2,464 (2018). Only 25 kilometers from this city is the largest forest in Iceland - "Hallormsstadur" with an area of 740 ha. The region boasts fjords, fishing villages, green valleys and although smaller waterfalls, there is Iceland's second highest waterfall - Hengifoss, 128 meters high. In this region is the easternmost city of Iceland - Neskaupstaður with 1500 inhabitants (east.is, 2018).

5. Northeast Region ('Norðurland eystra')

In the north-eastern region, on the coast of the fjord Eyjafjörður, is the largest city of the region - Akureyri. With a population of 18 860 (2018) is Iceland's fourth largest city. This region boasts Lake Mývatn, which was founded approximately 2,300 years ago with a strong eruption of basaltic lava. Today it fills an old glacial basin. It has an area of 38 km² and a depth of 4.5 meters. There are many lava formations or the Hverfjall crater in its surroundings. Near the lake, on the river of glacial origin - "Jökulsá á Fjöllum" is a waterfall Dettifoss. This waterfall is the strongest in Europe with a flow rate of 200 to 500 m³ per second (Fig. 13) (Stainer, 2014). Húsavík, which is famous for its whale watching, is popular for tourists.

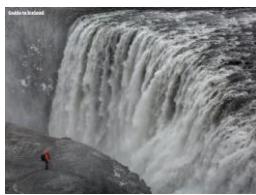
6. Northwest Region ('Norðurland vestra')

By population the largest city in the northwestern region of Iceland is Sauðárkrúkur, with a population of 3,151 (2018). This region is not very popular with tourists. Between the Langjökull and Hofsjökull glaciers is the Hveravellir geothermal area with a lot of hot springs and smelting water holes. This nature reserve is one of the largest geothermal areas in the country (hveravellir.is, 2019).

7. Westfjord region ('Vestfirðir')

The Western Fjords region is very sparsely populated. The largest city - Ísafjörður has a population of only 2,570 (2017). Due to the rugged relief, transport to the region is very complicated. There is the Hornstrandir Nature Reserve on the peninsula, accessible only on foot or by boat, inhabited only by arctic foxes, seals and birds. This region is particularly attractive due to the massive waterfall Dynjandi (or Fjallfoss), which was declared a natural monument in 1981 (Fig. 14). There is also a 10 km long sandy beach of Rauðasandur, which is unusual for Iceland (westfjords.is, 2017).

Fig. 13: Waterfall Dettifoss



Source: guidetoiceland.is, 2010

Fig. 14: Dynjandi waterfall



Source: justiceland.com, 2012

8. Western region (*Vesturland*)

Western Iceland is also referred to as "Sagaland" because of the many fairy tales, stories and sags about elves and trolls that are still very popular in the country to this day. This region is one of the most visited. The largest city is Akranes with a population of 6,700 (2018).

There is the National Park Snæfellsnes known mainly for the active volcano Snæfellsjökul. The region has the longest fjords on the island - Hvalfjörður and Kos. The lava cave Víðgelmir (Fig. 15) located in the lava area of Hallmundarhraun is popular for tourists. The cave is 1.5 km long and 16.5 meters wide making it the largest cave of its kind on the island. The cave entrance is very wide, but gradually the cave narrows (Magnússon, 2018). The western region is also known for Iceland's highest waterfall - Glymur, 198 meters high. The path to it is accompanied by many smaller waterfalls and caves.

Fig. 15: Wide entrance to the cave Víðgelmir



Source: Dysková, 2018

4 Results

The unique nature of Iceland attracts many tourists every year, which is both positive and negative for the country. The positive thing is that tourism got the country out of the economic crisis in 2010, after the eruption of the famous Eyjafjallajökull volcano, and so far it has been the largest source of revenue for the state budget. Tourism created 24,500 jobs (January, 2017), in the summer of 31,700 (August 2017), attracting mainly foreign workers (Óladóttir, 2018). Before the tourist boom, the country's main source of income was the export of fish and aluminum. However, the negative consequences are borne by nature itself, which is not able to cope with this onslaught of tourists. We have therefore focused on the most vulnerable protected areas in Iceland, which have been dedicated to the Environment Agency (Umhverfisstofnun) since 2010, when the number of tourists started to rise. Unless the popularity of the island does not decrease in the coming years, more and more areas will be closed, which is negatively affected not only by the inhabitants but also by the "untouched" and unique nature of the island (In Dysková, Petrikovičová, 2019).

4.1 Protected areas in Iceland

According to the Environment Agency of Iceland ("Umhverfisstofnun"), which is under the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment, it has announced that travel around the island is unrestricted for anyone who respects natural resources and protects the landscape. It emphasizes caution not only for others but also for animals and especially for nature, which is very fragile and insensitive treatment can damage or destroy the country for several years (Umhverfisstofnun.is, 2017).

According to the Nature and Landscape Protection Act in Iceland, Act no. 44/1999 Coll., The following types of land have special protection and their interference is prohibited in the following places:

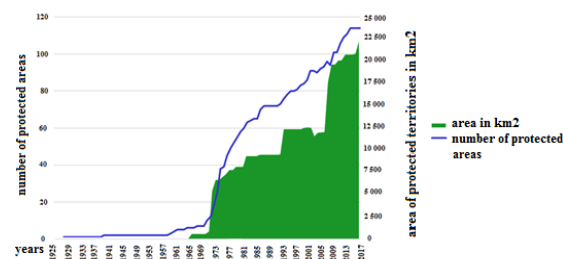
- volcanic craters and lava fields
- freshwater lakes of 1000 m² or more
- swamps and marshes of 3 ha or more
- waterfalls, hot springs and other sources of heat, such as geothermal springs and deposits (sulphurous and travertine) of 100 m² or more;
- salt marshes and marshes (Umhverfisstofnun.is, 1999).

Protected areas in Iceland currently account for 21.6% of the total land area. These areas occupy 22 233 km² of the total land area, which is approximately 103 000 km². This means that protected areas occupy more than 1/5 of the country's territory.

This is mainly due to the fact that in 2008 was declared the largest National Park in Iceland - Vatnajökull, which covers two other parks, Skaftafell, and since 2017 also Jökulsárgljúfur, known for its 25-kilometer canyon. The Vatnajökull National Park covers a total of 14,141 km² and covers 14% of Iceland and houses the largest glacier in Iceland with the same name as the NP. Vatnajökull glacier occupies 8% of Iceland's total area. The National Park has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008 (vatnajokulsthjodgardur.is, 2018).

The beginning of the protection of the area does not have a long history (Graph 2). The first area to become protected was the National Monument "Þingvellir" in 1928. The most protected areas fall in the 1980s, when the following areas became protected: "Skútustaðagígar", "Húsafell", "Hvannalindir", "Bláfjöll", "Hólmanes", "Eldborg", "Herðubreiðarlindir" or Lake "Myvatn". The last big leap is the establishment of the "Vatnajökull" National Park in 2008. The reason for the protection of most areas in Iceland is the peacock protection of the natural landscape (Umhverfisstofnun.is, 2017 In Dysková, Petrikovičová, 2019).

Graph 2: Growth in the number of protected areas in Iceland between 1928 - 2017



Source: Umhverfisstofnun.is, 2017; elaborated by authors, 2019

National parks are mostly located in areas unaffected by civilizations with unique fauna and flora, biodiversity, ecosystems or sites with special geological characteristics. National parks are established by the state, unless there are special circumstances and an agreement between the landowner and the Ministry of the Environment. There are three national parks in Iceland, each of which is unique by something different (Umhverfisstofnun.is, 2017). Þingvellir is the oldest of them, founded in 1930, declared the National Park in 1944 and in 1983 was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The area is 92.7 km². Snæfellsnes National Park was founded in 2001. It features unique mountain ranges, lava formations, coasts, bird cliffs and 700,000 years old snow-covered stratovolcano. It covers an area of 170 km². Vatnajökull National Park was founded in 2008 by joining two National Parks, Jökulsárgljúfur and Skaftafell. Thus, one with an area of over 12,000 km² was created, making it the largest NP in Iceland (Bergmann, 2004 In Dysková, Petrikovičová, 2019).

The high protected area is another category of land protection. There are habitats of European or national importance, where the favorable state of these habitats depends on the care of a human being. There are several protected areas in Iceland, intended mainly for recreational purposes and are open to the general public. Protected areas in Iceland present smaller areas, and very undesirable by tourists. For example, the Böttgvístaðafjall in Dalvík, in the north of Iceland, is known for its ski resort. The Rauðhólar (Fig. 16) near the capital is known for the volcanically colored red and black mountain ranges that visitors can enjoy while riding on horseback offered there (Umhverfisstofnun, 2017 In Dysková, Petrikovičová, 2019).

Fig. 16: Riding in the Rauðhólar protected area



Source: guidetoiceland.is, 2017

Natural monuments include phenomena that are unique either by their appearance or because of the interest of scientists. There are many natural monuments in Iceland. They are waterfalls, volcanoes, hot springs, rock pillars, fossils and minerals. The most famous natural sights include Dettifoss, Hraunfossar, Barnafoss, Selfoss and Skógafoss (Umhverfisstofnun.is, 2017 In Dysková, Petrikovičová, 2019).

A nature reserve is usually a site of up to 1000 ha, where habitats of European or national importance are modified either by the original or by human activity (Umhverfisstofnun, 2017). The nature reserve also includes the young volcanic island of Surtsey, which was founded in 1963 by a volcanic eruption and has been protected since its inception. Ever since 1964, when scientists began researching it, they had observed the presence of various seeds deposited by ocean currents, the appearance of bacteria, fungi and molds. This 141 ha large island is home to 335 invertebrate species and 89 bird species (whc.unesco.com, 2008).

4.2 The impact of tourism on Iceland's protected areas

Guide to Iceland, the world's largest travel guide for Iceland, lists a number of situations in which the protected areas are endangered or destroyed by tourists. These include, for example, illegal camping in car parks or in the wild of these areas, leaving not only a lot of garbage but also human waste, which is also shown by signs prohibiting illegal activity on the island (Fig. 17). Furthermore, it is a violation of prescribed routes and creating their own paths or roads for motor vehicles, creating soil erosion. Not respecting the boundaries of, for example, geysers, rivers and waterfalls not only destroys the flora, but also endangers their own lives. Danger also occurs when traveling to the country, where access is only allowed with an experienced guide.

Very often, the moss is clogged and deliberately destroyed, which takes hundreds of years to grow again (Fig. 18). Throwing coins into hot springs, waterfalls and geysers is also prohibited, but many people ignore them. The only place of all protected areas, where permitted, is the National Park - Peningagjá Rift. It is forbidden to build "pyramids" from stones that degrade the soil, as shown in Figure 19. It is also forbidden to take lava home, move it or deplete it by vandalism (Figures 20 and 21). Vandalism of tourists also succumbed to other national monuments. The landscape is also devalued by many artists for better photography. For example, artist Marco Evaristti, a native of Chile, damaged the country in 2015 by throwing a red color into the Strokkur geyser to have a more interesting photo of his explosion (Fig. 22), for which he was arrested and had to pay a fine. There have been many bans on the island in recent years

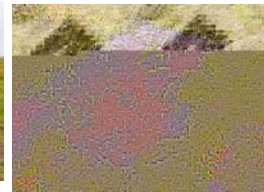
(Fig. 23), commands and information boards on how to behave in that area. Many new information announcements are found in the area of the most visited places informing about the ban on entering the area or a marked footpath. New roads are being built, car parks, public toilets and restaurants are being built around natural monuments that are slowly starting to be charged (guidetoiceland.is, 2017, In Dysková, Petrikovičová, 2019).

Fig. 17 Prohibition of illegal camping and carrying out human needs in the wild



Source : Dysková, 2019

Fig. 18: Moss destruction



Source: guidetoiceland.is, 2017

Fig. 19: Building of pyramids



Source: guidetoiceland.is, 2017

Fig. 20: Vandalism on the from stones island

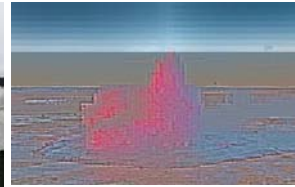


Fig.21: Vandalism on the island



Source: guidetoiceland.is, 2017

Fig. 22: Color burst of Strokkur geyser



Source: guidetoiceland.is, 2017

Fig. 23: No entry sign



Source: Dysková, 2019

5 Conclusion

What could have been interpreted as a disaster for Iceland's economy, turned out though to be a blessing in disguise. The ash cloud thrown up by the volcano threatened to damage the country's important tourist trade in a storm of negative publicity. Negative sentiment towards the country in key tourist sources went from 19% three days after the explosion to 72% in just seven days (mrs.org.uk, 2014).

Criticism in the international media about the country's financial situation, coupled with a global drop in leisure travel, led to a negative growth rate in foreign visitor arrivals in Iceland in 2009. All hope was not lost, however, and hope came from a most unlikely source: the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in the spring of 2010 (hospitalityinsights.com, 2020).

However, in the first quarter of 2020, a new situation occurred, not only for Iceland itself, but for the whole world. The coronavirus pandemic began in Iceland in March 2020. However, the number of tourists has already begun to decline since the beginning of 2020. Compared to last January and February, this is a 10 percent drop in visitors this year. Iceland has implemented travel restrictions for the Schengen area and the European Union. Since 20 March 2020, foreigners - with the exception of EU / EEA, EFTA or United Kingdom nationals - have no access to Iceland (ferdamalastofnun.is, 2020). As a result of this pandemic, tourism on the island was terminated indefinitely. It means hard times for accommodation facilities, island travel agencies, restaurants and others who have lived in tourism. Although tourism in the country has fallen a little, managers of roughly 40 percent of companies in tourism see 2021 optimistically: "In the long run, we're optimistic about continued growth in tourism in the country, and we expect it to exceed the global average to some extent," Daniel Svavarsson, PhD, head of Landsbanki's economics division, states. "The growth will, however, be much slower than what we've seen in recent years and on a more sustainable basis." (mbl.is, 2020). The positive thing about this situation is that after many years, Iceland's nature and protected areas have time to regenerate.

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