

Falling victim to Iceland's booby traps

Eric Hunter and his wife visited Iceland to install an new grinding machine at Reykyavik and stayed on for a holiday. Perhaps they should have come straight home!

It all started well enough with a visit to The Blue Lagoon a well known attraction in Iceland. There is a chemical reaction which turns the water bright blue and is a constant 75° throughout the year. Very pleasant to swim in until you meet a cool spot which makes you shiver and occasional hot spots which give the impression you are being boiled alive. However after nearly three hours your skin is turning wrinkly, so we figured it was time to move on.

It was then that things began to go wrong.

"We decided to tour the S.W. corner of Iceland from Grunduvik to Kissivik about 20 miles away but as soon as we left the road deteriorated into a rolled dirt track similar to a forest road in UK.

"After 10 miles or so, cracks across the road caused by melting snow were getting wilder but not impassable. We hit one 'rut' which was filled with orange coloured water which clung to the glass and, could not be cleared by the washer jets and wipers. Consequently the car ran into a deeper rut and 'bottomed'. We were well and truly stuck in the Icelandic wilderness.

"We had passed a farm about seven or eight miles back, but as it was getting darker by the minute, we decided to place our faith in the scale of the map which showed a community about three to four miles east. Abandoning the car, we stumbled along the muddy track up a hill. Silently praying we climbed up yet another hill and gratefully saw some distant lights. Salvation! Struggling through a field of snow we approached a building which was well lit, on both sides of the central doorway ran corridors with numbered doors. No sign of any life!

"Eventually we climbing into the building and saw about 20 men sitting round reading or watching television. Approached by a female attendant, we discovered that we were in an Institution for alcoholics and drug abusers! The manager, who was



When life can be a grind: Eric Hunter in Iceland

Dutch, offered to put us for the night.

"Having reached safety and being well received by our Dutch hosts, the next morning we returned to extricate our hired Astra from the mud which overnight had frozen solid! Case, the name of our saviour easily pulled us out with his four-wheel drive Lada, thus improving their rotten reputation at once!

"Back at Case's farm, his wife Tinneka had coffee on the go and suggested that we stay a while and investigate the area. It was beautiful but strange. The colours in the hillside were not the traditional browns and greens that we are used to, on show were blue, purple, grey, brown, black, white

but the white was not snow!

"With a couple of ski sticks for assistance my wife and I set off up to the nearest hillside. About a mile up, we found the geysir which had been capped to provide hot water and heat for Case's farm and the alcoholic's Institution, a pressure gauge showed 200 psi. and this was natural! A little further up we could see a stream of water flowing downhill, from which I could swear steam was rising. Curiosity aroused I approached slowly, prodding the grey coloured ground with the ski stick. It did not penetrate. However when I stood on this peculiar surface it collapsed under my weight - the hard surface was just a hardened crust under which

was whiteish hot mud and I was in it up to the knees. Flinging the cameras away, I managed to extricate myself but not without getting both my hands into the hot mud. Luckily there was plenty of grass around to wipe the hands and quite a bit of snow to cool the flesh but, too late, blisters on the hands and wrists were rising.

Carrying on up the hill and approaching the same stream by firmer ground and rocks, I was amazed to find that this stream was running with warm water. Quite an amazing experience to be found outdoors and something never found in the UK.

The hands and wrists by this time were starting to smart somewhat, even with the regular immersion in piles of snow. So we started back down the hill to the farm but on another slope. Stepping out with the intention of returning quickly, I failed to notice that the colour of the grass was changing from green to a darker green until again without warning the ground collapsed under me again. This time it was not hot mud but a bog into I had descended full leg length deep. Having this strange slowly sinking feeling, the cameras were hurled safely away for the second time that morning and by leaning forward, spreading my girth across the surface I practically swam and pulled myself to firm ground.

By this time I was fairly traumatized by these happenings and according to the 'other half' I was repeating myself. It really felt like a bad dream, but not one from which I could wake up. The principle consoling thought being that at least we only had one more day, then back to good old Glasgow. We drove back to Reykjavik by putting my hands in polythene bags filled with snow to cool the flesh.

All in all an interesting experience, which I would not like to repeat.

JUST A THOUGHT

Keep a diary of your accomplishments at work. Then when you ask for a rise you'll have the evidence you need to back it up.

MERRY CHRISTMAS
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