

# Tourism in Iceland

## Overcooking the Golden Goose?

**Foundations – Protection - Professionalism**

Rotary Reykjavik International - Iceland

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SCS Iceland

**Helping people heal the land**

# The need for action

- Report – committee on protecting tourist sites
  - Action urgently needed – prevent severe damage
  - Reputation of Iceland at risk
  - Without protection – unrealistic to increase tourism in Iceland
- The year of report – 1995!
- Relatively little action since – but 7 fold increase in tourists 1995 to 2015
- Prediction for 2016 is 1.730.000 – for a nation of 330.000
- The biggest industry in Iceland – but
- Are we killing the golden goose?

# Iceland is alive!



# Iceland is unique!



# Sensitive environments



# Trampling can do excessive damage



**But – how do we appreciate, respect and protect the beauty of Iceland ?**



# Stupid is the one that sits home

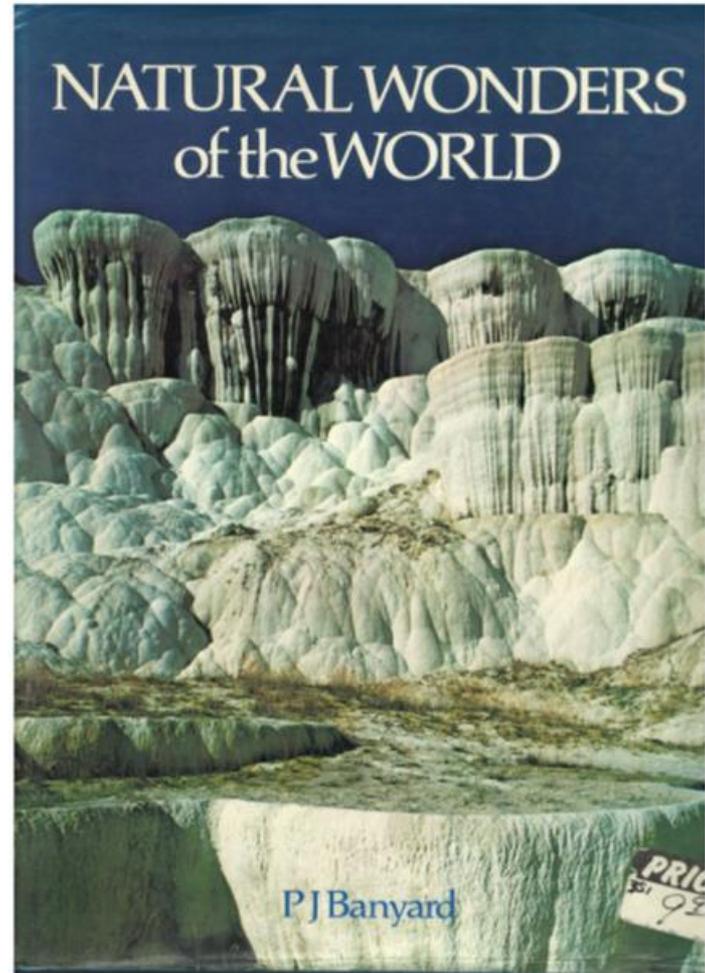
Vits er þörf

þeim er víða ratar

dælt er heima hvað

*Hávamál*

The original definition of  
“stupid” is the one that  
always stays at home.



# The black sand – A natural wonder



*Ljós: Fríður Eggertsdóttir*

In contrast to most common light color in other countries





An asset for tourism from the shoreline to the volcanic central highlands.

# But – Are we on track?



*“... a premium motorbike tour company in Iceland”*

# The lack of respect for Icelandic nature



A logo for a tourist company

What is the real stage of nature conservation?



Hjólavillingar - A dirt bike club

# The sensitive nature needs protection

Not only the popular places –  
All of Iceland is a tourist site!



# But – what do we need to protect?

The beauty of nature is the foundation  
Need to protect visual beauty  
and landscapes – a complex issue



# Is the desert a resource?



# Oft ég svartan sandinn leit

The destruction of Iceland's ecosystems  
Land degradation and desertification most  
severe environmental issue



*Photo: Garðar Þorfinnsson*



The consequence of soil erosion – But is also part of the stark beauty of Iceland



# Policy and planning badly needed What and how to reclaim?



# Choice of plants - Landscape characteristics - View



# The beauty of Iceland is the foundation for biggest revenue generator of the nation - but

- An era of massive environmental damage to sensitive nature
  - Big stakes
  - One of Iceland's biggest environmental problems
- We are overcooking the golden goose!

# What is sustainable tourism?

## Is protection of nature an integral factor?



Hlaupaferð Staldráð við í Austur-Reykjadölum þar sem heitir hverir eru við hvert fótímal.

MBL



<http://www.isafoldtravel.is/photogallery/album/18/mynd/199/>

# Promotion and advertising downgrade environmental awareness

Við bjóðum fyrirtækjum sérþekkingu

Okkar vinnu sýst um að þín vinna gangi vel. Við leggjum okkur fram um að setja okkur vel inn í það sem þú ert að gera, og þú að við þekkjum kannski ekki viðfangsefnið í þínu starfi jafn vel og þú, þá vitum við hvað starfið gengur út á.

Hjá Íslandsbanka starfar hópur fólks sem býr að áratuga reynslu af ráðgjöf við stór og smá fyrirtæki í ferðaþjónustu og hefur viðtaka sérþekkingu á fjárhagsumhverfi þeirra. Þannig getum við ávallt tryggt þeim þá bankþjónustu sem þau þarfnast.

Þekking sprettur af áhuga.

Við bjóðum góða þjónustu

Íslandsbanki

An Icelandic bank



Hér sést vel hvernig hjólin elta jörðina.

Handbook for foreign dirt-bikers  
Everything permitted – so long there is a track visible!  
Sheep tracks an exciting option

Tool review in a newspaper



## Ferðalög án takmarkana

Sprækur Happy1 er nýjasti bíllinn í flotanum, smár en knár og vel útbúinn.



From an interview with tourist camper rental:  
„Icelandic law and regulations allow you to park almost anywhere ... at any place the tourists like.“

Geta farið þangað sem hugurinn girnist



*Páll Jónsson – Bakland ferðapjónustunnar*



Increasing environmental damage

# Iceland's Off-Road Academy



<http://www.natureexplorer.is/4x4-training/off-road-academy>

# Riding into the hot spring



DV 21-23 júlí 2015, Kynningarblað – Hestar

# Is there a planning chaos?



**Need to clarify rules on treating the land**

**Improve rules and regulations**

**Set codes of conduct for promotions and advertisement**

# The governmental message?



Driving in Iceland with Elfis - Drive safe!



Islandia - Iceland 24

Subscribe 28

Up next

Auto



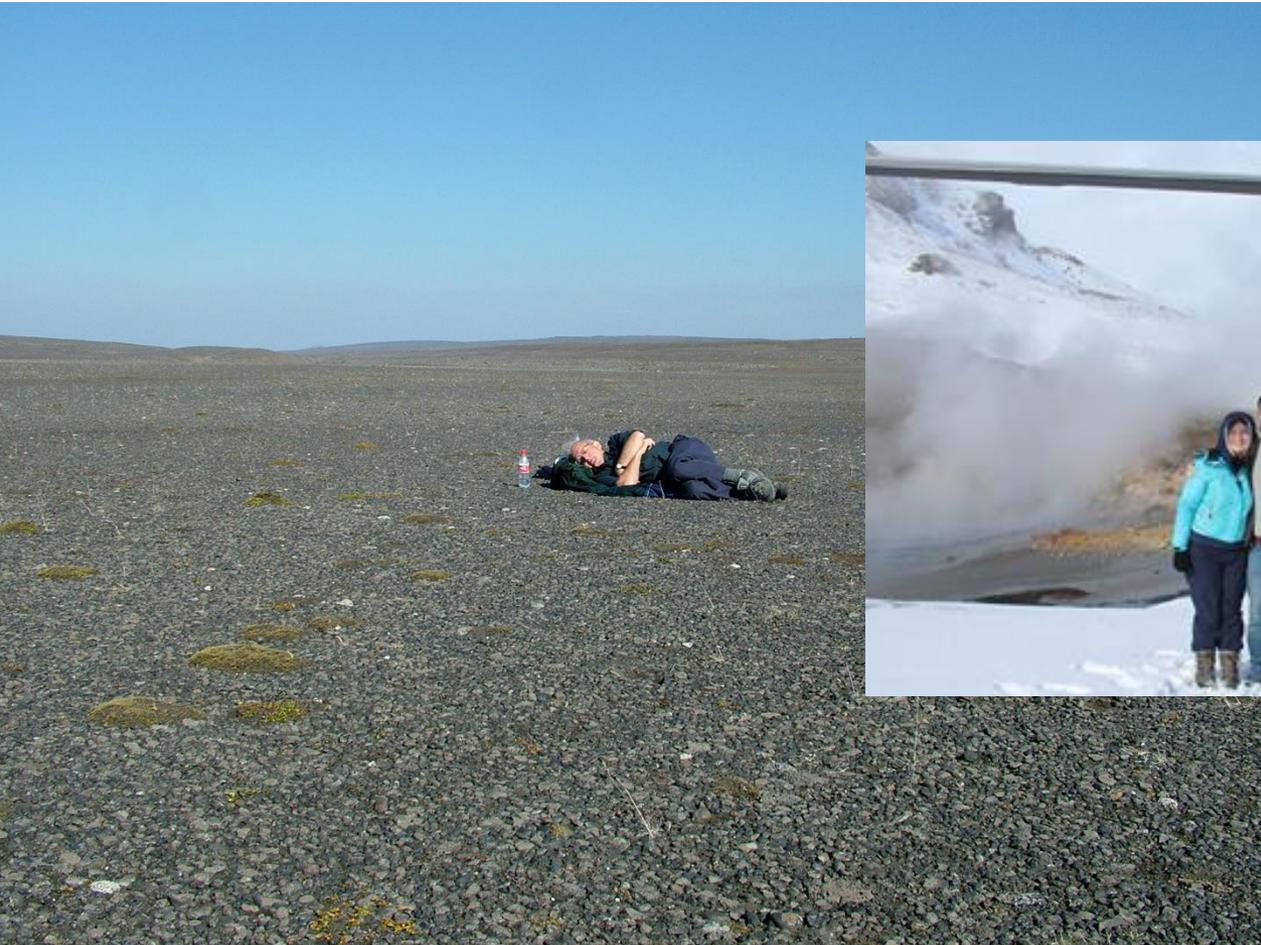
Iceland Ring Road Trip 2014

by Connor Callaghan

121,010 views

5,059

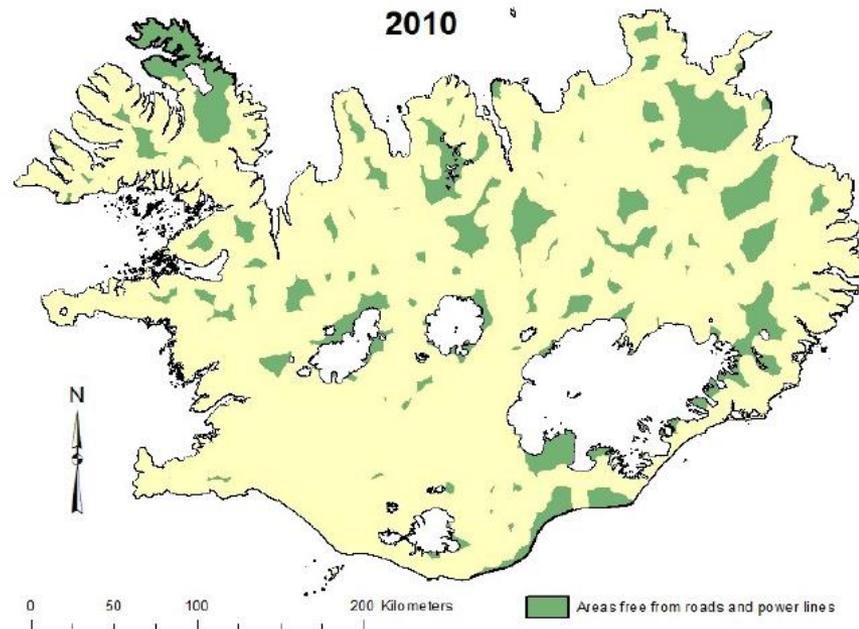
# The silence of the wilderness



*Bakland ferðapjónustunnar 3 apríl 2015*

# “Wilderness” – Undervalued resource

Considering roads and powerlines on maps and databases (2010) the wilderness is endangered.



*Taylor, 2011*

# How extensive roadsystem do we need?

Forms out of control – at a great cost to  
Iceland's natural resources

A wide, flat, grey gravel landscape under a pale sky. The ground is covered in small stones and sand. Several winding, light-colored tracks or roads are visible, curving across the terrain. The tracks are made of a different material, possibly sand or a different type of gravel, and they form a complex, interconnected network. The overall scene is desolate and open.

One of biggest planning gaps in Iceland?

# Roads or an environmental disaster?

- What do the maps show as roads open to public ?
  - Real roads and vehicle tracks
  - Tracks of restricted use
  - Off road damages shown as roads
  - Closed tracks
  - Bridle paths
  - Footpaths
- Very weak links to planning



# Paths and tourist sites

What is wrong here?



# Repair or management

## Path repair

- Often driven by acute site damage
- Usually reactive
- Local focus
- 'One-off' funding

## Path management

- Ideally objective-led, inventory-based
- Pro-active or pre-emptive
- Strategic priorities
- Sustained funding stream

*Bob Aitken 3. Oct. 2014*

# Management or chaotic planning?

Can we learn from the sheep?



*Ljósm: Áskell Þórisson*

*Ljósm: Magnús Jóhannsson*

# The water digs



*Ljósm: Guðmundur Ögmundsson*

# Material



# Landscapes



*Bob Aitken 3. Oct. 2014*

# The need for professionalism



*Ljósm: René Biasone*



# The acts of humans

Must match the natural pearls which they are to serve!

Are we at the repair stage instead of management and foresight?



**Where to build?**

**Which places to save from development?**

**How to make infrastructure part of the environment?**



Example from Australia



We should adapt knowledge, skills and „management culture“ from countries that take good care of nature ....



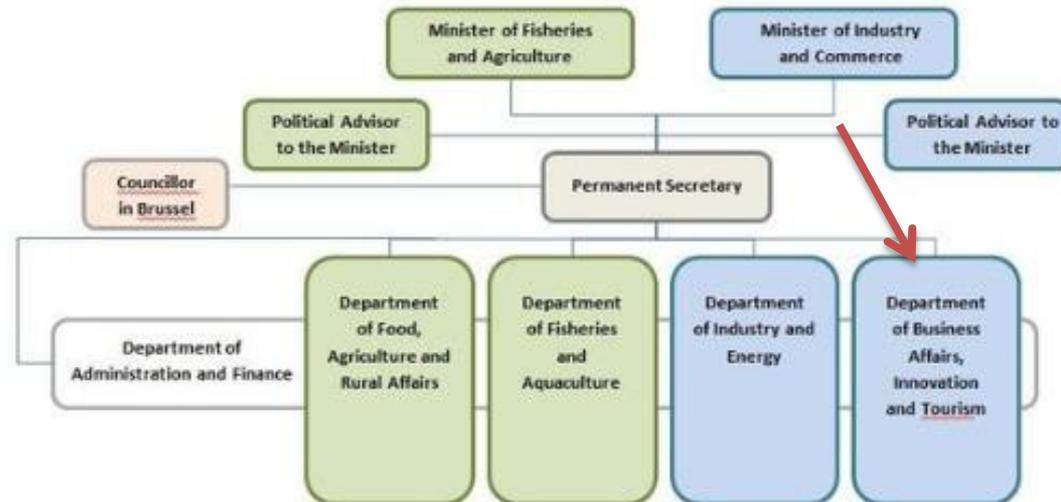
... but the Icelanders may have a bit individualistic approach to conservation.

Photos from USA

# Government to blame?

- Tourism # 1 in generating currency
  - 80-90% attracted by nature of Iceland, but ...
  - Tourism a dwarf in government
- Need to increase efficiency
  - Many agencies / bodies - None with a holistic role at national level
  - Tourism weak at the ministerial level

## Ministry of Industries and Innovation



Approved May 1<sup>st</sup> 2014

# In closing

- How well are we prepared?
  - Black report 1995, but too little done
  - Inhabitants 60.000 more
  - Tourists 1.100.000 increase to 2015,  
- possibly > 1.500.000 for 2016
- The „system“ lagging way behind
  - Compares to NZ before 1990?
- Respect nature
  - The „golden goose“ of tourism
  - And thus the financial health of Iceland
- Let´s step gently to earth

