

4.8.2015, Isafjörður

From Flateyri we drive through a one-lane tunnel (which has bays to let the oncoming traffic pass) for a few kilometers to Sudureyri. There was even a crossing inside the tunnel system. The tunnel was built because danger from rock and snow avalanches was getting too big especially after snow avalanches had caused several deaths in 1995 in different villages in the Westfjords.

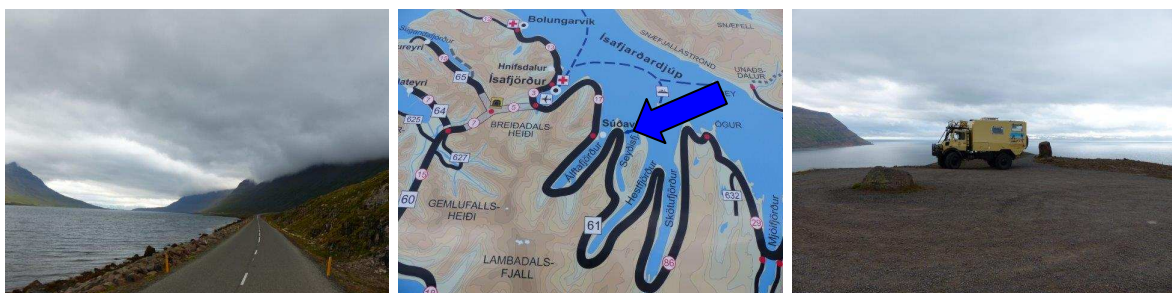


As we reach Isafjörður, the weather got worse. Unpleasant cold wind forced us to shorten the city sightseeing and to finally take shelter in a coffee shop.



But we wanted to cover a few more kilometers on our way around the Westfjords therefore continued to drive to Sudavik. Also this town was hit by an avalanche in 1995 and several people lost their lives. After that event they shifted the entire town for about 3 km into the fjord to a more avalanche-safe location. The old town still exists, but all houses are only allowed to be used in summer time.

From Sudavik we circumnavigate the Alftafjörður to reach the next fjord Seydisfjörður. Just at the tip of the cliff is a view point where we decide to stay for the night (at the blue arrow on the map). It was terribly windy and Dewi was worried the whole night that we would be blown off the cliff.



For dinner we had Flateyri-Cod while outside a huge storm was blowing with lots of rain. The Icelandic meteorological service even published a storm warning with possible flooding and gale force winds in the highlands and East coast.



5.8.2015, Litlibaer, Reykjanes, Dalbaer, Drangsnes

Also the next morning thick clouds were hanging low in the sky. Further up of the Isafjardardjup fjord we saw seals close to the shore. When we passed by Litlibaer we stopped to warm up. The tiny house was built in 1885 and has only a size of 3,9 x 7,4 m (the kitchen did not fit anymore and was housed in another small hut). This house was in use until 1969 and at times up to 20 people lived in Litlibaer!



The next „village“ of Reykjanes consist of only two buildings, now being a hotel. The swimming pool was a huge hot pot but unfortunately we had no time to take a dip. A geothermal spring at the beach is even heating up the sea.



We drive a little detour to the Drangajökull glacier, where we should have great views of up to 800m high mountains and over Isafjardardjup. Unfortunately, we could not see much from the mountains, but we witnessed some incredible dramatic

cloud formations moving lower and lower towards us. We had at least 500 shades of grey all day.



The end of our 40 km detour along the fjord is Dalbaer. We wanted to support the local business, but they did not seem to be interested in customers. The lady was too preoccupied with her cross word puzzle and so we make our own latte in the car.



Today we want to reach Drangsnes, which has a nice hot pot located directly on the beach. We drive over the Steingrimsfjardarheidi pass, but also here the low clouds cover the scenery and we don't get a glimpse of one of the many lakes in this area. At 19pm we reach Drangsnes and waste no time going directly to the hot pot. It's 7C cold with strong wind, so it took some determination to get changed and 'naked' into the pot, especially as the shower was on the other side of the street!



Afterwards we found a place for the night – as usual – at a local gravel storage site. While the rain is easing, the wind is still shaking the Unimog for the entire night.

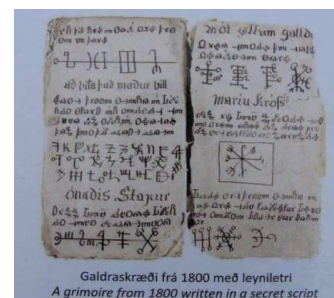
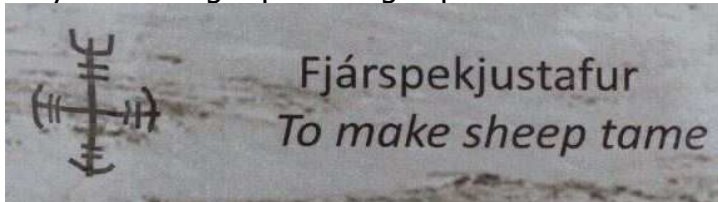


6.8.2015, Laugarholl, Djupavik, Holmavik

This morning we realize that the valve of our outside water canister is broken. We also discovered this morning, that we lost a handle of our window. Then while driving we suddenly smell burned cables – our mobile phone charger is smoldering and smoke is coming from the gadget! What is going on today? Maybe we got a bad spell from the witch house we visited in Laugarholl?



In the past, in this house witchcraft was practiced asking for help for a good harvest or when animals were ill. These „witches” were mostly male in Iceland. However, witches were considered outlaws and were punished by whipping if they were caught practicing superstitious witchcraft.

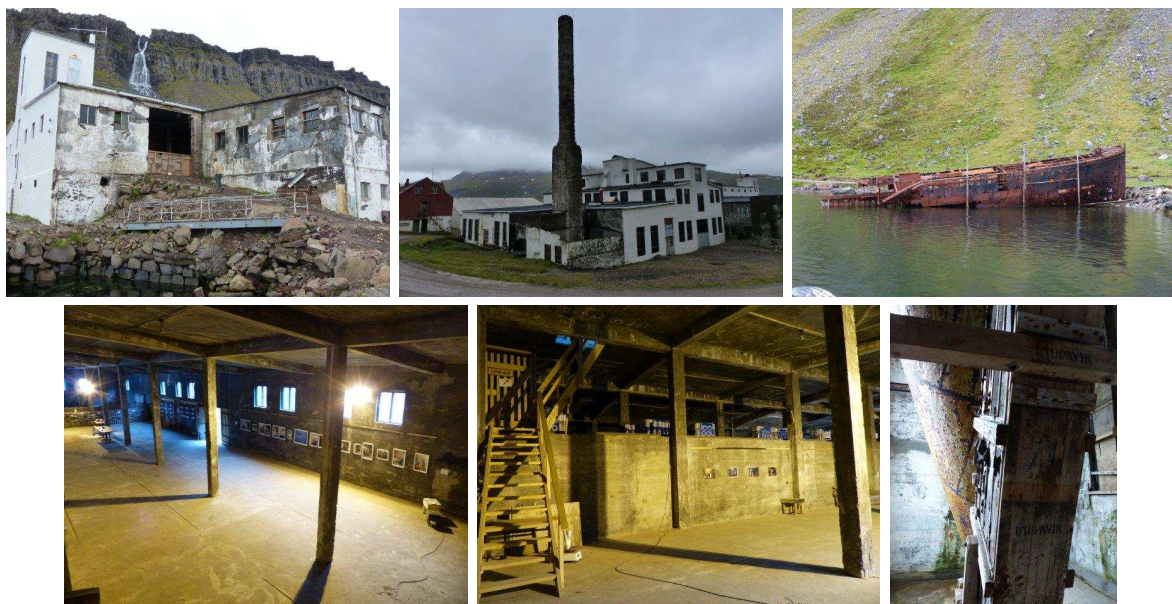


Djupavik is on today's agenda, there we want to visit a former herring processing factory. This factory was operating during the second big Herring era (1934-1954). We trail along the fjords on winding roads in the never ending rain and drizzle.

The many bays harbour a lot of drift wood. Amazingly, this drift wood originates from Siberia (and small amounts from Canada). The wood actually would not last long swimming in the ocean, but this drift wood in fact gets encapsulated in ice and is drifting frozen in ice for up to 12 years until it is swept onto the beaches of the Icelandic North coast. The wood is an important natural resource and is still used to construct houses, boats, furniture and also art. The wood needs to dry for a long time before it can be used. The beaches and bays are privately owned and the land owner has the rights to the drift wood.



During the herring boom a few hundred people worked and lived in the herring factory. Meanwhile the owners of the hotel in Djupavik are the only permanent residents in the village. In the past, the workers were living on board the rusty boat. Today, the old factory is used for exhibitions and events.





We drive back via the same gravel road and our Unimog gets powdered by the muddy road. After 90 km we arrive in Holmavik and have to clean the car first as when getting in and out of the Unimog we get powdered too.



All cleaned up, we cruise through the city of Holmavik and continue to find a place for the night.



Another perfect camp site is found quickly – as usual we end up at the local gravel pit.

7.8.2015, Bordeyri, Laugarbakki, Vatnsnes Peninsula

Under the cover of low hanging clouds we leave the boundary of the Westfjord area. Next we want to drive one of the highland routes.

We stop briefly in Broddanes where Puffins are breeding on a small island. We have never seen so many Puffins sitting in the water just like ducks. Funnily here they are breeding on a flat island and not on the edge of vertical rock cliffs...



At noon we reach Bordeyri. This village has a lively history: In the 10th to 13th century Bordeyri was one of the most important ports in Northern Iceland, a licensed trading port and even had an agricultural cooperative which was active till 2002. At the end of the 19th century emigrants and livestock – mainly sheep – were sailing from here to England. Today, not much is left to see from these old times. The biggest attraction now is a handicraft café. The grey house is the Riishus dated from 1862 and is one of the oldest houses in Iceland.

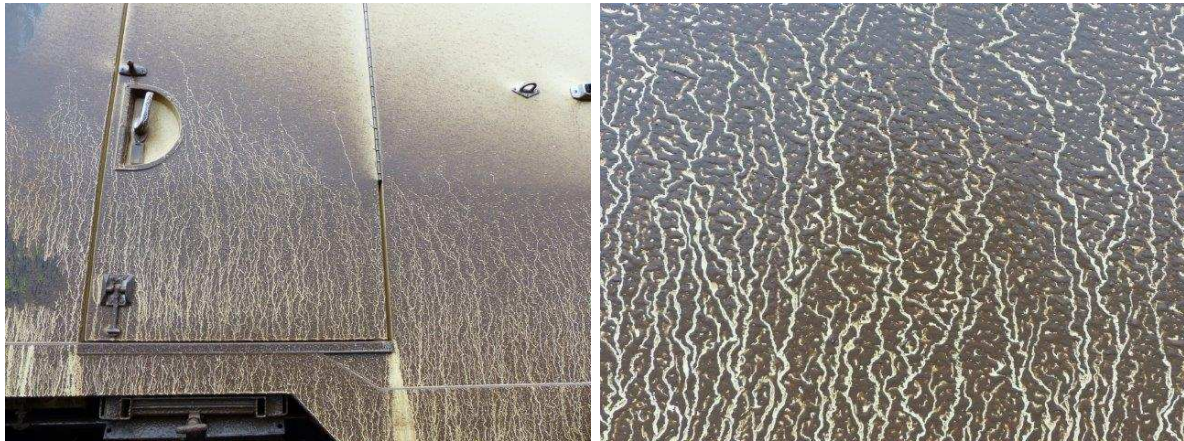


We stop at the Laugarbakki gas station for a coffee and have to wash the car. Rain and gravel road left us again totally muddy. From here it is only 8km to Hvammstangi, access point for the Vatnsnes peninsula. We decide spontaneously to drive this 82km detour before we go to the highlands, as the weather forecast for the highlands is pretty bad. But soon we are in the clouds again which seem to be stuck over this peninsula.

We never saw kelp-eating sheep before... Looks like then needed some salt...



Having cleaned the car in Laugarbakki was a complete waste of time; only after a few minutes we are even more dirty than before ☹



Again, we don't get much to see of the landscape we are passing through. At least the main attractions on the Vatnsnes peninsula are visible: The Hvitserkur, a rock formation which looks like a monster...



As well as Osar, a sand bank frequented by seals. The grey fog is giving this landscape a mystical atmosphere. We did a refreshing walk to get a closer look of the seals. Should have taken our gloves along, but wanted to be strong – it's only beginning of August!





This time it is hard to find a place for the night on the peninsula, so we continue driving and finally find a nice place at the Kolugljufur gorge. Here the river Vididalsa – or rather the Troll-woman Kola – has created a nice gorge with waterfall.



Meanwhile we eat fish in all variations, today as Spaghetti sauce. It actually tasted quite nice and replaced minced meat very well.



Meanwhile, the new spray paint of the Unimog is finished and slowly drying off.

