

## 8.8.2015, Arnarvatnsheidi, Reykjavik

The new spray paint job was done well, the paint is dry and our Unimog is now shining in trendy mud-grey.



We aim for the highland and have to back track a little to get to road F578 as the road we planned to take originally on is still in 'winter closure'. We drive through the Arnarvatnsheidi, close to 600m elevation and are all by ourselves in the vastness of the Icelandic highland. We only see one very brave biker.



On this road we have almost the entire time good views of the Eiríksjökull and the Langjökull glaciers.



Half way through is the lake Arnarvatn Stora with a few fishing huts which can be rented. Most huts were even occupied – hmm, there should be less windy places in Iceland to go fishing. We decide to have our lunch break before we continue towards Husafell where we want to visit some huge Lava caves as well as – of course – a waterfall.





But our Unimog has different plans. Suddenly the clutch doesn't want to work anymore, in fact the same problem we had on our way to the ferry in Denmark. Maybe the corrugated roads took their toll and air got again into the clutch system? What now? We are stuck in the middle of the highlands. To be towed out of here is a major project and would cost a fortune.

As we continued our way carefully, the problem gets worse and the clutch is not functioning anymore. We can not separate the engine from the gearbox anymore, can not shift gears and not even stop without stalling the engine. Therefore we decide to drive straight to Reykjavik, it's impossible to continue to travel without a functioning clutch. There is one large river to cross and we are a bit worried how to manage that without shifting gears. Two friendly Icelanders were there discussing how to best cross the river and offered us help, when they heard about our problem. We even exchanged telephone numbers.



We end up flying Paris-Dakar-style through the highland as without being able to shift gears we had to keep a certain speed. We race past the Lava caves and waterfalls which we actually wanted to visit.



We are pleased to have reached Husafell where the tarred road starts, but how to continue to Reykjavik? Each street crossing makes us very nervous and once the road turns uphill we worry how to get over the hill without shifting gears. Sometimes we make it with full throttle and the momentum of speed (by the way the Unimog reaches top speed of 96km/h...). If we have to shift, we can only force gears in without using the clutch. Sometimes Werner manages to shift gears, but at first has no clue which gear he actually hit....

After another 80 km driving we reach Borgarnes and come to a T-junction where our engine totally stalls. We cause some traffic jam (by Icelandic standard) at the junction and manage to bump a few meters to the side of the road. We have no other choice than to call the familiar number of the Mercedes Truck Service Hotline.

We get the address of the Mercedes workshop in Reykjavik and they record our problem. Do we now have to spend our weekend at this windy road crossing? After 20min we do another desperate try, Werner manages to get the Unimog started with a gear in place.

The final 110km to the capital were the longest 110km in our lives. We had to time the turns, that no others cars would come from the left or right side, same for the one lane bridges. Hills we had to manage with momentum and speed... We had to take a detour of 60 km around the Hvalfjörður fjord as we didn't dare to take the tunnel. How to stop and restart at the tunnel toll booth and what if we would break down in the tunnel? Not to imagine what chaos we would have caused.

After five hours of nonstop driving we reach Mercedes Benz in Reykjavik at 9pm totally exhausted. We park directly at the gate, need a few beers and collapse.... Mercedes Benz Reykjavik is now our declared camp site.



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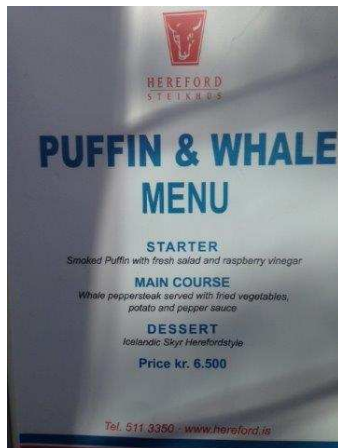
## 9.8.2015, Reykjavik



Today is Sunday and the workshop is closed, so we put a note in our window - in case anybody wants to know why we camp here - and take the bus into the city.

The weather here is much better than in the North, we have a sunny 17C instead of 7C.

We make use of the time to do our laundry and of course to visit – guess what – our favorite coffee shop Sandholt.



In the city we see that the cute little Puffins and whales are indeed on the menu.  
Who would be able to down these beautiful creatures?!

We are just back at our Mercedes-Camp, when there is a knock at our door. It was not a Mercedes technician, but the Swiss/Canadian-also-with-a-Unimog-couple whom we got to know on the ferry to Iceland. Theresa and Pierre have problems with the starter of their Unimog. What a funny coincidence, that both Unimogs need repair at the same time.

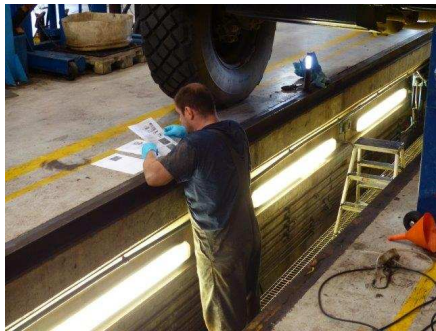
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## 10.8.2015, Reykjavik

Monday morning 8am we are at the reception of the Mercedes workshop. Our case is already known as forwarded by the Mercedes Service hotline.



To our pleasant surprise we were immediately asked to drive the Unimog into the workshop – easier said than done. Now with a cold gearbox, engine and break fluid it was even more difficult to shift gear. Only with strong determination Werner was able to start the engine with the 1<sup>st</sup> gear in place and drive into the workshop.



As an Unimog and its clutch system is rather special, the mechanic had to print out the Unimog working instructions and was studying them diligently.



One cylinder is de-installed, the seals inside look quite ok. So the cylinder air was again drained out of the clutch system at two different points.

We still have tiny black particles in the break fluid, but we will not be able to find out where they come from; it is too much work to also de-install the second cylinder.

The head of the workshop tells us there is nothing more they can do at the moment... As back-up we get the phone number of the workshop in Akureyri, the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest town of Iceland in the North.

Fingers crossed, that the clutch will last until the end of our journey. The first time the clutchsystem was de-aired it lasted for about 5000km.



At 11a.m. we are ready – much faster than we expected. We visit Theresa und Pierre who are waiting for their turn at the other side of the yard.

Today is Unimog Day at Mercedes in Reykjavik.

Since the repair was so quick, we have some spare time to go into town, where we witnessed the opening of the very first Dunkin' Donut Shop in Reykjavik. First we noticed the loong queue of people and thought there might be free Donuts...

Twenty two years after then-Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson took the first bite of the first McDonald's burger served in Iceland, six years after McDonald's left the country, announcing that franchises there had never paid off anyway, the finest U.S. fast food is back in town: Wednesday morning, Dunkin' Donuts opened the first of its sixteen planned Reykjavík outlets.

The Laugavegur Dunkin' outpost promised a full year of free donuts for its first 50 customers. The ploy seems to have succeeded, as customers lined up on Tuesday evening, spending the night by the door... (*The Reykjavík Grapevine*, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015)



Some remains of the Love parade of last weekend were also still visible.

The cold wind forced us to shorten our city sightseeing and we took shelter in a coffee shop.

So many people are wearing hats, scarves and gloves. We keep on forgetting that it is August....

No signs of the heat wave going on at the same time in the rest of Europe!

In order to warm up in the evening, we visit again the Hot Pot in Nautholsvik. As usual we just stay at the parking for the night.

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## 11.8.2015, Pingvellir

Our usual morning bath ceremony in Nautholsvik was the last one for this summer. Winter season starts on 16<sup>th</sup> August with shorter opening times!



We leave Reykjavik and head towards Pingvellir, a cultural and political important place. Here in the year 930 the first ever meeting of national parliament of Iceland (Alþingi) took place. In 2004 Pingvellir was named Unesco World Heritage Site.



At the same time the geology of this region is very interesting, too. Here the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates meet or rather drift apart for 8 mm per year. The rift between the two plates is now 7 km wide. One plate subsided and in that process tilted, so that an almost 40 meter deep gorge was created. We took a stroll through this huge very impressive rift.



One immediately notices that the landscape is covered in lush green vegetation. Pingvellir at the Þingvallavatn lake is the area where the most dense vegetation in Iceland can be found.

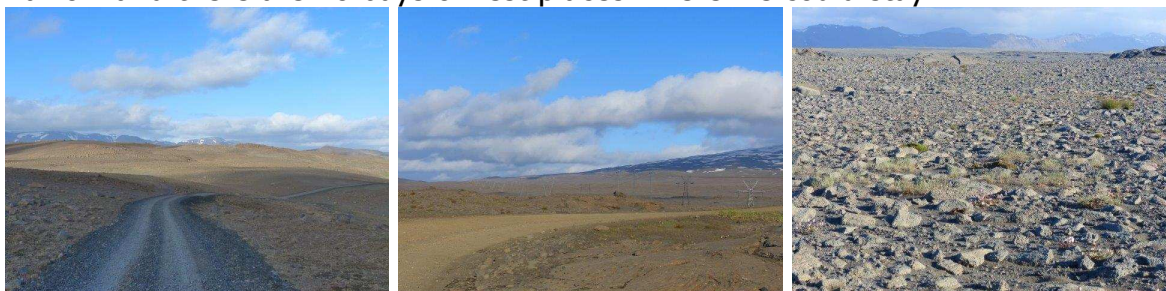


As the weather is fine we drive a little further until the entrance to highland road F338. This is our starting point for our highland exploration tomorrow. It is nice to have some peace and quiet again after so many tourists in Pingvellir, which is part of the "Golden Circle" in Iceland (a circle to drive with all major Must-sees).

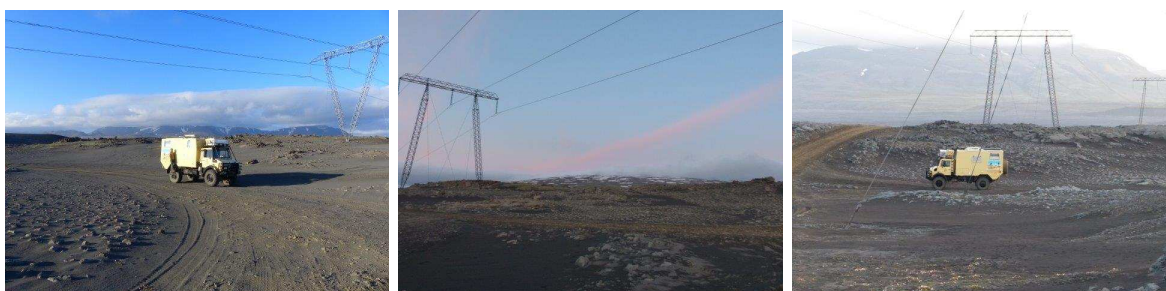




The track F338 is following an electricity line into highland country. The track is narrow and there are no bays or rest places where we could stay.



A small side track ends abruptly and it was quite troublesome to turn the Unimog around. So we decide to just stay at a track crossing to comply with Icelandic rules to not go offroad at any time. Temperatures during the evening were already at 6,5C and we expect a cold night.



## 12.8.2015, F337, Geysir, F338

As per the weather forecast rain is forecasted from 10a.m. onwards, so we have an early start. We want to be out of the highland track before it starts to rain, as our guidebook notes that the track at the end has a very steep decline and will be slippery when wet.



The track F338 is leading around the mount Skaldbreidur (1060m). As we get a bit bored following the electricity line we turn from the F338 into the F337.





The F337 runs around the mount Hlödufell (1188m) heading South towards Laugarvatn. This track is much more interesting than following the electricity poles.



The accuracy of the Icelandic weather forecast is frightening, exactly at 10a.m. it starts raining. How come, that the Icelandic weather forecast can be so accurate compared with the German one? The descent at the end was indeed very steep but not slippery – and we are back to civilization.



The rain was pouring down when we reach Geysir, the most famous and well known geothermal area in Iceland. A lot of hot springs are boiling and steam is everywhere. By the way, all Geysirs in the world are named after this place/hot spring in Iceland called Geysir.





The original Geysir is largely inactive now, but his smaller „brother“ called Strokkur just a few meters away is keeping the family tradition up and is erupting every 8-10min. He is shooting out a 35m high fountain of hot water and steam. A truly impressive performance of Mother Nature! We waited to see a few eruptions. If one is standing at the wrong side of the Geysir a big shower is guaranteed, but at least a warm one.



We are looking for a place to stay for the night and turn into the „Electricity Line“ F338 from the other end. Just next to first major river crossing we find a nice place.





### **13.8.2015, Gullfoss, Kjölur-Piste 35, Hveravellir**

We are back to the Golden Circle and it is not far to the most famous waterfall in Iceland – the Gullfoss. As we camped close, we were able to finish our waterfall tour before the first tourist busses turn up.

The source of the Gullfoss is the river Hvita. It has a total fall of 32 meters; the water has cut 2 steps in the rock below in an almost 90 degree angle to each other. For almost 100 years there were repeated attempts to build a hydropower station here, but luckily in 1979 the idea was dropped and the falls as well as the gorge were declared a nature reserve.



Just a few kilometers after Gullfoss is the starting point of the Kjölur track. This track is heading North crossing the highland between the two glaciers Langjökull in the West and Hofsjökull in the East and is our next goal.



On the Kjölur track, we can watch the first horses being rounded up from the highlands and brought to lower altitudes to prepare for winter.



We take a detour to lake Hvítarvatn, where we have a good view of the Langjökull glacier. One of the smaller rental 4x4 has its challenges to get back out of the river. We watch their actions for a while and were thinking to cross the river to give them a gentle push with the Unimog when he finally made it up the hill probably with a few scratches....





The drive on road F347 into Kerlingarfjöll was not really a success. First we pass the pretty waterfall Gyggjarfoss.



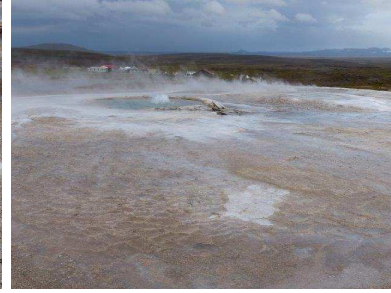
But as we come closer to the geothermal area of Kerlingarfjöll the weather has changed completely. Heavy rain is pouring down and strong winds with even stronger gusts are shaking our "house". We wait in the car for an hour, but as there are no signs of weather improvement, we sadly leave. Unfortunately all other roads in the area are still closed due to thawing conditions. This area is supposed to be a geologically interesting area with great landscapes, walks and hot pots.



Located almost half way on the Kjölur track is Hveravellir, another area with lots of geothermal activity. The hot water is boiling and steaming even at an elevation of almost 600m!







It has only 7 degrees temperature, but we still cannot give this very nice hot pot a miss!

After soaking for over an hour and being pretty much well done, we looked for a place for the night .....

