

23.8.2015, F26 and F208 in the Highland, Landmannalaugar

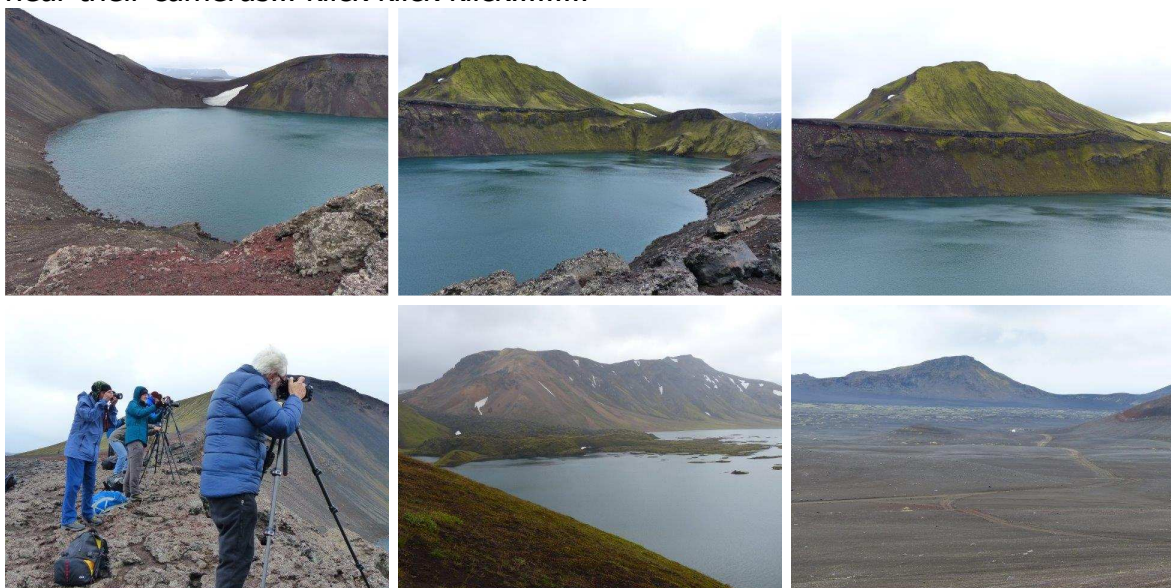
Today we continue our journey on the tracks F26 and F208 through the highlands with final destination Landmannalaugar.



At a river crossing we see a fellow traveller who is so brave to check the depth of the water on foot! How lucky we are to have an Unimog, so far we were able to cross all the rivers without thinking. After the successful river crossing we have a chat with the young German lady about Kneipp treatments...



Shortly before Landmannalaugar we pass lake Hnausapollur, where a group of very serious hobby photographers are very seriously taking their pictures. We can only hear their cameras... klick klick klick.....



At the hut awaits a challenge in form of a major river crossing. Not everyone can or dares to drive through the river; for them, there is a 2nd parking lot before the river and they can walk over on the foot bridge.

At the hut it feels like being at a festival, we have not seen so many people, tents and cars for a long time. Our travel guide book says up to 500 people camp here in summer peak time. The shop is housed in an old bus – where it started...

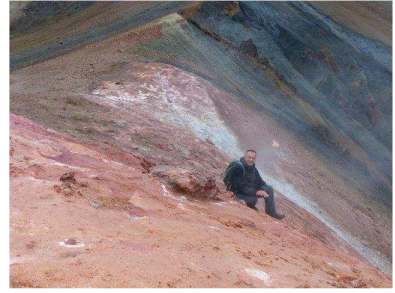


For one night camping they charge 1600ISK (~11EUR) per person. Showers cost extra 3,50EUR. For the tents it is only a stony surface and with the rain it's all muddy, there is no common room where people can warm up, the dish washing area is outside without a roof. The bathrooms are overcrowded, 3 showers out of 10 are broken! Well, this smells like rip off... This is one of the most expensive camp sites, but with least service on offer. As free camping is not allowed within the National Park boundary, we have no choice.

Tomorrow we want to do a day hike, so today we warm up with a short walk to the top of Mt Brennisteinsalda. The fascinating and stunning landscape explains why so many people want to come here. A volcanic area teeming with geothermal activity creates a unique landscape with colourful lava stone formations all in close proximity.







24.8.2015, Landmannalaugar

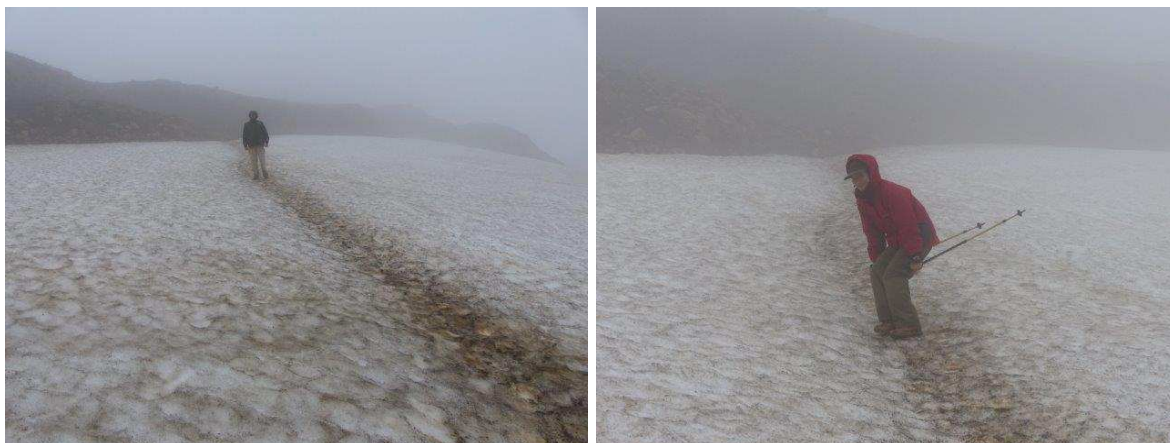
This morning, we start for our Skalli Walk (~ 17km) in good spirit. The weather is mediocre, but that should not deter us. Right at the beginning we have to cross quite a big river several times and there is no foot bridge...



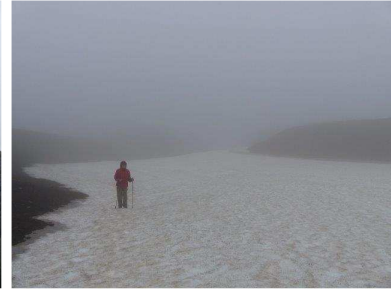
We climb the colourful ridges in all shades of red....



As we get higher, we have to cross some quite sizable snow fields. The weather continues to deteriorate and the fog gets very dense with low visibility; the wind gusts are so strong that we have problems walking. Dewi is scared that we will simply be blown off the mountain.



All of the sudden, there is an even bigger snowfield blocking our way and no more track markers in sight. We try to find the next pole and are scouting in all directions for about 1 hour, but to no avail. No marker to be found and also no obvious track or foot prints to be seen. Meanwhile the wind is blowing with about 60 km/h and we could hardly see anything in the fog. Scary, how easy it is to loose orientation especially when on a large white, snow covered area.



In the end we have to give up and walk back the same track we came. We don't want to take the risk of getting lost and with the dense fog and strong wind this was not an enjoyable hike anyway. Given that Landmannalaugar is one of the most visited tourist sites in Iceland, we would have thought, that the hiking tracks would be better marked, especially this year as there is still a lot of snow on the tracks. No wonder that tourists get lost and need to be rescued later....



The strong wind was tiring and after returning to the camp, we have a dip in natural geothermal river – which was crowded....

At last, it is time to leave this totally overcrowded place.





One more river crossing and after leaving the national park we find a good spot for the night.

It is almost dark when five French guys knock our door asking if they would be able to reach Landmannalaugar with their rented Sprinter which did not have 4x4. We had to disappoint them, that this road F225 is not possible for them, so they jump back into their bus and disappear back into the night....

25.8.2015, Hvolsvöllur

With stunning views of the volcano Hekla we leave the highland on F225.





The track is narrow and if there is oncoming traffic, one car has to move up the bank of the road to make space.

The highland bus drivers seem to "own" the track anyway and do not even make any attempt to move out of the way... Size matters...

Along some small side tracks we head for the city of Hvolsvöllur, where we plan to spend a day in civilisation. As we stop for a natural break, we discover lots of blueberries growing in beautiful heathland. Immediately we start harvesting and the break got a bit longer than expected...



The harvest!

In the early afternoon we reach Hvolsvöllur and unexpectedly meet Theresa und Pierre with their red-white Unimog again. Iceland is indeed small, one comes across each other all the time... We update each other about our latest adventures and tracks driven since we met at the Mercedes workshop in Reykjavik. So far both Unimogs are running without any problems. Then it is time to say good bye again and we both hit back into the highlands.

But before we start another adventure into the mountains we need to freshen up, of course in the local hot pot.

All cleanly scrubbed we leave the city and find a beautiful campsite close to mount Prihyrningur.



26.8.2015, F210, Laufafell

We now want to drive on track F210 Eastbound through the Southern highlands. The track F210 runs North of the glacier Myrdalsjökull, with extended views of the vulcano Hekla.



The vulcano Hekla is one of the most active vulcanos in Iceland, last eruption was in the year 2000. Scientists are expecting a larger eruption anytime soon. Quite extensive security measures and monitoring equipment is installed in the area. The danger of this volcano is, that it erupts with only 30 to 90 minutes prewarning signs. The eruption would happen so fast, that it is almost impossible to evacuate all people in this very remote area on time. Hekla has claimed lives before and now in any case or sign of any unrest of the volcano all mobile phones in the area will receive warning messages instantly.





As we cruise through the landscape of black lava sand all of a sudden the Unimog of Theresa & Pierre appears after a curve. This must be fate...

As we want to drive the same track we agree to meet up in the evening at the same camping spot.

We still drive to the valley Hungurfit, where we see a group of horse riders. Then our track is suddenly a riverbed or is the riverbed the track?



Then it's not far to our agreed camping spot at lake Laufafell, where an invitation for an Aperol from Theresa and Pierre awaits us. We have a very pleasant evening together in the shaking Unimog as outside again a rain storm is rattling the car.

