

June 11, 2014 (Hella, Iceland)

We get up at 7:30 AM to pack to leave Munich and Europe and fly to Iceland. Our flight isn't until 2 PM, but being unfamiliar with the time required to get to the airport and check in, I want to play it safe and get there early. Anyway, if we have an hour or two to burn, it's probably more comfortable at the airport than a hotel room where the air conditioning isn't that great. Yes, I slept on top of my blanket because the room never could seem to cool down enough.

Around 9 AM we decide to head to the airport. We take the tram back to the end of the street where the metro station is and get some money out of an ATM because we need euros to pay our hotel for the first 2 nights in Iceland. We then take the metro back to the main train station.

At the main train station, we stop at a bakery and get something sweet for breakfast. We sit inside the bakery at the tables because there are no benches anywhere in the Munich train station. Strange, since people are regularly there to wait for their trains.

We then get on the S-bahn train for the Munich airport. It takes over a half hour to get to the airport, getting us there at 10:30 AM for our 2 PM flight. Yes, we're definitely on the safe side for being early.



Inside the airport, we find where our flight checks in and must wait for a half hour until we can check in. It's nice to get rid of our bulky bags. We still have extra euros, so my wife wants to buy some chocolate for her parents. Of course she buys the Mozart chocolate we saw in Salzburg, Austria.

We then go through airport security and buy lunch at the lone food service place there. I get chicken schnitzel with potato wedges while my wife gets 2 ham omelets. It's amazing that Munich airport food is better than anything we ate in Switzerland, although it's not hard to beat baguette sandwiches.

We wait in the terminal for our flight. The incoming IcelandAir flight is late due to fog in Iceland, so our flight is delayed by 30 minutes. They announce that they'll be able to make up some of that time in the air.

During the flight, I watch the movie "The Butterfly Effect" which stars Ashton Kutcher.

It's actually not too bad of a movie. The premise is that the main character (Ashton Kutcher), his 3



friends and mother have had a bad life. But he discovers a way to go back in his memory and make a different decision at some point in his childhood. That change triggers a completely different outcome to the present day. But with each alternative life there are impacts and other consequences. Finally he realizes what he must change in his childhood to remove any bad consequences to the present day. The thing is, he remembers each of the different life outcomes and is burdened with knowing the cause and effect of everything that happens from each childhood decision.



We arrive at the Keflavik (Reykjavik) International Airport only 15 minutes late. We must wait awhile for our bags then exit the airport to pick up our rental car. Also, we get some money from an ATM.

Trying to figure out how to pick up the rental

car turned out to be a major hassle. Our rental car company, despite being an international company, doesn't have a counter inside the airport. So I ask at one of the other car rental companies and am directed to walk outside the airport about 5 minutes to their rental offices. I also ask at the IcelandAir office and am told the same thing. The email I received said something about a shuttle bus, but we also look



around and see no pick up area for any shuttle bus.

We decide to walk over to the car rental office. But there are several buildings over there and of course, we walk to the wrong ones. Fortunately,



we're still using the airport cart even though we're no longer in the airport, but it's difficult to move over curbs and push through some gravel. Eventually we arrive at the car rental offices and are told they do have a shuttle bus and that someone was standing in the terminal with a sign. It seems more logical that they have a sign permanently in the car rental counter area that states how their shuttle bus works.





We get an automatic Chevy Aveo. It looks practically new. By 5:30 PM, we're finally driving away from the airport towards Hella where our hotel is. The car rental guy told me that it should take about 2 hours to drive to Hella and pointed out a route to avoid the traffic around Reykjavik. He even gives me a map.

The first thing we notice about Iceland is that

there are practically no trees. Also, the area near the airport seems to be old lava fields. It looks very similar to the big island of Hawaii, but without the trees. It's a lot of black and brown volcanic rock.



Our route takes us past the Blue Lagoon thermal resort and the large geothermal electric power plant which provides the hot water to the Blue Lagoon.

It takes us awhile to figure out how the road signs work, but it's very simple. The difficult thing about driving is that it's single lane roads and we

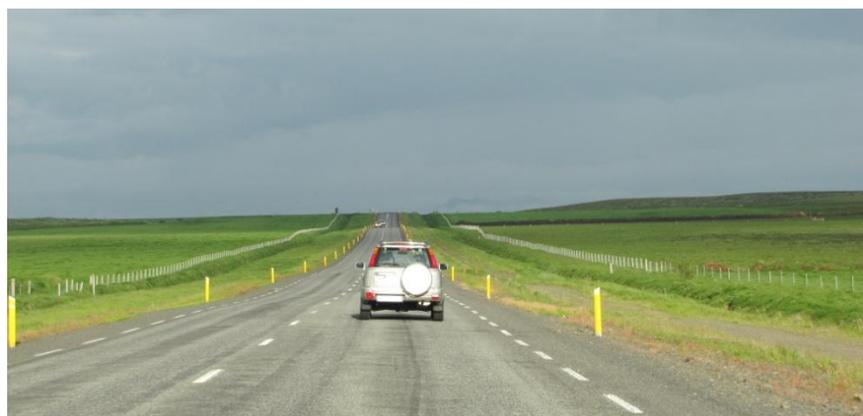
can drive for quite awhile without seeing anyone else. On an early Wednesday evening, there just don't seem to be many people on the roads, or at least not on these remote roads.



My wife is taking pictures out the car window as we

drive. There aren't many places to pull over and even if there was, we don't have time as we told our bed and breakfast place that we would arrive between 7 and 8 PM.

The countryside has a lot of lavender flowers (called lupine) and we come to an area where there are actually trees. These may be massive trees by Iceland's standards, but by the rest of the world, these trees are the 98 pound weakling that gets sand kicked in its face. We also see some horses and sheep in



the fields. Every once in awhile we'll see a lone building here or there.

When we get to the main ring road (Highway #1), we stop at a small grouping of stores to look for something to eat. The grocery store is closed for the day and the gas station has a minimal supply of food. We decide to drive on as the next town, Selfoss, probably has some options.



We arrive in Selfoss a few minutes later and stop at a gas station with a large convenience store. We purchase a package of cheese, a small package of ham, a loaf of bread and a 1.5 liter bottle of water. It comes to 1,866lkr (\$17). The bread and cheese is enough to last for additional meals and I want the larger water bottle for refilling each day. The car will remain cool so we don't need refrigeration. High temperatures during the day should be around 55°F with lows in the high 40s. Of course there's only about 3 hours of darkness, although I don't expect it to get completely dark.

After we've eaten our ham and cheese sandwiches, we continue on the last 15 minutes to Hella to our hotel. When we get to Hella, we realize we have zero directions about finding our hotel. But this isn't a problem as Hella is a small town and by just driving around, we find it.

The bed and breakfast is owned by a man who's on vacation. His daughter and 10 year old granddaughter are running the place in his absence. They're very helpful at showing us around. We



have our room with a shared bathroom in the hallway. Our room is quite large with a desk. There are a total of 5 rooms here and they're full for the night. I ask her some questions about the frequency of gas stations and how they accept cash or credit cards for payment. She doesn't know. This surprises me that someone who lives here doesn't know the basics about how easy it is to find gas stations. She seems very nice. The bed and breakfast has free wifi and breakfast included. Otherwise it would be called a bed and nothing.

As we arrive in Hella, the rain starts to sprinkle a bit. Hopefully this is just the general nature of Iceland and not an indication that rain is on the way. The weather report shows it to be cloudy tomorrow, but I suspect the weather can be anything at anytime in Iceland.

We spend the evening relaxing and wondering why we're so tired. It's then we remember that we've moved 2 time zones west and our bodies are telling us it's 2 hours later than it really is. So, it's time for bed.