

June 15, 2014 (Reykjavík, Iceland)

The day we go home we sleep in the latest. It's close to 7:30 AM when we get up. We get our things packed. My wife wants to visit the thermal baths down near the lake before we drive to the airport to fly home this afternoon. But this isn't possible as the baths don't open until 10 AM and we have what is probably a 2 ½ drive to the airport. We need to return the rental car and all that stuff. Our flight is at 4:45 PM and I'd like to be back to the airport



no later than 2 PM. Plus, we don't really know what the driving times are or what the roads are like.



Around 9 AM we leave the apartment for our trip back to the airport. Down the road, we stop in Selfoss to visit a small grocery store. My wife needs more skyr

and I need something for breakfast besides my second Billy's pan pizza I heated up back at the apartment. I buy a package of thin pancakes that are a little sweet and taste good cold and plain.



It's raining a lot and we hope that it lets up enough so we can still stop and see something



before we get to the airport. Since it's Sunday and we expect traffic to be light, we decide to take the more direct route via Reykjavík.



As we get close to Reykjavík, the road climbs in elevation as it must cross one of the mountains. As we get to the top, the fog is almost blinding although the rain has almost quit. Soon, the rain does quit and the fog is gone as we come down the other side of the mountain.

Reykjavík is a much larger city than I imagined.

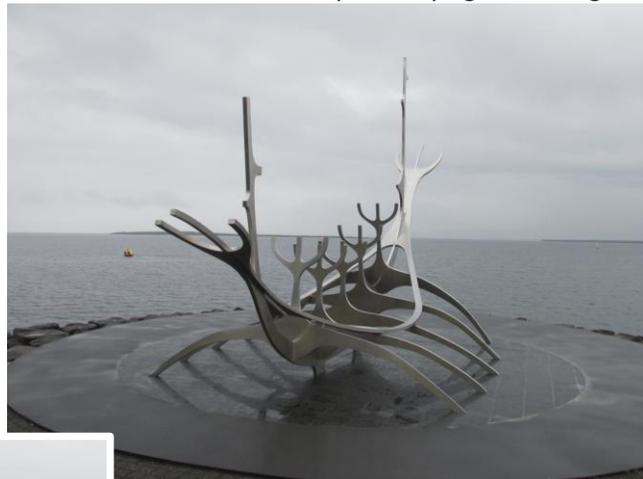


For a country of 320,000 people,

it appears that most live in Reykjavík. We first stop at a small park on the shoreline to the northeast of the city. A very light, misting rain and not really much views of anything.

We drive towards the

center of Reykjavík and find a parking place. At first we're concerned about having to pay for parking, but the signs seem to indicate that parking is free on Sundays. My wife wants to visit the large concrete church, Hallgrímskirkja.



We see it and believe we've parked near it, but when we get out of the car, we can't see it anywhere.

We walk downhill to the main tourist



street through Reykjavík. It's mostly shops offering guided trips or restaurants. We turn to go back uphill a few blocks away and we picked the perfect street. There on top of the hill is Hallgrímskirkja.

Hallgrímskirkja isn't particularly old, having been completed in 1974 with a construction time spanning 34 years. But it's a recognizable landmark of Reykjavík and a place everyone who visits must see. In front of it is a large square with a statue of Leifur Eiríksson (Leif





Erickson), a Viking explorer and the first European to discover North America. The statue was a gift from the United States in 1930 on the 1,000th anniversary of Iceland's National Assembly at þingvellir. We aren't able to go inside the church as they're just beginning to have their Sunday morning services and tourists with cameras would be disrespectful.

We walk back to the car and drive down to a metal sculpture of a Viking ship that's on the waterfront. It's called Sun-Craft and was done by Jón Gunnar Árnason. People are there posing for photos with it and evidently it's one of the top tourist sites here.

Nearby we stop at a parking lot for the large marina where I get out of the car to take pictures of several of the large ships that are docked. Across the way is a Icelandic Coast Guard ship.

We continue driving on the road that runs along the shoreline until we arrive at a lighthouse that sits on a small island by itself. It's called Gróttta and is also a bird sanctuary. During high tide it's an island, but at low tide (like now), it's easy to walk out to it. But, we can't walk to it because from May through July, access to the island is prohibited because it's also a bird sanctuary.



It's now getting close to noon. The airport is 50 km (30 miles) away. We decide to drive in that direction and see some sights near the airport. The road from Reykjavík to the airport is actually a two-lane divided highway.

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Near the airport, we turn south on road 44 towards the Hafnaberg Cliffs and the a bridge that crosses between the 2 continents. As we pass Hafnir, we see a parking area so we pull over. It's amazingly windy here so much that it feels freezing cold. My wife walks over to a display board that talks about the Hafnaberg Cliffs which happen to

be a reasonably long walk across this barren lava-created landscape. It's too windy to walk anywhere. Strangely there is also here a small metal ball on a poll from a metal plate that has inscribed "Uranus" and gives its distance from earth. There is no other explanation why that's here. I guess it's almost cold enough to be Uranus.



Down the road a couple of more minutes we arrive at the overly touristy “Bridge Between Two Continents.” When our guidebook mentions this, I was expecting just a regular bridge on the road. Instead, there’s a turnoff to a parking area and a small path to footbridge that spans a small chasm between two sides of volcanic rock. There are signs



up indicating you’re either in Europe or North America and it’s just constructed for the tourist who wants to say they’ve walked from Europe to North America or vice versa. In the center of the bridge there is actually a sign indicating where the border is between the 2 continents. When you look down at the small gorge between the 2 sides of volcanic rock, it’s apparent that someone dug it out as 50 feet or so to either side, the gorge is gone with sand, rock or whatever just filling it up. It’s just been dug out to give a stronger



impression to tourists of the 2 continents drifting apart. And the wind is brutally cold. A large tour bus pulls up and a lot of them don’t even get out.

We now drive back to the airport. I drop my wife off at the terminal with our bags while I drive over to the car rental company to return the car. We don’t trust the car rental company’s shuttle after the issues when we arrived. If the shuttle is an issue again, I can walk back to the terminal and not need to worry about our bags. But the shuttle is on and around 2 PM, I’m back at the departure terminal with my wife and our bags.



we arrive.

We check in for our flight. Unfortunately they can’t give us our boarding passes for our connecting flight with another airline out of Minneapolis. We’ll need to get that when



After going through security, we stop at the big food court for something to eat. We still have 45,000kr (\$41), yet the choices aren’t great. Well, we do find things to eat. I get a below-average cheeseburger with fries and a Coke

for 1,800kr (\$16.50) while my wife buys a package of smoked Icelandic salmon and a tin of Icelandic cod liver paté for 1,500kr (\$14). I'm surprised she didn't buy any skyr.

While we sit and eat, my wife notices that our flight has been delayed from 4:45 PM to 5:15 PM, likely because flights for connecting passengers have been delayed. This is the problem with IcelandAir. The weather in Iceland always has issues and they have their schedules set up such that passengers have less than an hour to change planes. Thus, they're constant delaying flights for connecting passengers. This is the 3rd time we've been in this airport and we've seen the same thing all 3 times. In fact, on the departure board, every flight to North America has a 30 to 60 minute delay.

We go through exit immigration of Iceland which covers leaving Europe. It's another stamp for each of our passports.

We get to the gate and it's crowded. We find seats near our gate but it's obvious that there are far more passengers than available seats. We wait for our flight to board. I start to get a little concerned when a flight to Washington-Dulles delayed to 5:20 PM is boarding before our flight that has been delayed to 5:15 PM. Under a normal schedule, we have a 2 hour and 50 minute connection in Minneapolis which must also include (1) going through customs, (2) changing airport terminals and (3) getting boarding passes. It could be very tight for us.

At 4:50 PM our flight finally starts boarding. By 5:00 PM it appears our plane has finished boarding, yet we just sit there. There are no announcements or anything. Finally at 5:10 PM about 25 people begin to board. They must have been on another delayed flight. This is the issue with IcelandAir scheduling so little layover time. Hopefully it won't domino into our being able to connect with our Minneapolis flight.

The flight is non-eventful, the way flights should be. We do finally pull away from the gate at 5:27 PM, 42 minutes late. Hopefully some of this time can be made up in the air. After takeoff, the flight status on the monitor projects arrival in Minneapolis at 6:27 PM, only 22 minutes late. But as we fly, that time slowly creeps up as the ground speed of the plane progressively decreases. It appears like no time will be made up in the air.

We land in Minneapolis 40 minutes late. We quickly get through immigration, get our bags, then go through customs. Normally, on the other side of customs is a place to drop off your checked bags. Are bags are checked through to our final destination. But as we go through customs, we're dumped out into the general airport population with no place to drop our checked bags. We inquire and are told we need to carry our checked bags to the ticketing area for our next flight, which is in Terminal 1. This is a very important reason to never fly IcelandAir through Minneapolis again.

We carry our checked bags through the light rail system, which still requires a lot of walking, to Terminal 1 and the US Airways ticketing area. We're there about an hour and fifteen minutes before our flight and there is zero line. The woman behind the counter tries to charge us \$25/bag for each of our checked bags. We protest that we're on an international flight and our bags are already checked through to our final destination. She goes away and checks, then returns to tell us that there's no charge. We drop off our bags and get our boarding passes.

We go through airport security and quickly grab something eat from the food court.

Soon we're at the gate and boarding our flight. After the 6-hour flight from Reykjavík and the time change, we're both hoping to sleep on the 3-hour flight home. Unfortunately, US Airways has given us seats in the very back row that don't recline. I guess US Airways is trying to top IcelandAir in low quality.