

Our Trip To Iceland, November 18 -22, 2011

Thursday, November 17

Rob actually wrote most of the following description of our trip, although I helped fill in a few details, and I am adding my own thoughts now and again....

We left for Iceland from Dulles National Airport at 7:40pm on IcelandAir. The flight took about six hours, and there is a five hour time difference between DC & Iceland so we arrived at Keflavik Airport at about 6:00am. Not much to tell about the flight since I tried to sleep a lot. The seat was very hard and not very comfortable so I was very glad when the plane landed and I could finally stand up and walk around some.

Friday, November 18

After going through Customs check, we boarded a FlyBus to take us to our hotel, the Hotel Nordicia in Reykjavik. Since the sun had not risen yet, we could not see much out of the bus windows. But the bus had much more comfortable seats than the airplane. During the drive we listened to an Icelandic radio station that played mostly songs to which we knew the words. We heard the Beatles, the Eagles, Three Dog Night, and other groups. The announcer spoke in Icelandic, though.

The hotel is located at about the corner of Suðurlandsbraut & Kringlumýrarbraut facing the ocean to the North.

We checked into the hotel, went to our room and freshened up a bit, broke out the cameras and proceeded to take a walk downtown to a place called the Grau Kotturinn, in English, the Grey Kitten, where I had a traditional "American" breakfast of fried eggs, potatoes, and bacon. What I also got was my first taste of Icelandic Tomatoes. They grow the tomatoes in greenhouses and they have an excellent exquisite taste! No tomatoes I have tasted in the States compares with the delicious flavor the Icelandic Tomato has and I am going to miss them. The Grau Kotturinn is a small establishment that has local artist paintings hanging on the walls and sculptures sitting about. There are two small rooms, one by the door and then the other was by the counter. We were seated in the room by the door and there were about four tables there. Directly across from us were two Icelandic women and in the table just to the right of us were five college aged students from, of all places, the DC area! I thought it funny that we went to a restaurant in the middle of Reykjavik and found other Americans.

After breakfast we decided to wander about the downtown area a little bit. We walked up streets and took pictures of the buildings, landmarks, and scenery. After awhile we needed a rest so we stopped at a bar & grill where I got some special Icelandic Christmas Beer.

The breweries in Iceland make special beers around Christmas; they are darker and more robust than the regular beers that are served at other times. The Christmas beers tasted really good and I tried to drink that version every time I had a brew.

We got back to the hotel around 3:30 and Laura was beat, having been unable to sleep as much during the flight, so I went exploring on my own for a while. I walked down to the bay along Kringlumýrarbraut until I crossed a road called Sæbraut. On the other side of the road next to the bay there is a walking/biking path that follows the coast from the top part of the bay to the harbor downtown. Along this path I got a really good view of the island Viðey. There is a ferry that goes out to the island but we did not get a chance to visit it this time.

Viðey is the largest island of the Kollafjörður Bay in Iceland next to the capital. It is the location of the Imagine Peace Tower which is a "Tower of Light" envisioned and built by Yoko Ono, widow of Beatle John Lennon. According to the Associated Press, *"The tower is a beam of light, radiating from a wishing well bearing the words "imagine peace" in 24 languages. The plan is for it to be lit each year between his birthday, October 9, and his death December 8."*

After taking a bunch of pictures I hobbled back to the hotel where we proceeded to go to the restaurant in the hotel (VOX) for dinner. After a great meal of vegetable lasagna, Greek salad, bread, coffee, and a Christmas beer we went back to the room to discover the delights of Icelandic TV.

Since we do not speak or comprehend Icelandic, we stayed with the English speaking channels, of which there were a couple of them devoted to news, BBC World News and France24 in English, and then there were the "other" channels: CBeibees or BBC Four, BBC One London, and BBC Two Scotland. The first was devoted to children's shows in the mornings, showing things like "Postman Pat," "Bob the Builder" and others along these lines. At night it showed cultural documentaries. BBC Two was a mix of children shows & Quiz shows. There was a very strange one we watched. It had Alice Cooper hosting a show about rock music knowledge. It was pretty far out. We went to sleep around 10 or 11 (Iceland Time).

Saturday, November 19

This was our “Walk on a Glacier” Day! We got up around 7AM and went down to the VOX restaurant for breakfast. They served a buffet style breakfast and they had some interesting items for breakfast. Offered for our dining pleasure were beans, mini sausages, cuts of cheese and meats, olives, along with “traditional” eggs, potatoes, bacon, pan cakes, and various pastries. They also had a wide selection of breads from which to choose. It was a very good breakfast.

Back in the room we proceeded to put on our glacier survival gear, ie: thermal underwear, rain pants over blue jeans, and our winter coats. I elected not to put on the thermal undershirt and I am very glad I did as the coat and shirt I picked out was very warm.

We loaded up on the bus at 11:30 and our tour guide, Stefan proceeded to entertain us with stories of Icelandic history, trolls, elves, and interesting facts about the farms and places we passed while riding along. Stefan will forever be the voice of Iceland for us.

The bus route took us past the Hellisheiði Power Station which is the second largest geothermal power station in the world and the largest in Iceland. Along the route Stefan pointed out the only town in Iceland without a church, which is quite unusual in Iceland. While Iceland had no official separation of Church (Lutheran) and State, citizens both natural born and nationalized, can opt out. Of course they still have to pay the “Church tax,” but they can direct their taxes to another Church or to the University of Iceland. Nobody can opt out of paying the tax to someone.

Stefan told us that the sun would be at its highest point about 1pm when it would be due south. Laura measured the height of the sun at about 3 fingers off the horizon at its peak.

We continued down Route 1 until we had a ½ hour stop over in Selfoss for a quick lunch, then on through Hella towards the Mýrdalsjökull Glacier where our walk was scheduled. While we were getting back onto the bus, Stefan told us that we were in the presence of four volcanoes. This was a pretty neat thing to know, (and kind of exciting in its own way).

This glacier is located just to the north of the town of Vik, which is along the coast. The icecap of the glacier covers an active volcano called Katla. The volcano erupts usually every 40–80 years. As the last eruption took place in 1918, scientists are monitoring the volcano very carefully as they believe an eruption of Katla is in the cards, particularly after the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull began in April 2010. In fact, the people of Vik held an evacuation practice just two weeks before we arrived.

Evidently the area around Katla has been having an increasing number of small earthquakes around it. This could be an indication that Katla is ready to go, or not. Its not an exact science predicting eruptions!

Route 1 is called the Ring Road, because it goes all the way around Iceland, another trip I want to do.

We did not see any eruptions while we were there, although we did see the ash from an eruption lying on the glacier where we were walking. I don't know how long we were on the glacier, but however long it was it was too short of a time ☺ I could have stayed a lot longer. But we were losing light and had a lot of other places to go. So we got back into the buses being tired, happy, and exulted at actually walking on a glacier!

Next stop was the water fall we passed on the way to the glacier, Seljalandsfoss. It was quite dark by the time we arrived back at the falls, since it was about 5:30pm, so the guides set up some lights along the path and the falls had some floodlights strategically placed so we were able to see it quite clearly. My camera did not like the lighting so much so none of my pictures turned out well. However, Laura got some excellent pictures with her camera.

The fall is situated in between Selfoss and Skógafoss, at the road crossing of Route 1 (the Ring Road) with the track going into Þórsmörk. The river Seljalandsá feeds this fall and the water drops 200 ft over the cliffs of the former coastline. Evidently this is a very famous fall and its picture can be found in many books & calendars, according to Wikipedia ☺ There is a path that goes behind the falls but we didn't take it since we were already wet and cold. We had been overly warm on the glacier, but once the sun set and the rain started, it was a different story.

Skógafoss, is another waterfall that we did not go to see close up, but saw from the road.

After the fall we had about an hour drive to the restaurant, it is called Rauda Husid (The Red House). We had an excellent Lobster soup, fantastic bread, and divine desert. I had some coffee and a Tuborg (Danish) beer. This restaurant is located in Eyrarbakki, a fishing-town on the south-coast of Iceland with a population of about 570 people.

After dinner we were informed that the chance of seeing Northern lights that night was 0 percent, but the guides had another place they wanted to take us to. They

decided to take us to the Seltún geothermal area, located near the town of Krýsuvík, north of Krýsuvík church along Route 42.

According to information I found online, *“The geothermal area Krýsuvík is situated on the Reykjanes peninsula. It is in the south of Reykjanes in the middle of the fissure zone on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge which traverses Iceland diagonally from the south-west to the north-east of the island.”*

“The area is highly interesting to visit, with colorful soil surrounding bubbling mud pools containing foul-smelling steam fumaroles and hot sulphurous water springs. There is a wooden show path and hiking trails leading up the mountain Sveifluháls behind it.”

Laura has a great description of our visit here: It was raining, dark, and windy when we arrived. We wandered up the trail, onto the boardwalk, and on to wet stone stairs by flashlight. We had to pause whenever we lost our light, since having not considered doing this, Rob and I did not bring a flash light with us. The affair bordered on reckless since the danger of slipping was quite high, I suppose, but it was such great fun that we hardly cared.

Then it was time to load up the tired exhausted people on the buses and head back to Reykjavik. We got back to the hotel at about midnight. We left a wake-up call for 7:00am the next morning then dragged ourselves off to bed.

Sunday, November 20

The Great Car Rental Adventure!

The previous day, Saturday, we had arranged to rent a car from Budget. The van was scheduled to pick us up at the hotel at 8:30am. We woke up at about 7, showered and got dressed then went to the lobby to wait for the van to come.

It arrived right on time and I tried to memorize the route the driver took so I could make it back to the hotel, since all my carefully planned routes left and arrived there. The Budget office is located by the regional airport located in downtown Reykjavik, funny enough, this airport was built mostly by the British during their occupation of Iceland during WWII. As an aside, the international airport at Keflavík was built by the US when we established a base there in 1951.

So, after getting the car, a Hyundai i20, I proceeded to get us totally lost. We found the street we wanted a couple times, but could not determine if we were headed east or west. We ended up stopping at a gas station next to the ocean to ask for directions



to our hotel. The attendant looked at the map I had, kinda shook his head, and then got us another map. The man at the station knew his town well and

proceeded to draw a line on this map to where we needed to go, saying things like, “take the 2nd exit from the roundabout to go....” So there would be no reason for us to get lost again.

We bought a road map of Iceland, coffee, hardsfiskur (hard fish), and a cookie to share for breakfast, thanked the guy, and then went on our way. The man’s directions were spot on as Laura was able to get us out of town and headed in the right direction. Once we were out of Reykjavik, we had less trouble navigating. Each side road was clearly marked. We eventually realized the signs were color coded with green for residential areas and blue for more major intersections.

We were going to do what is known as the “Golden Circle” tour of Iceland. This incorporates two very popular tourist sites and a national heritage site. The first site on our list to see was Pingvellir National Park. Pingvellir is known for a few things. First it is the home of the Alþingi, in English called Althing or Althingi, the first site of the Icelandic Parliament which was the first parliament in Europe established in 930 and remaining there until 1789. Pingvellir is also the site of a valley that marks the crest of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge where the North American plate meets the European plate. It is also home to Þingvallavatn, the largest natural lake in Iceland. Finally it is a very lovely place.

We arrived there at about 12:00. It was overcast, windy, and kind of cold. We walked up the gravel pathway, across a bridge and to an overlook area. The sun played hide and seek in the clouds while whiffs of storm clouds played with the mountain behind us. All in all it was a very beautiful area, even in its winter colors of brown and rust red. We could see clearly the rift of the Mid Atlantic Ridge.

While we were walking along the path to the bridges, a tour bus stopped and a gaggle (no other word could describe them) of young German tourists were offloaded. They proceeded to march their way up the paths and around the bends while making loud “victory cheers” at every site they saw. It was very amusing 😊

After we looked around a bit and took a bunch of pictures we went back to the car. I was getting hungry, (a half a cookie can only last me so long) so we were lucky that there was a little “oasis” of sorts located just on the other side of the road. We went in and we had some very good vegetable soup made with broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, and celery. We also had some of my new favorite stuff, Skyr.

Again, looking on Wikipedia, *“Skyr is an Icelandic cultured dairy product, similar to strained yogurt. Technically it is a very soft cheese. It is very popular in Icelandic cuisine. Skyr was originally discovered by accident. A group of farmers in Iceland in the early settlement days poured skim milk over barrels of meat to attempt to preserve the meat throughout a long and harsh winter. During this same winter, the farmers became hungry and ate the fermented by-product which formed on the sides of the barrels. This was the first known culture of Skyr. It is traditionally served cold with a topping of sugar and cream.”*

Refreshed, and re-fed, we hopped in the car and headed to our next destination, Geysir. Maybe you can guess what the attraction is there? *“Geysir was the first geyser described in a printed source and the first known to modern Europeans. The English word geyser (a spouting hot spring) derives from Geysir. The name Geysir itself is derived from the Icelandic verb geysa, “to gush”, the verb from Old Norse. Geysir lies in the Haukadalur valley on the slopes of Laugarfjall hill, which is also the home to Strokkur geyser about 50 meters south. Eruptions at Geysir can hurl boiling water up to 70 meters in the air.”*

When we arrived here it was raining a bit, turning into hail every now and again. The Geyser went off just as we arrived, but as we walked up the path to it we looked at other little boiling pots of water and steam vents. All very colorful. We got to where the main geyser was and waited. And we waited. Then, suddenly, with no warning at all, the Geysir shot a stream of hot water into the air! It was great! I even managed to get a shot of it! Laura was not so lucky the first time so we waited a bit more. Finally we decided to leave. Of course, once we turned our backs on it, the geyser decided to let go again! Well, we both missed this first shot, but since the pattern I had observed since we were there was that it would let go twice before stopping, we waited just a bit longer and Laura was able to capture the geysers exciting moment!

So off we went to the next breathtaking spot on our tour, Gullfoss. Gullfoss consists of two falls, placed closely together. The falls were very beautiful, with a mist surrounding them. I did not see any rainbows as the sun was pretty low in the sky, again playing around with the clouds.

From my friend, Wikipedia, *“Gullfoss (English: Golden Falls) is located in the canyon of Hvítá river in southwest Iceland. The wide Hvítá rushes southward. About a kilometer above the falls it turns sharply to the left and flows down into a wide curved three-step “staircase” and then abruptly plunges in two stages (11 m and 21 m) into a crevice 32 m (105 ft) deep. The crevice, about 20 m (60 ft) wide, and 2.5 km in length, is at right angles to the flow of the river. As you first approach the falls, the crevice is obscured from view, so that it appears that a mighty river simply vanishes into the earth.*

During the first half of the 20th century and some years into the late 20th century, there was much speculation about using Gullfoss to generate electricity. During this period, the waterfall was rented indirectly by its owners, Tómas Tómasson and Halldór Halldórsson, to foreign investors. However, the investors' attempts were unsuccessful, partly due to lack of money. The waterfall was later sold to the state of Iceland. Even after it was sold, there were plans to utilize Hvítá, which would have changed the waterfall forever. This was not done, and now the waterfall is protected.

Sigríður Tómasdóttir, the daughter of Tómas Tómasson was determined to preserve the waterfall's condition and even threatened to throw herself into the waterfall. Although it is widely believed, the very popular story that Sigríður did save the waterfall from use is not true. A stone memorial to Sigríður, located above the falls, depicts her profile.” On the guided tour we took on Saturday, Stefan told us this story very well.

In the service area next to the trail head, who should we run into to but our old guide buddy Stefan. He stopped to talk for a minute or two and told us that that night would have good conditions for the Northern Lights. There was sun activity and a clear sky predicted for the area around Gullfloss and Geyser between about 9 and 10 that evening.

So now we have completed the golden circle. It was a wonderful drive, through very pretty and interesting landscapes. I can't wait until I can do this again. The lake that this drive bordered was also very pretty to look at as we followed its coastline.

Since Stefan told us there could be a good chance for Northern Lights, I decided not to head back to Reykjavik but instead to go back to the falls we stopped at Saturday night in hopes that I could get some pictures as well.

Heading south on Route 35 we first went through the small town of Reykholt, according to some info I found on the Nordic Adventure Travel: *Reykholt is one of the most important historical places in Iceland and a cultural center for centuries.*

Here was the home of Snorri Sturluson, the chieftain and historian, from 1206 until 1241, when he was slain by his enemies. Snorri Sturluson was Iceland's greatest Saga writer as well as being an author and a great scholar. His most renowned works are Snorra-Edda and Heimskringla (The Orb of The World; Orbis Terrarum).

"Snorralaug", a thermal pool at the farm of Reykholt where Snorri used to bathe, has been restored and so has a tunnel he used to reach the pool from his residence. Reykholt has been a school center for decades and a Snorri museum has been established there. There are many hot springs at Reykholt and Valley Reykholt is the largest low temperature area of the country. Deildartunguhver, a wonder in itself, is the largest hot spring in Europe. Spectacular waterfalls are in the vicinity and the rivers offer salmon fishing. Reykholt is also an information center for tourists.

The nearby Husafell is in one of Iceland's few woodlands and is therefore popular among the natives. Enroute are Hraunfossar and Barnafoss waterfalls, where nature seems to have been playing at wonders. Daily tours on the glacier Langjokull and to Surtshellir, one of Iceland's largest lava caves, are operated in the area.

Of course we did not know any of that at the time, so we just drove right on through. We followed 35 south until it connected with the Ring Road (Route 1) then went through Selfoss, back through Hella, and made it to the Seljalandsfoss. This time we arrived a little before sunset, and could see the area better. We took more pictures and walked around some.

Next we headed east to Vik. A bit of information about Vik from Nordic Adventure Travel: *This is the southernmost coastal hamlet of the country and the only one without a harbor. The flat, black beach south of the village was declared one of the 10 most beautiful island beaches of the world by the Iceland Magazine. Amphibious vehicles were used for deep sea angling, fishing and highly interesting sightseeing tours along the coastline all the way to the country's southernmost point, Dyrholaey. This activity was discontinued, but is on offer at the farm Dyrholaey, a bit further west. There is also Travel Café Tourist Information Center.*



Large bird breeding colonies are on both sides of the village, arctic terns, puffins, guillemots, fulmars, kittiwakes etc. There are many other possibilities for recreation

in Vik and its surroundings, bird watching, hiking, glacier tours etc. The distance from the capital is 192 km.

Stefan had told a story about 3 trolls who went fishing. They were catching so many fish they did not know when to quit. When they realized how late it was getting, they rowed furiously, but the sun caught them near the shore turning them and their boat to stone. I wanted to see the trolls, so off we went to Vik. But, by the time we arrived, it was too dark to see the trolls much less take a picture, so we ‘borrowed’ this one from Wikipedia.

We were a bit hungry so we decided to get a bite to eat at a gas station/grill. I take Laura to the “**Best**” places to eat don’t I?

We walked into the grill area and decided to get the “Traditional Icelandic Lamb soup.” Yes, I actually got a bowl and really liked it. They gave us two pieces of French type bread with our meal. This meal, simple as it was, filled us, along with the delicious slice of desert cake we shared.

While at the gas station/grill I decided to get some gas in the car since we only had ½ tank left. Being in a strange country with a strange car I did not want to risk running out of gas in the hinterlands of Iceland! Getting gas turned out to be not so easy. First I had to ask another customer at the pumps where to put the credit card. Then I had to decipher what it was asking me. Well, it would not work with the debit card, or with the credit card. So I had to admit defeat and go in and ask the attendant what I could do to get gas in the car. He had a solution; he sold us a gas card. The other customer suggested I put in 5,000 Kroners worth of gas, so that was the amount I put on the gas card. Needless to say, it took all 5,000 to fill the car up! By the way, gas is sold by the liter in Iceland, like basically the rest of the world. 1 liter is approximately ¼ of a US gallon. The price was 227.9 Kroners per liter. One US dollar is equal to about 115 Kroners. So we were paying about \$7.93 a gallon!

Back on the road again, we headed north toward Geyser to wait for the Lights. My plan was to reverse my route back to Selfoss and take 35, but on the way there we saw another road, route 30 that claimed it could get us to Geysir. Laura consulted the map and we discussed it for a bit, then decided what the heck, go for it.

I am glad we did! It was a marvelous drive. We went through a small town called Laugaras-Skalholt where they had greenhouses along the side of the road. We should have gotten some pictures of these, but we were not thinking. Perhaps next time. ☺
Some information I found about this little town on Nordic Adventure Travel: *A hamlet has developed at Laugaras, where there is a very active thermal area and many*

greenhouses produce vegetables for the domestic market. The hamlet offers accommodation in hotel Hvita, Travel Café tourist information center, good camping grounds and the domestic animal garden Slakki is popular among children of all ages. Laugaras is the domicile of the county physician and a health care center. One of the country's most important historic sites, Skalholt, is located nearby. It was the seat of the bishops of the southern see for 740 years and a school was established there around the year 1056. Nowadays it is still a school center, mainly used for all kinds of courses and adult education. An excellent salmon river, [Ida](#), runs past the hamlet. The second largest spring fed river, Bruara, north and west of Skalholt, offers good brown trout fishing.

The night was clear and we saw more stars than we have seen in quite a while. But the Lights did not come out to play, we saw a couple flashes in the sky like lightning without any thunder, and I saw a green flash. Since Laura was looking out of the other side of the car, she missed that.

About 10 we headed back to Reykjavik driving through bands of clear sky, followed by rain and sleet with a little bit of snow thrown in for variety. We were able to find our hotel fairly easily, thanks to the map the service station man marked for us.

Monday, November 21

We had another early morning. We had to return the car around 8:30. Again we got turned around on the roads in Reykjavik. We started out well, but then passed the road we wanted and were unable to get turned around to try again. Eventually we did get there. We had put over 689 Kilometers (about 429 miles) on the car since picking it up at 9:00am the previous day, the lady we returned the car to at the rental place didn't even blink at the distance 😊

The lady at the car rental drove us back to the hotel. During the drive back, she asked us where we live. Upon hearing that we were from the U.S. she got quite excited and told us about a friend she has, also from the U.S., who lives in Iceland now. Last year her friend invited her over for a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner. The rental car lady really like the food, and was sad because her friend had not invited her for Thanksgiving this year, too.

While the restaurant in the hotel had a marvelous breakfast buffet, we realized it was also quite expensive, so we elected for something a bit easier on the wallet.

We walked east to the end of the hotel and right across the street was the “Café Konditori” (Copenhagen) where we had some coffee & a chocolate covered pastry. The pastries were very good and breakfast was very cheap (less than \$7).

We spent the rest of the morning walking 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) along the seawall on Sæbraut toward the harbor area where there was a fish and chips café I wanted to try. I had read the review of it on a site that promotes Iceland and they said it was a really healthy place to eat. I had Haddock and Laura tried Wolf Fish which she says was excellent.



After we had the excellent lunch, we walked around the Harbor area that was just across the road from the restaurant. We took some pictures of the ships that take tourists out to see whales, something that I would like to do, and some pictures of large fishing boats. There were a lot of birds flying around and I managed to get a picture of a seabird staring down at the

water, looking for its next meal. While walking along the road next to the harbor I noticed a bunch of little fish swimming next to the wall, so I managed to get some pictures of them. The polarized lens I got really helped me out here, as I was able to see the fish very clearly without any glare off the water.

We continued walking west along the Harbor and eventually passed the new Opera House, “Harpa” that was completed early 2011. The design is controversial among Icelanders, but I thought it was a really cool looking building. The outside of the building is covered in glass rectangles that capture the sunlight and show different colors depending on how the light hits them. Very cool.

We started walking along the walking/biking path that borders the bay towards a sculpture named “Sun Voyager” (Icelandic: Sólfar). I found the information about this sculpture so interesting that I’ve included a lot about it in this letter, again from my old friend Wikipedia.

This sculpture is by Jón Gunnar Árnason (1931 - 1989). Sun Voyager is a dreamboat, an ode to the sun. Intrinsicly, it contains within itself the promise of undiscovered territory, a dream of hope, progress and freedom.

“In 1986, the district association of the west part of the city funded a competition for a new outdoor sculpture to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the city of Reykjavík. Jón Gunnar’s Sun Voyager won the competition. The full-sized Sun Voyager was eventually unveiled on Sæbraut on the birthday of the city of Reykjavík, August 18th, 1990.



There has been some dispute about the eventual location of Sun Voyager on Sæbraut in [Reykjavík](#). Some people have complained that the ship does not face west, towards the setting sun in accordance with the concept behind it.

The original intention had been for Sun Voyager to be situated in the west part of Reykjavík, for obvious reasons. Jón Gunnar’s original idea had been for the ship to be placed on Landakot hill, the prow facing the centre of Reykjavík and the stern Landakot church. In the end, the final decision was taken (with Jón Gunnar’s consent) that Sun Voyager should be located on Sæbraut on a small headland (which the artist jokingly called Jónsnes: Jón’s Peninsular). Jón Gunnar was well aware that when bolted to its platform, Sun Voyager would be facing north, but felt that that made little difference when it came down to it.”

After taking numerous pictures of Sun Voyager, we decided what we really wanted to do was to sit on a bus and get warm and rested for a while! So we turned around and went a couple of streets over to Hverfisgata, a street that I knew had buses running along it. We stood there for a while and I told Laura, "I'm not particular what bus we get on, the first one will do." She looked at me strangely, but didn't say a word. When the Number 6 bus pulled up a few minutes later, we got on for "a ride."

Laura describes our trip: "This would be our "last adventure in Iceland." We had a bus route map and knew the route number for the bus we were on, so we were not totally crazy, just mostly. With the bus we could see more of the city in the time and light we had left. The bus took us past a city park, the car rental place we had so much trouble finding, shopping malls, and into the suburbs, along winding lanes, and eventually, back into town.

"Unfortunately it did not seem to be heading up Suðurlandsbraut where our hotel was located. I figured we could switch to another bus when we reached a station, but Rob had other ideas. He had been watching the sign at the front of the bus that told us the name of the next stop, and then looking at the map. As the last of the sunset was sliding into darkness, Rob suddenly announced that we should get off here.

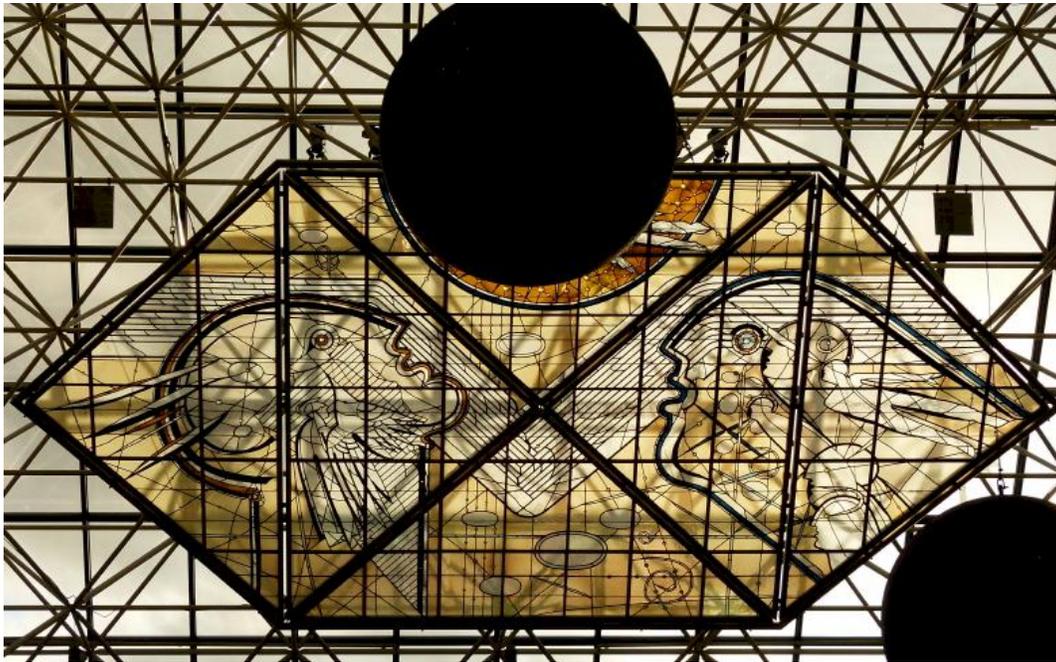
"Here" was a dark, rainy, spooky stop alongside a major 6 lane divided road. As he started off down the dark sidewalk, he said we needed to take the first right. So we turned right, and walked up a long, dark, uninviting pathway by some older apartment buildings. I was cold, wet, and lost. Just as I was reminding Rob that distances that look short on a map can be very long for walking, we came on a bright city street. Rob was jubilant, crowing about what a good job he had done. Even though I did not recognize the street, he seemed so certain that I felt better. He said that he recognized the gas station; since gas stations all look very much alike to me, I just nodded. Then he led me around a corner and there it was – Nirvana. OK, it was only our hotel, but it sure looked good to me.

"We ate dinner in the hotel that night."

Tuesday, Nov 22

For the first morning since we arrived, we slept in. After we woke, I went to a local convenience store to get some Skyr and fruit for our breakfast. Then we packed and checked out. While we were relaxing by the fire in the lobby waiting for our ride, who should wander past but good ol' Stefan? We told him that we did not see the Lights on Saturday night, but we loved the sky full of stars. And then we said,

goodbye. The minivan arrived at 12:30 to take us to a bus that would take us to Keflavik Airport. The van drove to the building next door to the car rental that we had so much trouble finding. Since we had sunlight, we could see more than during the ride into Reykjavik. On the left side of the bus, we saw the volcanoes that birthed Iceland. The volcanic rocks were covered with moss and occasional scruffy bushes and trees. To our right, we mostly saw the sea, harbors, boats, seawalls.... And too soon we saw the airport.



As we headed up the stairs to go through Security and Customs, Laura took a parting shot of a window inside the terminal.



Good bye Iceland for now, we will be coming back soon ☺

After going through Security and Customs, we had a few hours to kill before our flight left at 5:00pm. We wandered through the duty free shop where we got some bottles of Iceland products then went to a café called, “Nord” for lunch.

I had a tomato & provolone cheese sandwich on toasted whole wheat while Laura had an excellent Icelandic soup. After lunch we went shopping through some conveniently located duty free stores just a few short steps from where we ate. How nice of them to put these stores so close . ☺ Anyway, we picked up a couple more little items for presents and to remember our trip by, then we took a walk through the whole length of the Airport to get to our gate.

The plane took off at about 5:00pm and we “chased the sunset” over the Atlantic and almost all the way across Canada. The sun finally “won” the race and disappeared behind the earth while we were flying over Quebec. During the flight Laura & I were able to watch three movies, thanks to the video screens they provided each passenger with. (I'm liking this IcelandicAir!) We each had a selection of movies, TV shows, music, etc. we could pick from. Really neat. All we had to pay for were headphones and we got to keep them for our next trip :-)

Our plane landed at Dulles around 6:20pm. By this time it was dark, with a misty rain. We sped through customs and got our bags then went out to wait for the bus that would take us to our car. The wait was not very long and before we knew it we were at the car and heading home.

Per my usual routine, I missed the exit to the beltway (495) from the road coming from the airport but I managed to get turned around quickly enough that we did not lose too much time. After an uneventful 40 minute drive home we took our weary bodies inside, said hello to Luke & Leah, gave them some food, then we went to bed at about 9pm. And that was the end of our 17 hour travel day.