

## Icelandic volcanic ash creates travel chaos

Spectacular scenes emerged from southern Iceland recently as its Eyjafjallajökull volcano began erupting. On April 14<sup>th</sup> it suddenly began sending a plume of ash 8.5 km (5.3 miles) high into the air. The volcanic ash spewed out gradually spreading across Europe, causing travel chaos, not only in Europe but worldwide. Within days, the ash had crossed many parts of Europe, forcing closure of most of Europe's air routes. The Met Office in Britain warned the disruption could go on for another week, causing flight misery to passengers. Geologists warned the travel chaos could last months. Meanwhile airports remained closed across much of Europe. Travellers instead opted for any means possible to get home. Cross channel ferry services were rapidly booked up, as was Eurostar, who raised prices and was accused of profiteering.

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Celebrities too got caught out in the chaos. John Cleese, the actor and comedian, took a €3,700 taxi ride from Norway to Brussels then took the Eurostar train to London. Singer Whitney Houston and her tour entourage were forced to take the ferry across the Irish Sea to Ireland. BBC Match of

**Category: Icelandic volcano / Airlines / Travel**  
**Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate**

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the Day presenter Gary Lineker, who was in Tenerife with his family, flew to Madrid, hired a car, then drove to Paris, then took the Eurostar to London. Even US President Obama was forced to cancel his flight to the funeral of the former Polish President, who ironically was killed by thick fog a week earlier.

Some incredible stories have emerged showing 'the Dunkirk spirit' of people stranded. Historian Dan Snow laid on a flotilla of inflatable rubber rafts from Calais to get people home to England. Some intrepid travellers resorted to buying a bike to get on board ferries to Britain as foot passenger tickets were fully booked. Across Europe people have come up with clever ideas to get home. People have banded together to take taxis to ports. Meanwhile business boomed for car hire companies. With tens of thousands of people stuck worldwide, many found hotels had suddenly raised their price. One man stuck in Dubai hitched a ride on a container ship. People with medical conditions and no money were particularly at risk. Air passengers were advised to contact their embassies if desperate.

Food supplies to the UK and other countries were hit. Millions of pounds worth of vegetables and flowers from Kenya that were destined for British supermarkets were destroyed. Fresh Thai food and orchids could also not be delivered. The British economy alone lost £230m a day. Meanwhile conflicting stories were pouring in from travellers anxious as to whether travel insurers would cover their situations. The Association of British Insurers (ABI) strongly recommended people to contact their insurers and to check the conditions of their policies, which could vary from insurer to insurer. Airlines were desperate to get their planes back in the air. Over the first weekend Dutch airline KLM and German airline Lufthansa tested several planes without passengers to see if they were affected by the volcanic dust. None actually encountered any problems during the flights. Meanwhile a thin layer of ash began settling across Europe.

## EXERCISES

1. **Icelandic volcano:** What three things do you know about the volcano in Iceland? Give three other related issues. Briefly, what's the latest news?

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self correct your work from page two - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

**Look on Google maps to pinpoint the volcano.**

6. **Let's think!** Think of three economic advantages and disadvantages the air travel ban has created. Write them below. What conclusion do you come to?

	Advantages		Disadvantages
1		1	
2		2	
3		3	

**The teacher** will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. **Let's help!** In pairs. One of you rings your fellow student who is in another country on your mobile or on Skype! You are stuck and can't get home. How can the other help? Momentarily there is a bad line. *5-minutes*.

8. **Let's think!** Swap partners. With your new partner on the board write as many words to do with **Volcanoes** as you can. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

9. **Let's compile! Sentences:** Choose six/nine of the words from No 8. Write two/three sentences using two/three words in each. Underline your chosen words. The teacher will if necessary correct your work. Students might be asked to read their sentences aloud.

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10. **Let's debate:** In pairs. Students A think the volcano ash is a threat to economic recovery. Students B think otherwise. Explain why.

11. **Let's think! Travel disruption:** Think of three 'alternative' ways to travel home due to the air travel ban. Add three reasons you might need to get home! Write them below. Use these in the next exercise.

Ways to get home	Why you might need to get home
1	1
2	2
3	3

**The teacher** will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

12. **Let's talk! In the pub:** *In pairs.* Imagine you are in a pub. You have both recently returned home after taking dramatic action to do so. One of you was on business, the other on holiday. Discuss together your crazy mad journeys.

13. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score one point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

**Student A**

- 1) Which country is the volcano spewing ash out in?
- 2) Name the volcano.
- 3) Who warned there could be travel chaos for months?
- 4) How many countries closed their airspace?
- 5) Who has been affected?

**Student B**

- 1) What does 'tipped over the edge' mean?
- 2) Who was accused of profiteering?
- 3) Name the celebrities and what are they famous for?
- 4) What 'supplies' have been hit?
- 5) What did the Association of British Insurers say?

14. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about **Worldwide air travel chaos**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

15. **Presentation:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation: **Worldwide air travel chaos**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the strong and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

16. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) The volcano \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Airlines \_\_\_\_\_
- c) My adventure \_\_\_\_\_

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## CASE STUDY

*A live TV news show in London – a lifestyle TV issue*

*The subject - The Icelandic volcano – the ash effect*

*Allow 30-45 minutes – As a class*

### **Background**

The Icelandic volcano has sent massive amounts of ash into the air resulting in it severely disrupting air travel. This has had a major knock on effect in many sectors. Representatives of these sectors have been invited to a live TV debate.

*Task – Allow 15 minutes preparation time before debate*

You are here to discuss the air travel chaos situation and how it has affected many people, businesses and life worldwide. The invited panel are here to offer alternative viewpoints. The invited audience has been asked to prepare three questions. The host will ask the audience randomly to ask some of their questions to the panel.

### **Students will be one of the following:-**

*The TV host*

One student is the TV host

*A senior airline representative from your country*

One student is a senior airline representative from a leading airline.

*The EU Minister of Travel*

One student is a senior government minister.

*A geologist from Iceland*

One student is a top geologist from Iceland. You are daily actively monitoring the volcano – sending reports worldwide to whoever.

*A top business person from your country*

One student is a top business person. Your business is importing large amounts of fresh flowers and exotic vegetables from Kenya, Thailand and Israel. Your business is in serious jeopardy because of the flight ban.

*Travellers*

The remaining students are travellers. Be prepared to briefly tell the panel how you got home and from where. How much did it cost you? How did other travellers suffer? What thoughts can you offer the panel on how to improve future emergency travel situations?

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## CASE STUDY

**Length of TV debate = 30 minutes maximum**

After appointing someone to be the TV host start your live debate. The TV host should explain the purpose of the debate, and then introduce the panel. Questions should then be taken from the travellers in the audience....

Students = travellers – each prepare a question to someone different on the panel.

Your question
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**During the TV debate write down the main points discussed during the TV debate**

### **Homework:**

Students to send a 200 word article by e-mail to the teacher highlighting the main points discussed during the TV debate.

**The teacher can moderate the session**

## DISCUSSION

### **Student A questions**

- 1) What is your government doing to help?
- 2) Is your business affected by the air travel ban?
- 3) Do you know anyone who has been affected by the air travel ban?
- 4) What are airlines doing about the air travel ban?
- 5) Would you be happy to fly with volcanic dust in the air?
- 6) Are peoples health threatened by the ash?
- 7) Are food supplies disrupted by the air travel ban?
- 8) Are insurance companies paying out compensation?
- 9) Do you know of any travel horror stories that have been in the press that relate to the air travel ban?

### **Student B questions**

- 1) Has the air travel ban affected you in any way?
- 2) Will the air traffic ban disrupt any of your travel plans? If yes, how?
- 3) Is it right that taxis, Eurostar and car hire companies are 'making a killing' from other people's misery?
- 4) What three bits of advice would you give a traveller stuck somewhere?
- 5) Is global warming anything to do with this volcano spewing ash everywhere?
- 6) Will an economic disaster unfold because of this air travel ban caused by the volcano ash? Why? Why not?
- 7) Will airlines be able to survive this disaster?
- 8) What cultural and sporting events have been affected near you because of this travel flight ban?
- 9) Did you like this discussion?

## GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

### Icelandic volcanic ash creates travel chaos

(1)\_\_\_\_\_ scenes emerged from southern Iceland recently as its Eyjafjallajökull (2)\_\_\_\_\_ began (3)\_\_\_\_\_. On April 14<sup>th</sup> it suddenly began sending a (4)\_\_\_\_\_ of ash 8.5 km (5.3 miles) high into the air. The volcanic (5)\_\_\_\_\_ spewed out gradually spreading across Europe, causing travel (6)\_\_\_\_\_, not only in Europe but worldwide. Within days, the ash had crossed many parts of Europe, forcing closure of most of Europe's air routes. The Met Office in Britain warned the (7)\_\_\_\_\_ could go on for another week, causing flight misery to passengers. Geologists warned the travel chaos could last months. Meanwhile airports remained closed across much of Europe. Travellers instead opted for any means possible to get home. Cross channel ferry services were rapidly booked up, as was Eurostar, who raised prices and was accused of (8)\_\_\_\_\_.

*plume*

*volcano*

*disruption*

*chaos*

*erupting*

*ash*

*profiteering*

*spectacular*

Some 20 countries closed their (1)\_\_\_\_\_ with some closing their airspace for days. The International Air Travel Organisation said, "Disruption to air travel is now greater than after 9/11," adding, "There appears to be no end in sight." Eurocontrol, which co-ordinates air traffic control in 38 nations said on Saturday alone more than 17,000 flights were cancelled across Europe, from a total of 22,000 on a normal day. All but 55 of 337 scheduled (2)\_\_\_\_\_ by US carriers to and from Europe were also (3)\_\_\_\_\_. Meanwhile airlines are estimated to be losing more than €150m a day in an (4)\_\_\_\_\_ shutdown of commercial air travel. The disruption could become a business and economic (5)\_\_\_\_\_ with several airlines facing financial (6)\_\_\_\_\_. A number may be 'tipped over the edge' and need (7)\_\_\_\_\_ from their governments such is the scale of the disaster. (8)\_\_\_\_\_ have also been affected, as many school children were stranded and unable to get home. The sporting calendar and cultural events were also affected by the flight travel ban. Meanwhile post worldwide was disrupted, with post to the US being driven from Britain to southern Spain - before being flown to the US.

*disaster*

*cancelled*

*unprecedented*

*flights*

*difficulties*

*bailouts*

*schools*

*airspace*

## SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	chaos	11	meanwhile
2	celebrities	12	spectacular
3	anxious	13	bailouts
4	commercial	14	disruption
5	profiteering	15	unprecedented
6	ironically	16	disruption
7	desperate	17	geologists
8	particularly	18	actually
9	incredible	19	entourage
10	travellers	20	inflatable

### LINKS

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/04/100415-volcanic-ash-cancels-flights-airports-airline-europe-iceland-volcano/>

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/8625813.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8625813.stm)

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/8627253.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8627253.stm)

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/8628519.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8628519.stm)

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/04/15/london-airports-closed-volcanic-ash/>

<http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2010/04/15/iceland-ash-airlines.html>

### ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Icelandic volcanic ash creates travel chaos: **Spectacular** scenes emerged from southern Iceland recently as its Eyjafjallajökull **volcano** began **erupting**. On April 14<sup>th</sup> it suddenly began sending a **plume** of ash 8.5 km (5.3 miles) high into the air. The volcanic **ash** spewed out gradually spreading across Europe, causing travel **chaos**, not only in Europe but worldwide. Within days, the ash had crossed many parts of Europe, forcing closure of most of Europe's air routes. The Met Office in Britain warned the **disruption** could go on for another week, causing flight misery to passengers. Geologists warned the travel chaos could last months. Meanwhile airports remained closed across much of Europe. Travellers instead opted for any means possible to get home. Cross channel ferry services were rapidly booked up, as was Eurostar, who raised prices and was accused of **profiteering**.

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