

## The great gamble of volcanic tourism

Deanne Bird (1) and Guðrún Gísladóttir (1,2)

(1) Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland (deanne.bird@gmail.com), (2) Nordvulk, Institute of Earth Sciences, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland (ggisla@hi.is)

Communicating natural hazard risk and uncertainty to local residents in Iceland is a difficult task even when scientists, civil protection authorities and government officials have a basic familiarity with the at-risk population. An even more challenging task is communicating the same risk and uncertainty with a transient population i.e. the ever-increasing number of tourists who visit Iceland and who engage in activities on and around Iceland's volcanoes. Tourism currently accounts for more foreign exchange income than any other industry in Iceland, with employment in tourism-related industries increasing more than in any other sector of the economy. This growth is expected to rise exponentially with the continued support and marketing from the Icelandic Government and tourism sector. Hence, civil protection authorities and government officials, alongside scientists, face an extremely challenging task of ensuring tourists have a basic understanding of the natural hazards they may face and what they need to do to ensure their own safety. Seismic unrest in and around Iceland's volcanoes during the height of the 2016 summer tourist season required timely communication from scientists and civil protection authorities with local and transient populations. Timely information is also paramount with respect to the constant public broadcast of near-real time information. Any person may view near real-time seismic data on the Icelandic Meteorological Office's website. Depending how that information is received and interpreted by the public, it may result in optimistic bias to the detriment of their safety. Alternatively, it could result in fatalism causing cancelations to the detriment of the tourism sector and local economy. This paper explores these challenges and highlights solutions where scientists, civil protection authorities and government officials are working together with tourists and the tourism sector to enhance public safety in regards to natural hazard risks.