



RÍKISLÖGREGLUSTJÓRINN

Fact sheet:

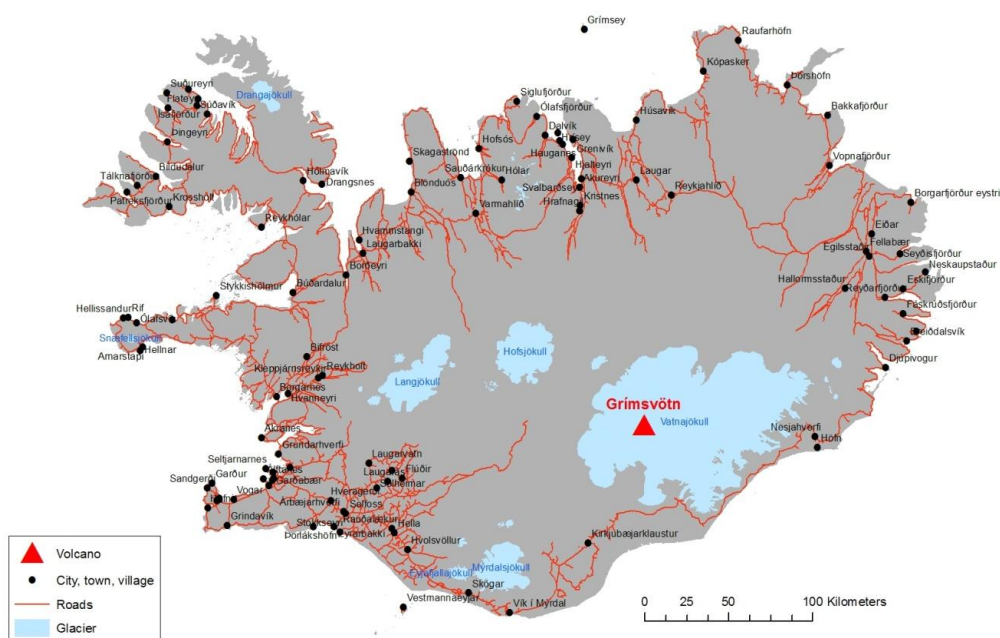
## Grímsvötn volcano



The Grímsvötn Volcano is situated underneath Vatnajökull, Europe's largest glacier. The volcano is 220 km ENE of Reykjavík. Eruptions at Grímsvötn are frequent; usually they occur at an interval of a few years. Most of these eruptions last a few days and are small in volume.

The Grímsvötn volcano is a caldera or depression in the earth's crust. There is great geothermal activity within the caldera. The geothermal power melts the glacial ice and the meltwater collects in the caldera. Periodically the meltwater forges a path underneath the glacier and flows to the south towards and over the uninhabited Skeiðarársandur in what is termed a glacial outburst flood.

The volume of water collected in Grímsvötn last week was on the order of 0.7 cubic Kilometres, that is similar to the magnitude of water collected there before the eruption of Grímsvötn in November of 2004. The glacial outburst flood of 2004 posed no threat to people or infrastructure. Roads and bridges over Skeiðarársandur are designed to withstand greater floods.



Location of Grímsvötn volcano.

Historical and geological records show that there have been around 60 to 70 volcanic eruptions over the last eight centuries in the Grímsvötn volcano. The latest eruptions occurred in the years 2004, 1998, 1996, 1983 and 1934. None of these eruptions threatened lives or inhabited areas and all except one are classified as minor eruptions. Typical eruptions at Grímsvötn last from two to fourteen days. Little or limited volcanic ash is associated with these eruptions. Visible volcanic ash rarely reaches farther than the perimeter of the glacier Vatnajökull and effects on commercial air-traffic is limited. During the eruption of 2004 restrictions were put on air-traffic to the north of Iceland for five days. Trans-Atlantic flights were re-routed to the south of Iceland. No airport closures were in effect.

The volcanic activity in the Grímsvötn volcanic system is periodic. Active periods last from about 100 to 150 years with more restful periods of a few decades in between. A period of increased activity seems to have started with the eruption í 1983.

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