

Hikers scramble as new fissure opens up at Icelandic volcano

April 5 2021



Members of the Search and Rescue Team, Bjorgunasveit look at a new fissure on a volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwestern Iceland, Monday, April 5, 2021. The new fissure has opened up at the Icelandic volcano that began erupting last month, prompting the evacuation of hundreds of hikers who had come to see the spectacle. Officials say the new fissure is about 500 meters (550 yards) long and about one kilometer (around a half-mile) from the original eruption site in the Geldinga Valley (AP Photo/Marco Di Marco)

Steam and lava spurted Monday from a new fissure at an Icelandic volcano that began erupting last month, prompting the evacuation of hundreds of hikers who had come to see the spectacle.

The new fissure, first spotted by a sightseeing helicopter, was about 500 meters (550 yards) long and about a kilometer (around a half-mile) from the original eruption site in the Geldinga Valley.

The Icelandic Department of Emergency Management announced an immediate evacuation of the area. It said there was no imminent danger to life due to the site's distance from popular hiking paths.

The Icelandic Meteorological Office said the new volcanic activity wasn't expected to affect traffic at nearby Keflavik Airport.

The long-dormant volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwest Iceland flared to life March 20 after tens of thousands of earthquakes were recorded in the area in the past three weeks. It was the area's first volcanic eruption in nearly 800 years.

The volcano's proximity to Iceland's capital, Reykjavík, about 32 kilometers (20 miles) away, has brought a steady stream of tourists to the area, even with the country in partial lockdown to combat the coronavirus. Around 30,000 people have visited the area since the eruption began, according to the Icelandic Tourist Board.



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A member of the Search and Rescue Team, Bjorgunasveit scans the horizon near a new fissure on a volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwestern Iceland, Monday, April 5, 2021. The new fissure has opened up at the Icelandic volcano that began erupting last month, prompting the evacuation of hundreds of hikers who had come to see the spectacle. Officials say the new fissure is about 500 meters (550 yards) long and about one kilometer (around a half-mile) from the original eruption site in the Geldinga Valley (AP Photo/Marco Di Marco)



A members of the Search and Rescue Team, Bjorgunasveit looks at lava flowing from a new fissure on a volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwestern Iceland, Monday, April 5, 2021. The new fissure has opened up at the Icelandic volcano that began erupting last month, prompting the evacuation of hundreds of hikers who had come to see the spectacle. Officials say the new fissure is about 500 meters (550 yards) long and about one kilometer (around a half-mile) from the original eruption site in the Geldinga Valley (AP Photo/Marco Di Marco)



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Live footage from the area showed small spouts of lava coming from the new fissure.

Geophysicist Magnus Gudmundsson said the volcanic eruption could be moving north from its original location.

"We now see less lava coming from the two original craters," he told The Associated Press. "This could be the beginning of second stage."

Iceland, located above a volcanic hot spot in the North Atlantic, averages one volcanic eruption every four to five years. The last one was at Holuhraun in 2014, when a fissure eruption spread lava the size of Manhattan over the interior highland region.

In 2010, ash from Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano shut down much international air travel for several days.

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