

# A volcano in Iceland is erupting again, spewing lava and cutting heat and hot water supplies

February 8 2024, by Marco Di Marco

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the Blue Lagoon spa which is one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions.  
Credit: AP Photo /Marco Di Marco

A volcano in southwestern Iceland erupted Thursday for [the third time since December](#), sending jets of lava into the sky, triggering the evacuation of the popular Blue Lagoon geothermal spa and cutting heat and hot water to thousands of people.

The eruption began at about 0600 GMT (1 a.m. EST) along a three-kilometer (nearly two-mile) fissure northeast of Mount Sýlingarfell, the Icelandic Meteorological Office said. Several communities on the Reykjanes Peninsula were cut off from heat and hot water after a river of lava engulfed a supply pipeline.

The strength of the eruption had decreased by mid-afternoon, the Met Office said, though lava continued to spew from parts of the fissure and a huge plume of steam rose over a section of the crack where magma mixed with groundwater.

The eruption site is about 4 kilometers (2½ miles) northeast of Grindavik, [a coastal town of 3,800 people](#) that was evacuated before [a previous eruption](#) on Dec. 18. The Meteorological Office said there was no immediate threat to the town on Thursday.

Civil defense officials said no one was believed to be in Grindavik at the time of the new eruption. "They weren't meant to be, and we don't know about any," Víðir Reynisson, the head of Iceland's Civil Defense, told national broadcaster RUV.



People look at the volcano erupting, north of Grindavík, Iceland, Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024. Iceland's Meteorological Office says a volcano is erupting in the southwestern part of the country, north of a nearby settlement. The eruption of the Sylingarfell volcano began at 6 a.m. local time on Thursday, soon after an intense burst of seismic activity. Credit: AP Photo/Marco Di Marco

The Civil Defense agency said lava reached a pipeline that supplies several towns on the Reykjanes Peninsula with hot water—which is used to heat homes—from the Svartsengi geothermal power plant. Authorities urged residents to use hot water and electricity sparingly, as workers rushed to lay an underground water pipe as a backup. Schools, gyms and swimming pools were shut because of the lack of heat and water.

The Blue Lagoon thermal spa, created using excess water from the

power plant, was closed when the eruption began and all the guests were safely evacuated, RUV said. A stream of steaming lava later spread across the exit road from the spa.

No flight disruptions were reported at nearby Keflavik, Iceland's main airport, but hot water was cut off, airport operator Isavia said.

The Icelandic Met Office earlier this week warned of a possible eruption after monitoring a buildup of magma, or semi-molten rock, below the ground for the past three weeks. Hundreds of small earthquakes had been measured in the area since Friday, capped by a burst of intense seismic activity about 30 minutes before the latest eruption began.



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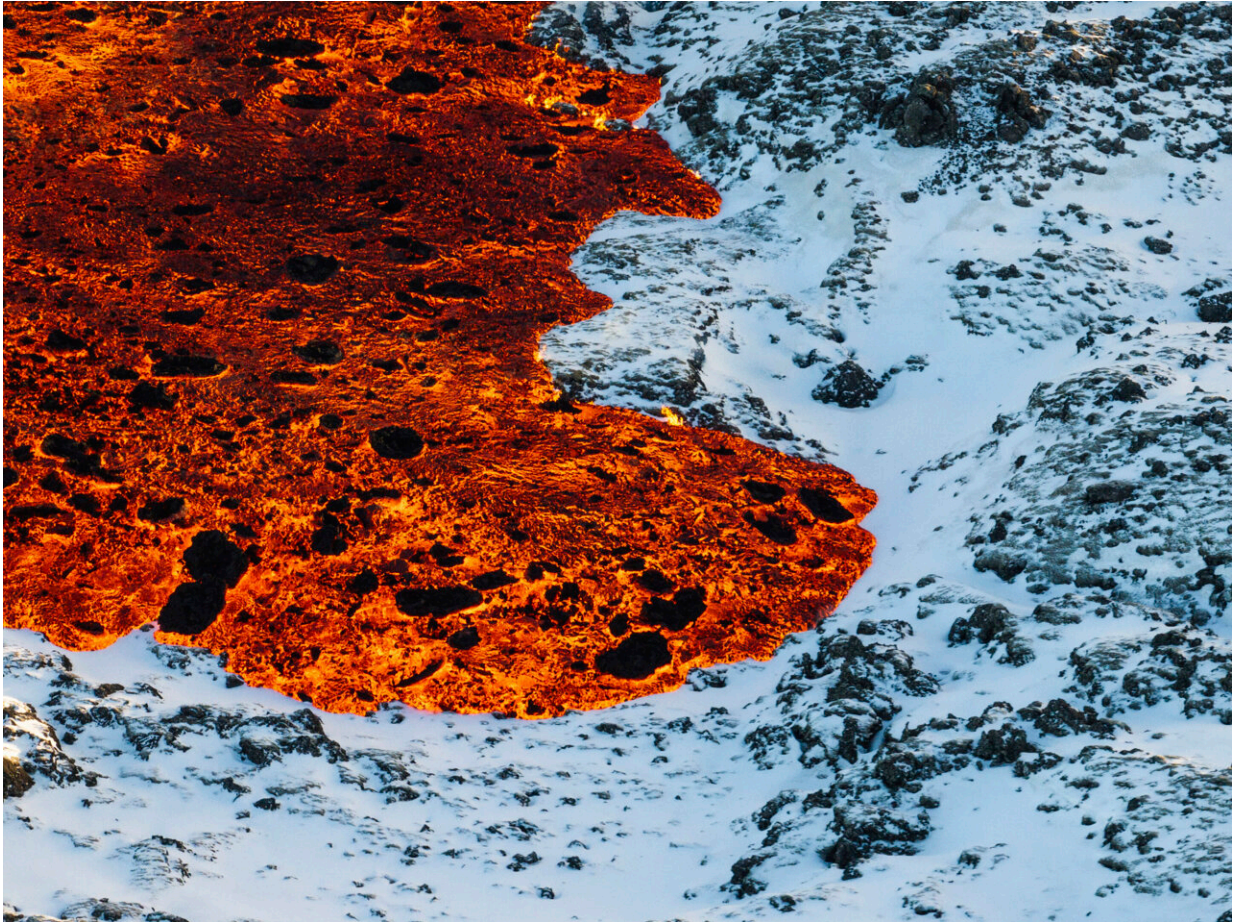
intense burst of seismic activity. Credit: Almannavarnir via AP

Dramatic video from Iceland's coast guard showed fountains of lava soaring more than 50 meters (165 feet) into the darkened skies. A plume of vapor rose about 3 kilometers (1½ miles) above the volcano.

Iceland, which sits above a volcanic hot spot in the North Atlantic, averages an eruption every four to five years. The most disruptive in recent times was the 2010 eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, which spewed huge clouds of ash into the atmosphere and led to widespread airspace closures over Europe.

Dave McGarvie, a volcanologist who has worked extensively in Iceland, said it's highly unlikely the "gentle, effusive" eruption would disrupt aviation because such volcanoes produce only a tiny amount of ash.

Grindavík, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of Iceland's capital, Reykjavík, was evacuated in November when the Svartsengi volcanic system awakened after almost 800 years with a series of earthquakes that opened large cracks in the earth north of the town.



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[The volcano eventually erupted](#) on Dec. 18, sending lava flowing away from Grindavik. A second eruption that began on Jan. 14 sent lava towards the town. Defensive walls that had been bolstered since the first eruption stopped some of the flow, but several buildings were consumed by the lava, and land in the town has sunk by as much as 1½meters (4½

feet) because of the magma movement.

No confirmed deaths have been reported, but a workman is missing after falling into a fissure opened by the volcano.

Both the previous eruptions lasted only a matter of days, but they signal what Icelandic President Gudni Th. Johannesson called "a daunting period of upheaval" on the Reykjanes Peninsula, one of the most densely populated parts of Iceland.

It's unclear whether the residents of Grindavik will ever be able to return permanently, McGarvie said.



Lava reaches close to the road to Grindavík, near the exit for the blue lagoon, in Grindavík, Iceland, Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024. A volcano in southwestern Iceland

has erupted for the third time since December and sent jets of lava into the sky. The eruption on Thursday morning triggered the evacuation the Blue Lagoon spa which is one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions. Credit: AP Photo /Marco Di Marco



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A view of lava near to the road to Grindavík close to the exit for the Blue Lagoon, in Grindavík, Iceland, Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024. A volcano in southwestern Iceland has erupted for the third time since December and sent jets of lava into the sky. The eruption on Thursday morning triggered the evacuation the Blue Lagoon spa which is one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions. Credit: AP Photo /Marco Di Marco



Lava spills near to the road to Grindavík, close to the exit for the blue lagoon, in Grindavík, Iceland, Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024. A volcano in southwestern Iceland has erupted for the third time since December and sent jets of lava into the sky. The eruption on Thursday morning triggered the evacuation the Blue Lagoon spa which is one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions. Credit: AP Photo /Marco Di Marco



A view of lava crossing the main road to Grindavík and flowing on the road leading to the Blue Lagoon, in Grindavík, Iceland, Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024. A volcano in southwestern Iceland has erupted for the third time since December and sent jets of lava into the sky. The eruption on Thursday morning triggered the evacuation the Blue Lagoon spa which is one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions. Credit: AP Photo /Marco Di Marco



Lava spills onto the road to Grindavík, close to the exit for the Blue Lagoon, in Grindavík, Iceland, Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024. A volcano in southwestern Iceland has erupted for the third time since December and sent jets of lava into the sky. The eruption on Thursday morning triggered the evacuation the Blue Lagoon spa which is one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions. Credit: AP Photo/Marco Di Marco



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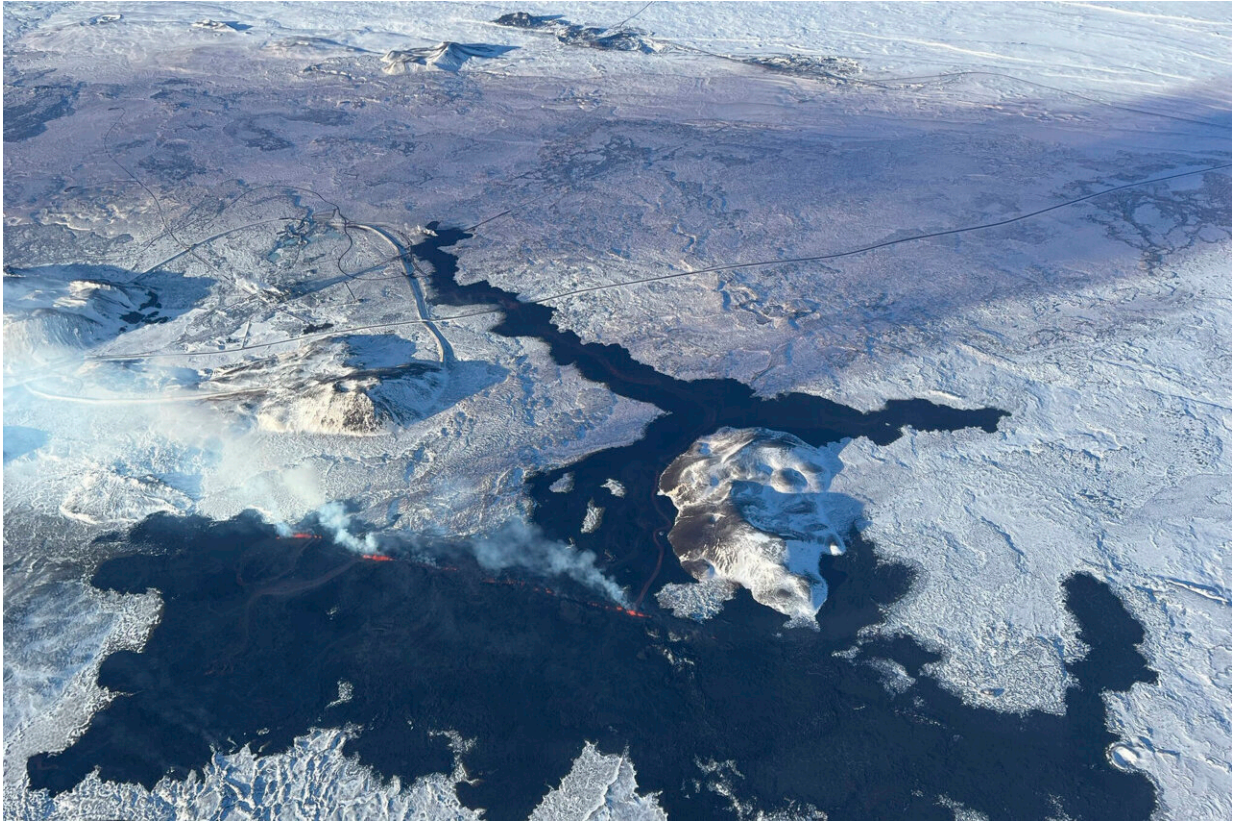




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Aerial view of the lava from the volcano erupting in north of Grindavík, Iceland, Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024. Iceland's Meteorological Office says a volcano is erupting in the southwestern part of the country, north of a nearby settlement. The eruption of the Sylingarfell volcano began at 6 a.m. local time on Thursday, soon after an intense burst of seismic activity. Credit: Almannavarnir via AP



A view of lava hitting the hot water pipeline flowing on the road leading to the Blue Lagoon, in Grindavík, Iceland, Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024. A volcano in southwestern Iceland has erupted for the third time since December and sent jets of lava into the sky. The eruption on Thursday morning triggered the evacuation the Blue Lagoon spa which is one of the island nation's biggest tourist attractions. (AP Photo /Marco Di Marco). Credit: AP Photo /Marco Di Marco



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"I think at the moment there is the resignation, the stoical resignation, that, for the foreseeable future, the town is basically uninhabitable," he said.

He said that after centuries of quiet, "people thought this area was fairly

safe."

"It's been a bit of a shock that it has come back to life," he added, "Evidence that we gathered only quite recently is that eruptions could go on for decades, if not centuries, sporadically in this particular peninsula."

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