

The Northern Lights in Reykjavik (10 – 13 January 2016)

Nine of us booked an Icelandair 3 night visit to Reykjavik which included a tour to try and see the Northern Lights. Our hotel, the Leifur Eiriksson, was well situated near the centre of town and right opposite Hallgrímskirkja, a 73 metre high Lutheran parish church. There were excellent views of the town from the top.



Reykjavik from the top of the church

We went out on the evening we arrived since there were clear skies and we did indeed see some aurora activity. It could hardly be described as stunning but it was there. The next day was overcast with snowy blizzards, and although quite atmospheric, there was no chance to see any Lights. Our last full day did once again have clear skies and there were reports of high aurora activity. Most of us were out on other tours during the day but numerous text messages enabled us all to agree a final Lights outing that evening.

The tour coach remains at the site for 2 hours, usually from about 9.30pm. Although there was some activity, it was not really any better than on our first outing. Exactly at 11.30pm, when we were expecting to start our journey back, the driver shouted at us to get out of the coach. It was as if someone had suddenly thrown a switch – the Northern lights in all their glory just lit up the entire sky. We stayed outside for about half an hour whilst both looking upwards and taking photographs.

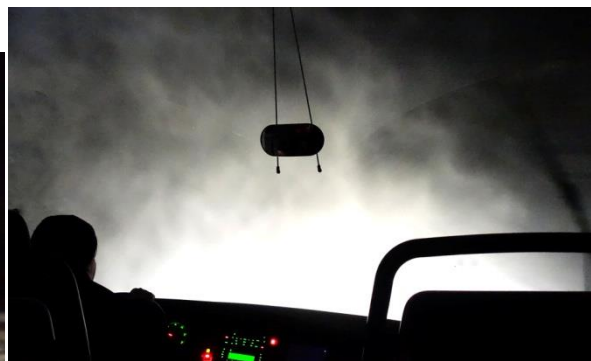


The Northern Lights

We could even see them through the coach windscreen as we were driven back to the hotel (photo below left). We then encountered a blizzard so extreme that visibility for the driver became zero (photo below right).



through the coach windscreen



zero visibility



Our happy group on the morning of our return home

Note: Gary Harding has created a time-lapse video compiled from some of his photographs which can be seen on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/2WoaDk4pM5k>

Peter Altman