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Where were you 10 years ago when the Icelandic ash cloud shut down Europe?



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The ash cloud shut down air space for a week CREDIT: GETTY



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By **Hugh Morris**, TRAVEL NEWS EDITOR

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The coronavirus pandemic has grounded nearly nine in 10 of the world's flights, ushering in an unprecedented pause in global travel.

Iata, the International Air Travel Association, has warned that Europe has been one of the regions hit hardest. Cast your eye across a flight-tracking website, such as FlightRadar24, and you will see only a handful of planes traversing the continent.

But 10 years ago, European skies were even quieter.

Eyjafjallajökull first erupted on March 20. By mid-April, ash spewed into the air by the Icelandic volcano had drifted south and east towards mainland Europe, leading to the most complete shutdown of the continent's airspace since the Second World War.

Though the eruptions themselves were intermittent, lasting into June, the main period of disruption caused by the Icelandic ash cloud, as it became to be known, was April 15-21. Data from the London Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre showed that the ash reached as far as North America to the west, and central Asia and Russia to the east.



The Icelandic volcano erupted for several months CREDIT: GETTY

Cast your mind back and tell us in the comments how you remember the disruption: was your holiday impacted? Did you end up stranded?

More than 100,000 flights were cancelled in total, peaking at 19,000 a day

More than 10 million travellers were stranded or unable to board flights

Airlines lost \$1.7billion (£1.37bn) in revenue

Airports in Europe lost €250 million (£218m)

In worst-affected markets, such as Finland, Ireland and the UK, 90 per cent of flights were cancelled

Low-cost carriers were worst hit, cancelling some 61 per cent of flights

Worldwide, airline capacity fell by 30 per cent; European capacity was cut by 75 per cent, Africa by 30 per cent, Middle East by 20 per cent

Airline kerosene demand fell by 1.2million barrels a day, compared with 4.3million barrels consumed on a normal day



The south coast of Iceland was left covered in ash CREDIT: GETTY

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said the ash cloud week cost the European economy \$5billion

PricewaterhouseCoopers estimated each week of disruption destroyed around 0.025pc-0.05pc of annual British GDP; the same would probably be true of other European countries

While hotels received fewer incoming tourists, some were able to raise prices to take advantage of stranded travellers

While one volcano wreaked havoc, the economy of the volcanic islands of the Azores, governed by Portugal, got an unexpected lift: traffic boomed due to flight diversions



It also bred a fresh interest in the allures of Iceland CREDIT: AFP

Iceland, too, also then experienced a surge in visitors, with many attributing the growth of its tourism industry to the publicity the eruption brought.

How do you remember the ash cloud? Tell us in the comments below