TIMELINE

About 400,000 years ago – Humans domesticate fire.
About 36,000 years ago – Oldest known pictures of volca-
oyes are scratched on cave walls in France.
About 14,000 years ago – Heimaey island is formed.
About 6,000 years ago – Mt. Helgafell erupts.
Around 900 – The Westman Islands are colonized
by humans.
1783 – The Laki eruption in Iceland begins
on June 8, and the volcanic haze
spreads widely across the globe.
1815 – Mt. Tambora on the island of Sum-
bawa, Indonesia, begins erupting,
one of the largest eruptions in his-
tory, causing global cooling, crop
failure, and severe winters in both
the northern and southern hemi-
spheres; twenty thousand people
der.
1883 – Krakatoa in Indonesia begins
erupting. Sea flows into the vol-
canic crater, causing an enormous
explosion. Tsunamis are triggered,
causing devastation and killing about 36,000 people on nearby islands.

1906 – The worker’s cottage known as Bólstaður is built on Heimaey.

1918 – Katla erupts. Volcanic ash spreads across over half of Iceland.

1934 – June 2: A large earthquake shakes Dalvík, northern Iceland, and the adjacent areas. Many locals spend the summer in tents and temporary shelters while repairs are made.

1947 – Hekla in Iceland erupts, a long intense eruption. One man dies studying it.

1949 – The author is born at Bólstaður on the Westman Islands.

c. 1950 – Anthropocene, the Age of Humans, begins.

1963 – The volcanic island Surtsey is born, not far from Heimaey.

1968 – The author’s family from Bólstaður moves to Reykjavík.

1972 – Soot-seismometers are installed at Laugarvatn and Skammadalshóll. The author begins graduate studies at the University of Manchester.

March 22: Sigurgeir Órn Sigurgeirsson dies from breathing toxic volcanic gases on Heimaey, exact time of death unknown. 

April 2: Lava cooling with high-pressure hoses begins. 

Bólstaður, on Heimagata, is engulfed by lava and burns. 

April 22: The battle for Heimaey is considered won when lava floods east of Eldfell. 

July 3: The Heimaey eruption ends. 

August: the author visits Heimaey. 

1974 – 

July: The first End of the Eruption Festival is held. 

December 20: An avalanche falls on Neskaupstaður, eastern Iceland; 12 die. 

1980 – 

Mt. St. Helens erupts, the largest eruption in US history, devastating several hundred square kilometers of land. 

2000 – 

June 17: A large earthquake, 6.5 on the Richter scale, strikes south Iceland, followed by another a few days later. 

2004 – 

A tsunami triggered by an earthquake strikes countries around the Indian Ocean; 230,000 people die. 

2010 – 

Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland erupts. Ash clouds disrupt flights around the world. 

2014 – 

Eldheimar Museum opens in the Westman Islands, showcasing the 1973 volcanic eruption.