Today we’re going to talk about Iceland. Iceland is known for being settled by the Vikings in the late 9th and early 10th Century. It is also know for its unique geology. It is a land of glaciers and volcanoes.

Iceland is an island in Europe. It is the most western country in Europe. It is closer to Greenland than any other European country. It is the 18th largest island in the world and it is the 2nd largest island in Europe.

It is a very sparsely populated country. Its population is 320,000. Bellevue is 126,000 people and the number of people in Seattle is twice that of the entire country of Iceland.

Density: the amount of people per area.

The capital and the largest city is Reykjavik. And nearly 2/3of the population lives in the Reykjavik area. Most people live in cities – as opposed to the countryside.

They speak Icelandic in Iceland. It is a North Germanic Language and descended from Old Norse. Children in school study English and Danish.

Iceland marks the boundary of the Eurasian Plate and the North American Plate. The meeting of these plates make Iceland a very interesting county in terms of geology. There are lots of volcano and geyser. (Geyser is the only word in English that is Icelandic in origin). Like Hawaii, Iceland is a volcanic island. The land is consists of glaciers, lakes and mountainous lava deserts. There is only a little bit of land that is cultivated (used for farming or raising animals). There are more glaciers in Iceland than is all of Europe.

62% Tundra, 14% lakes and glaciers, and 23% vegetated.

Tundra: a treeless plain where the subsoil is permanently frozen.

Even with the glaciers, the climate of Iceland’s coast is called subpolar oceanic. The jet steam makes it a temperate climate even though is right outside the Arctic Circle.

Jet Stream: high speed, high altitude air that blows west to east that effects the weather.

Arctic Circle: a line of latitude near but to the south of the north pole; it marks the northernmost point at which the sun is visible on the northern winter solstice and the southern most point at which the mid-night sun can be seen on the northern summer solstice.

In March and April of this year, the volcano Eyjafjallajökull exploded. The ash plume shut down North Atlantic air travel for a few days.

Another feature of the geology of Iceland are geyers. These are spots where there is really hot water underground and it heats up the water and turns it to steam and the pressure forces the water up. It shoots out of Strokkur up to 65 feet high. Because of all this water, nearly 80% of Iceland’s total energy is generated from geothermal and hydro power.

Geothermal Energy: the heat under ground heats water and turns it into steam and then the steam turns the generator turbines to make electricity.

Naming: Patronym – adoption of the father’s first given name. –son; -dottir. Few us the last name and even the phone book is alphabetized by first name.

Coat of Arms: is on the back of the coins. Has the 4 guardians of the country. A bull, the eagle or griffin, the giant and the dragon.

Flag: the colors represent three of the elements that make up the island: red is for the island's volcanic fires, white recalls the snow and ice fields of the island, and blue is for the surrounding ocean

History: Settled in the late 9th and early 10th century. In 930 AD the ruling chiefs established a republican constitution and an assembly called the Althingi. Iceland boasts the world's oldest functioning legislative assembly, the Althing, established in 930. Independent for over 300 years, Iceland was subsequently ruled by Norway and Denmark

The Viking ship "Icelander" based on a style of boatbuilding over 1,100 years old. This working replica built between 1994 and 1996 using traditional methods and tools to the Viking era, is similar to the Gokstad ship found in Norway in 1880.

Viking ships were primarily of two types 1) the Longship was used for shorter voyages, coastal excursions and warfare.  2) the knörr used to carry cargo and longer trips such as voyages to Iceland.

Fully manned a ship like the "Icelander" would have had a crew of around 70. It is 23m (75 feet) long, 5.25m wide and gross weight of 80 metric tons. The mast is 18m tall with sail area of 130 m2.

In 2000 Captain Eggertsson and crew of 9 sailed the Icelander to America via Greenland, following the path of the Icelandic Viking explorer Leifer Eiríksson. The 4,200 nautical mile journey took 110 days.