

## In the matter of a volcano

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I am not the world's most enthusiastic air traveller. In fact, that overstates my love of airports many thousandfold. But the time came last week when my sons needed to go abroad for the first time — to Ireland, from where both my wife's family and my own come (her parents being Gaelic speakers by origin).

Ryanair is not a great introduction to air travel, and they did not seem to enjoy the experience. As a result a trip back by boat and train suited them well, and has now been completed — twenty four hours later than scheduled and all very smoothly except for the exceptionally unhelpful Virgin staff at Crewe (to be contrasted with all other train staff who have been brilliant).

It's staggering to note how something like a volcano erupting can have such an impact on life. And in microcosm it shows how much a part of nature we humans are, and how much we must respect that fact.

I confidently predict a serious decline in air travel after this incident, and a significant rise in teleconferencing. I would welcome that. Of course meeting face to face is useful sometimes. But maybe not as often as we think.

I also note something else related to the environment. All of which leads me to also note that the right wing have not been grovelling in their apologies when after months of controversy, the University of East Anglia climate unit [was exonerated last week](#) over the leaked emails affair. The Royal Society found the work undertaken at the unit was robust. The climate change deniers — almost to a person the same people it seems who promote tax abuse — have been silent in response. Facts don't appeal to them.

Of course a volcanic eruption has, almost certainly, nothing to do with climate change. But it does emphatically demonstrate our dependence upon nature and the risk we take if altering the environment in a way that might make irrevocable change threatening our life much more seriously than simply being denied the opportunity to travel by air.