

NEWSFLASH!

BRITAIN CLOSES AIRSPACE AS VOLCANIC ASH SPREADS

British civil aviation authorities ordered the closure of the country's airspace as of noon (local time) today (Thursday, April 15th) to shield aircraft from a high altitude cloud of ash drifting south and east from an erupting volcano in Iceland. The plume of ash shut down airports and forced the cancellation of hundreds of flights in a wide arc from Ireland to Scandinavia.

The closures left airplanes on the tarmac as the rolling cloud — made up of minute particles of silicate that can damage airplane engines — headed from Britain and Scandinavia toward northern France. **Denmark also had restricted air travel.**

"From midday today until at least 6 p.m., there will be no flights permitted in U.K. controlled airspace other than emergency situations," Britain's National Air Traffic Service said in a statement on its Web site. "This has been applied in accordance with international civil aviation policy."

The move effectively grounded all flights in Britain from 11:00 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time (7:00 a.m. Eastern) and affected an estimated 6,000 flights that use British airspace every day, aviation experts said. Oddly, for travelers, the closure was announced under clear blue skies. Experts had said earlier that the ash may not be visible from the ground but can clog airplane engines.

The impact is likely to be among the most severe in many years, cutting transatlantic links and severing air routes across northern Europe.

- In parts of **Scandinavia**, too, air travel came to a halt. **In Norway, all flights to and from Oslo Airport were cancelled as of 10:00 a.m. (local time),** the airport said in a statement on its Web site.
- The **Finnish** aviation authority, Finavia, warned travelers to **expect some flight delays and cancellations until at least 3:00 p.m. (local time) today,** though a spokeswoman said all of the country's airports would remain open for now.
- A spokesman for the Irish Aviation Authority said that "several sections" of **Irish airspace, including Dublin, would be closed beginning at 12:00 p.m. (local time) today** and last possibly into the evening. **Both Aer Lingus, the country's flag carrier, and the low-cost airline Ryanair warned of major disruptions across their networks** as a result.

Some airline operators from the United States, Japan and the United Arab Emirates had already revised schedules for flights to Britain.

Travel Resources will be contacting any of its clients who may be affected by this action to provide them with assistance in securing alternate flight arrangements.

Should you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact Selina Johnston directly at:

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