DRESS UP LIKE A VOLCANOLOGIST!

In this activity, people can dress up as a volcanologist and have their photo taken in front of a backdrop to make it look as if they were on a real volcano. It's hugely popular with children, teens, and adults.

Required:

- Silver heat suit (helmet, jacket, and gloves)
- Gas mask(s)
- Hi-vis vests
- Hard hats (ideally a range of colours)
- Backdrop posters
- Sign (provided)
- Volcanologists in the field print-out (provided)

Optional:

- Poster boards for backdrops
- Stand for sign

Set-up

Print out two backdrop posters on A0 paper – one of red-hot lava, the other of degassing fumaroles. Don't worry if they are a bit grainy – on photos they will look great. Put up the two posters on wall space or poster boards, and put out the sign and "Volcanologists at Work" print-out where people can see it. The silver suit always grabs attention, so if you can, put that in a very obvious place. Most people have their own cameras or phone cameras.

What to do

Ask people if they want to dress in the silver suit and have their photo taken in front of a lava flow backdrop, or in a gas mask, hi-vis vest, and hard hat and have a photo in front of a fumaroles backdrop.

This starts out as a purely fun activity, especially when people see how realistic their photos look. But once people stop laughing, you can talk about why this protective gear is needed – why scientists need to get so close to hot lava or toxic gases. Some useful facts and talking points are included on the next page.

Tips

- The silver suit is to protect scientists from the heat that radiates from lava flows (which can be over 1000ºC). It is not entirely fire-proof though, and will not protect you if you touch the lava.
- Poisonous gases include sulfur, fluorine, and chlorine. The gas can also be hot, and smells very bad, like rotten eggs.
- Getting fresh lava samples is essential because once on the surface, lava begins to alter (a bit like metal rusting). We can learn a lot from chemical clues in the lava, but only if those clues are preserved.
- Measuring gas emissions is an important way to tell what is going on underground. For instance, sudden increase in sulfur emissions suggests fresh lava has entered the magma chamber. Gas measurements are used to predict activity.