

Explain why in spite
of the danger, people
live near volcanoes
essay sample



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The risk of living near a volcano is obviously very high, but these risks are calculated. People don't live on the side of a volcano because of the thrill, there is much more to why people do it.

The dangers of living so close to an active volcano can be catastrophic, lava flows, lahars, and pyroclastic flows can all be devastating, so why then do people do it, people like those who live on the sides of Merapi, Indonesia, and those of Pinatubo in the Philippines, there is no denying that it happens but why, why do people live near such dangerous hazards?

Firstly a volcano can produce highly fertile soils; when it erupts if a pyroclastic flow is caused then ash that settles on fields etc provides nutrients that are good for the soil, ideal for rice growing or any other crop for that matter. This increase in the quality of the soil can mean that you can grow an extra crop each year. This is just one reason for people to live near a volcano.

In Indonesia this is particularly the case, namely at Merapi. Here the climate is tropical meaning that with the extra fertile soils they can grow three crops a year, such as fruit and rice. The volcano rarely erupts violently; there is a constant stream of lava pouring from the top, high in basalt meaning it is viscous, thus meaning that the crater never gets plugged. This is the calculated risk that people take in order to live productive farming lives on the sides of volcanoes.

The other main factor that is the cause for people living so close to volcanoes is geothermal energy. Heat from the earth's crust is being converted into heat energy. In very cold countries with a high number of

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volcanoes this can therefore be very useful. For example in Iceland this method is used. The volcano Eldfield, Haemaey here has created many positive effects as well as geothermal energy. The harbour in this area has become more sheltered as a result of the eruption; this is an example of localized advantages.

Some people find that living near volcanoes can provide a good source of income. Firstly there is a big tourism industry surrounding volcanoes, with great potential, like that at Hawaii, this volcano is not dangerous at all to the surrounding people because of the slowness at which it erupts, and the fact that the lava predicatively runs down the same channels each time it erupts. People aren't taking a risk at all here but it is another reason why there are over 500 million people living in close proximity with volcanoes. Also the lava produced by the volcano when cooled can be mined. Pumice is mined as well as the volcanic ash; these are used as abrasives in soaps and household cleaners. In past times there was reason to live as well, in Rome the volcanic ash was mixed with lime to make effective cement.

People are sometimes seen to be naive about there surroundings when they live near volcanoes but there are nearly always reasons for there close proximity to these potentially disastrous natural hazards. As one can see in Indonesia, the Philippines and Iceland people have found ways of dealing with living near volcanoes usually for the best. We must take in to account the fact that people are killed by them; the question really is whether living near volcanoes is worth the risk, and whether your way of life is worth the loss of life.