

Who are you?

Hello! I'm Robin George Andrews

What do you do?

I'm a volcanologist turned science journalist! I work for IFLScience, the popular science communication network, which now has nearly 25 million followers. I'm their jack-of-all-trades writer, covering anything from quantum physics and planetary geology to viral outbreaks and evolutionary biology. There's nothing more fun to write about than volcanoes, of course, but climate change, dinosaurs, psychopaths & cats come pretty close.

What does your job involve?

I scour the web for the most cutting-edge science, and interview the researchers behind these rather marvellous discoveries; the more contacts I make, the more original the articles are! Occasionally, I'll write up a longer feature piece, which normally asks an intriguing question without a definitive answer, or at least without a simple answer. Sometimes I write scripts for our in-house animation team, and I often place my own calculations into articles, to give the research I'm writing about a fresh perspective. It's fast-paced, exhilarating work, where you learn as quickly as you teach all that shiny new science to a potential audience of tens of millions. I adore every second of it.



How did you get there?

I graduated from Imperial College in 2010 with an MSci in Geology, which included a year abroad in North America. I then followed this with a PhD in experimental volcanology from the University of Otago in New Zealand and originally I wanted to take up a postdoctoral position somewhere in the UK or US. I managed to get to the final round of a NASA postdoctoral application program, but sadly fell at the final hurdle. Fortunately, an advert for a new scientific staff writer position at IFLScience popped up on Facebook, and after a few interviews, I managed to get the sought-after position. I had really enjoyed the bit of freelance science communication that I did during my PhD, and getting this job ticked all of the boxes for me: I could live in London, keep up a bit of academia on the side, work with the most wonderful, silly, hardworking and hilarious people, and communicate science to the largest online audience imaginable. All in all, hard work and a significant portion of luck got me the post, and I couldn't be more thankful!

How do you use your skills in geology and geophysics?

Geoscience covers a wide range of topics, from volcanoes and earthquakes to atmospheric physics and planetary geology. Partly thanks to Imperial's training, and partly due to my obsession with all things Earth Science, I can draw on a fairly detailed well of knowledge to add my own detailed scientific signatures to my articles in ways some others can't.

What do you love about geology/geophysics?

I'm a little strange compared to most geologists, actually: I'm not a huge fan of rocks themselves, as they've already done their most exciting stuff eons ago. I'm interested in the processes that forge them; from the fiery hearts of worlds to explosive volcanism, it's the kinetic, visually resplendent stories of science that really set me alight.

Climate change is an incredibly moving and motivational topic for me too. It's inarguably the most important issue facing humanity today, and having a thorough, in-depth knowledge of it isn't just a joy – I feel that, as a science communicator, it's a responsibility. It's the problem that makes everything worse, and people need to be correctly informed about it.

Your best and worst moments?

Ooh, well this depends on what it's in relation to! In terms of science itself, my best moment would be getting to fly a helicopter over active Japanese volcanoes during my PhD – it's a seriously beautiful nation, and the volcanoes there are nothing short of spectacular. My worst moment was probably when I dropped my phone into one – whoops!

In terms of science communication, I'd say one of my favourite moments was getting to write up a pioneering study on Saturn's rings, which suggested they were only 100 million years old – not billions, as many have thought. My worst? It has to be the time I accidentally said Kilauea was an island, not a volcano; a minor mistake for anyone else, but a little embarrassing for a volcanologist!