Should people live near volcanoes?

At first, it may seem odd that any human being would choose to live on or near a volcano, considering the obvious dangers that an eruption would bring. Yet, throughout history, people have deliberately chosen to live in these 'hazard zones' and today over five hundred million people have chosen to make their homes close to volcanoes. They feel that the benefits of living in these areas outweigh the risks.

There are certainly many advantages to living in these areas of the world. There are many special features of volcanic geography that mean that people can build successful lives around them. Firstly, volcanic soil is incredibly rich in nutrients, which is ideal for running a successful farm and harvesting lots of crops, for example in Hawaii. Volcanoes are also good places to live if your job involves building things. These areas are rich in a kind of rock called granite, which is very strong and consequently makes a very good building material. The heat of the magma underground means that volcanoes can be used to make cheap and environmentally friendly electricity. This is called geo-thermal energy. Additionally, living near a volcano might be a great way for people to get rich quick! Diamonds and precious metals are brought from deep underground, to the surface and these can be mined and sold. Finally, these areas are rich in natural beauty and geo-thermal spas, which attracts tourists and the tourism industry creates many jobs for people, for example Mount Vesuvius in Italy.

There are some obvious disadvantages to living on or near a volcano. Eruptions can destroy homes, property and kill people. Besides eruptions, these areas are prone to earthquakes and the collapse of rocky structures, which can also be a danger to life. Volcanoes also release poisonous gases which cause irritation to the eyes, skin and lungs when people breathe them in. These gases also react with water vapour in the air, which forms acids, which in turn damages crops. Volcanic activity can also cause tsunamis (giant waves), which can lead to widespread destruction and loss of life. On the other hand, scientists, called volcanologists, can monitor active and dormant volcanoes and predict eruptions so that human beings have the chance to evacuate and reach safety.

In conclusion, when weighing up the advantages and disadvantages, I would choose to live in a volcanic region because I believe that the benefits out weigh the risks. I would like to work in the tourism industry, which would allow me to build a successful life for me and my family. However, I would only want to live in a volcanic area that is closely studied by scientists, so that I could hopefully have a warning about a possible upcoming eruption. This would give me time to take my family and most important possessions to safety.