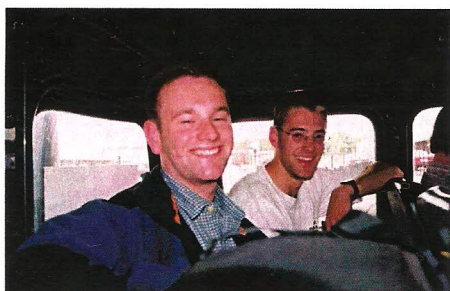
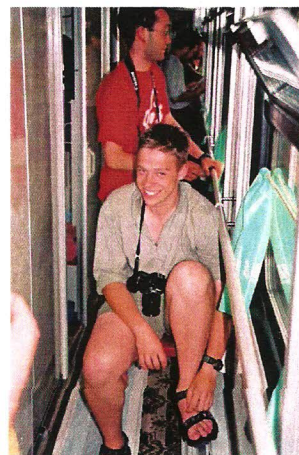
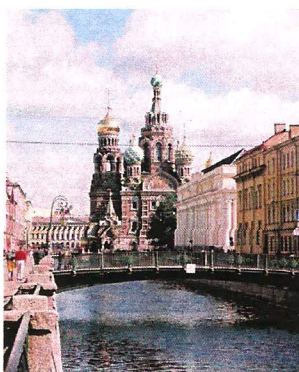
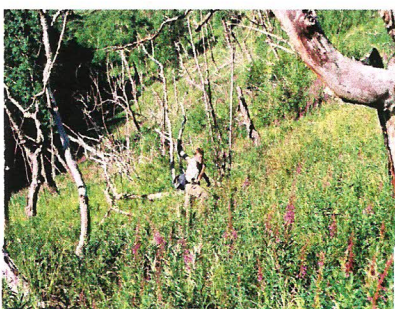


RUSSIA 2002



**Nick Adlam
Warwick Goodall
Nick Saunders
James Smyth**

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Introduction

Back in November 2001 Nick Adlam and James Smyth conceived a trans-Russia expedition, travelling overland by train, boat and truck to the remote Kamchatka peninsula. Along the route Nick would visit interesting engineering contacts and sites as part of his Royal Academy of Engineering leadership award. Once in Kamchatka we planned to complete a trek taking in the world famous Valley of Geysers and some of the peninsula's volcanoes.

By February Nick had approval to use funds from his award for the first phase of the expedition and so we reapplied to Imperial College exploration board focusing solely on the Kamchatka phase of the expedition. At this point Nick Saunders, another recipient of the Royal Academy of Engineering leadership award, and Warwick Goodall joined the expedition team. After further investigation into the requirements for an armed ranger and permits whilst trekking in Kamchatka, exploration board agreed to support the second phase of the expedition. Nick (S) received funding from two Bristol University funds and received a Shell personal development award for the second phase of the expedition. This report has been prepared for those whose primary interest was the wilderness trekking phase of the expedition.

The Team



Nick Adlam

Prior to the expedition Nick completed another successful year in the Imperial College Civil Engineering Department. At 22 he has already built up an impressive travelling and mountaineering CV, including last year's drive to Pakistan and ascent of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. Russia represented a new challenge and the chance to further his engineering experience.

Expedition Name: Bam

Best Quotes: 'I'll eat anything if I'm hungry enough but I'm not hungry enough to eat that.'

'You know it's bad when you start inhaling mosquitoes.'



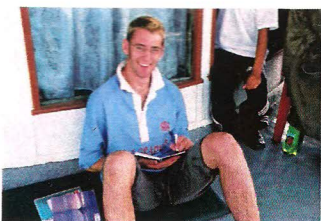
Warwick Goodall

At 24 Warwick was the oldest member of the team and despite spending two years at Accenture revelling in the executive lifestyle, he still possesses the travel bug. After previous expeditions to Belize and Peru, he saw Russia as a good opportunity to get away from the rat race and reduce his waist size.

Expedition Name: Good-for-nothing

Best Quotes: 'It's like Greek Island hopping without the islands'

'Can't breathe! Can't breathe!'



Nick Saunders

Nick is 21 and in the middle of a mechanical engineering degree at Bristol University. Free from concerns about career choice and mortgages he tends to inhabit cloud cuckoo land, bringing amusement to any expedition. Russia offered Nick the chance to spend more of the bank's money, and consign himself to another year of plain pasta.

Expedition Name: N E

Best Quotes: 'How much caviar does one generally eat?'

'Is that a real Panda?'



James Smyth

James is 22 and after last summer's drive to Pakistan realised that 2002 was his last summer of freedom, and so wanted to make the most of it. Having graduated from Imperial College Civil Engineering Department, the real world awaits in September when he joins LloydsTSB as a group management trainee.

Expedition Name: Myth

Best Quotes: 'If they've got BSE in Russia, I've got it.'

'With my knowledge of the Y.....'

'I'll laugh in the face of conventional fishing wisdom.'

Overview of Phase 1 – Trans-Russia

On June 22nd we left Heathrow for Moscow spending most of the flight attempting to learn the Russian alphabet and a few basic phrases. After a single night in the capital we bought provisions and caught the train to Novosibirsk. Over the next 18 days we travelled overland to Yakutsk. Firstly on the trans-Siberian line to Novosibirsk, and then on to Taishet. This was followed

by the BAM railway to Ust-Kut. On arrival at Ust-Kut we found that the paddle steamer we wished to catch left the following morning. As it only leaves once a fortnight, this was a slice of extreme good fortune. From Ust-Kut we travelled on the river Lena for five days to Yakutsk.



During the course of this journey a number of engineering visits were made. Particular highlights were the dam and hydroelectric power scheme at the Ob sea, near Novosibirsk, and the underground permafrost laboratory in Yakutsk.

From Yakutsk we had originally intended to hitchhike along the Kolmya highway to Magadan. However, speaking to people in Yakutsk it became apparent that this may not be possible. Although very little could be established for certain, it seemed that the full length of the road could only be travelled in winter when frozen rivers enabled collapsed bridges to be bypassed. Rather than risk getting stuck along the road, and miss our chance of visiting Kamchatka, we choose to fly to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky from Yakutsk. So on the 9/10th of July we flew from Yakutsk to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, with a large dog leg to a stopover in Vladivostok.



Phase 2 – Kamchatka

PolusM were recommended as a logistics company in the report of a Dutch mountaineering expedition. We would also recommend them to anyone looking to travel as independently as possible in Kamchatka. They offered advice but never tried to get us to go on a PolusM itinerary and provided minivans and people to fit in with our timetable.

During our first morning in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky we met with Oleg the boss of PolusM, and discussed options for our time in Kamchatka. It became apparent that a large number of areas within the peninsular are inaccessible without an FSB (formerly the KGB) permit. We decided to avoid these as getting the necessary permit would have



delayed us and our movements would have been restricted by an FSB guide. We also decided that trekking within the Valley of Geysers national park was prohibitively expensive (park fees and the need to privately charter a helicopter) and equally spectacular trekking could be done in other areas with



only the cost of the man to provide protection from the bears. We could, however, visit the Valley of Geysers on a day trip. Oleg highlighted the opportunity to make a four day, 120km, rafting trip in the remote south eastern part of the Kamchatka peninsular where trekking is not feasible because of the thick vegetation cover. This is something that we did not even know was a possibility before arriving in Kamchatka. A further consideration in our planning was that the smallest scale map available was the aircraft map we had bought in London.

After much debate amongst ourselves we decided to start with a four day trek to the south of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, this would offer the chance to climb a couple of volcanoes in an area where navigation should be simple. (Important given the poor quality of maps available). We would then go rafting for four days. After this we planned to head up to a small village, called Esso, in a remote area to the north of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, where more trekking would be possible. With these three choices we felt that we would experience as much of the Kamchatka peninsular as possible in the time available. With our minds made up we contacted Oleg and he was able to organise transport and a man to accompany us, who would carry bear flares. This would also be a test of our Russian linguistics as the 'bear man' spoke no English.

A day by day description of our time in Kamchatka is included in the following section of this report. Below are some extracts from our expedition logs to give a feel for the places we visited and our experiences.

Describing our climb into the Muknovsky volcano:

At 7am we set off up the snow slope above our camp towards the caldera – spectacularly billowing smoke against the clear morning sky. This was the start of an amazing few hours. The geothermal activity we saw surpassed anything any of us had witnessed in Iceland or New Zealand. After about an hour we were into the first section of the crater. The wafting sulphurous smell hit us, and at times we used bandanas to cover our mouths. Further into the crater we saw spectacular steam vents, often ringed by bright yellow sulphur deposits. Finally we scrambled up to an edge to see the source of the main plume that could be seen billowing for miles around.



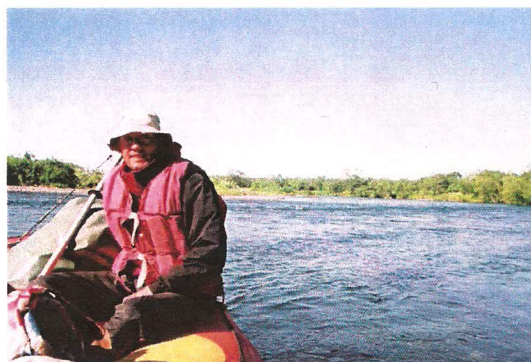
From our rafting trip:



Alexi, our guide, said 'bank' and we all paddled furiously to the side. With a little flattening we had our camp for the night amongst the trees. Plenty of fish had been caught and we realised that noodles were definitely off the menu. Alexi showed his true backwoodsman nature, quickly getting a fire going despite the damp conditions. Using bark from

one tree to light it and another to get it going. A fire here is essential – the smoke covers our smell from the bears and also for us keeps the mosquitoes at bay. The presence of bear flares is a much more serious issue here – Alexi always has one to hand.

The scenery is quite something, hills covered in thick scrub and woodland right down to the waters edge. It is amazingly green and very atmospheric with mist sitting in the valleys and on the hill tops.



Phase 2 – Day by Day

Wednesday 10th July

After email contact we were met at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky airport by a PolusM representative. This was most helpful as all foreigners were held on the plane and questioned by immigration officials as to the purpose of their visit. A Canadian businessman in the fishing industry told us of his first attempt at getting into Kamchatka when he was put on the first plane back to Tokyo. We checked into the cheapest hotel in the city, still expensive at \$27 per person per night, but essential to get our visas registered. For \$27 we had no hot water and communal showers.



Thursday 11th July

Discussed potential trekking areas, permits and bear protection with the PolusM boss Oleg. We also organised an apartment to stay in, at \$50 per night a huge saving on the hotel. Having decided on our first trekking area and a rough plan for our time in Kamchatka, we spent the remainder of the day buying provisions and packing.



Friday 12th July

Our 4WD minivan dropped us and our bear man off at the end of the plain between the Gorley and Mutnovsky volcanoes. Trekked to the base of Gorley where we set up camp. The terrain was a mixture of heather, volcanic sand and rock, with large snow patches. We had made good time, it was only early afternoon,

and so decided to climb the nearest hill. The bear man seemed to think that the risk of bear attack was minimal and so we set off on our own, bear flares in hand. The hill was deceptively steep but we made it to the top and had fantastic views of volcanoes stretching into the distance.

Saturday 13th July

Left camp at 6.30am to climb Gorley. Our ascent was slowed somewhat by the need to kick steps into snow slopes and the poorly consolidated soil that made up much of the upper part of the crater. Completed a circuit of the crater and returned to our tents for lunch. Packed up camp and crossed the valley to the base of



Mutnovsky. Saw bear prints in the sand at one point reminding us of the risk posed by bears. At 5pm we stopped for a rest and decided that with plenty of light remaining we should push on to the base of the snow slope leading up into the Mutnovsky crater.

Sunday 14th July



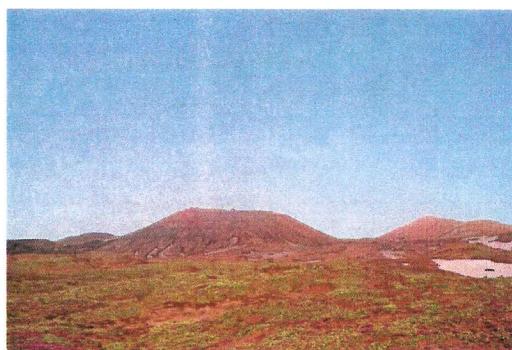
We followed the snow slope above our camp up to the crater. The scale was phenomenal, we spent another hour travelling further into the crater to the location of the major steam emission and a sub-crater formed in 1999. Having returned to our camp we traversed round the side of the volcanic cone to an adjacent valley which dropped down to a geothermal power station under construction.

Monday 15th July

Completed the circle of our trek by returning to our original drop off point where after only half an hour wait we were met by the 4WD minivan.

Tuesday 16th July

Rest day before rafting. Completed the more mundane tasks of expedition life, washing clothes, writing postcards and booking our flights to St. Petersburg.

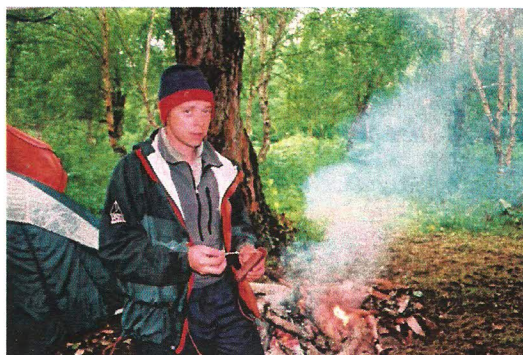


Wednesday 17th July

Minivan to the start of our rafting trip. After inflating the raft and packing our gear into waterproof bags we set off, pleased to get moving and away from the hordes of mosquitoes. At our camp that evening we learnt the importance of positioning the tents downwind of the fire to hide our smell from any bears in the area. Delicious fresh fish for dinner.

Thursday 18th July

A cold day on the raft, continuous rainfall and additional soakings with a couple of white water sections. Soaked to the skin we stopped to camp in mid-afternoon. As the skies cleared in the early evening, our guide Alexi lead us on a walk. At times he walked with flare in one hand and ignition string in the other, but the closest we came to a bear was a



flattened patch of ground where a 400kg bear had slept within the past two days.

Friday 19th July

Less rainfall today, just as well – we spent over seven hours on the water, with our progress slowed by a strong head wind. The riverbanks were now covered by thick vegetation as well as trees, making the flattening of a camping area a lengthy process.

Saturday 20th July

Plenty of strong paddling required today as we negotiated our way round numerous tree trunks blocking the channel and avoided being dragged into the numerous shallow braids. Met by the minivan and drove back to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.



Sunday 21st July

Rest day. Booked ourselves a helicopter trip to the Valley of Geysers for the following day and reserved bus tickets to Esso for the 23rd.



Monday 22nd July

Helicopter trip to the Valley of Geysers. Visit restricted to wooden walkways to protect the fragile ecosystems, impressive nonetheless. However, more impressive was the sight, from the window of the helicopter, of a nearby volcano erupting a new mushroom cloud as we flew by.

Tuesday 23rd July

The bus journey north to Esso turned into a 10 hour epic, far longer than the six hours suggested to us in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. By the time we arrived it was early evening and so we took time to relax in the geothermally heated swimming pool and plan what could be done during our stay in Esso.

Wednesday 24th July

With only a large scale map available we set out on a simple route above Esso. The number of mosquitoes was phenomenal, at one point James managed to kill five with one slap on his arm. The problem of mosquitoes was worsened by our slow progress on the steep valley sides above Esso. The terrain was particularly gruelling as we were making our way over and through thick heather with hidden tree trunks.



Thursday 25th July

Our descent to the main valley involved getting extremely wet as we made our way through grass and undergrowth that was at times head high. Having reached the valley floor we followed the river back to Esso. Despite the assurances of the locals in Esso that there were no bears in the area, we made our way back very warily after seeing a large print in soft mud by the river. Caught the early evening bus back to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.



Friday 26th July

Picked up our spare gear from PolusM, before packing and catching our flight to St. Petersburg.

General Notes on Russia

Whilst travelling across Russia we made many detailed notes, these will be submitted to Lonely Planet for inclusion in future guide books and are included as an Appendix to this report. The notes below are intended to give a general outline of some of the experiences of our expedition and answer the questions frequently asked by family and friends.

The People

With the exception of our early encounters in Moscow, everyone was amazingly welcoming towards us particularly our generation. Outside Moscow and St. Petersburg this was predominantly due to the novelty value of meeting and talking to westerners. On the route we took overland, many people had never spoken to an Englishman before. This was reflected in the fact that we didn't see a western tourist between June 23rd and July 22nd. Whilst travelling on the river Lena the attention became incessant. For the first couple of days it was flattering to have everyone on the boat, the captain included, want to meet you and drink beer with you. But by the end of day five, with only basic Russian at our disposal, we had tired of making conversation.

Language

Learning the Russian alphabet is imperative, without it you will probably not even make it round the Moscow metro. For off the beaten track travelling a few Russian phrases are essential, as very little English is spoken in Siberia and we had to embark on a steep learning curve.

Visas

The Russian visa system is still a relic of the Soviet era. Having received an invitation from a Russian company to get your visa, it is still necessary to register it at every city you stay in. The easiest way to do this is to stay in a hotel that can register your visa for your first night in a city and then move to cheaper accommodation for further nights. Despite what the guidebooks say it is still best to register your visa even if staying somewhere for less than three days. As we found out to our cost on our final day in Moscow, the police can come down heavily on unregistered visas, even when the duration of your stay is less than three days.

Alcoholism

Depending on the source, the life expectancy of a Russian male is either 54 or 57. This is partly due to the collapse of the healthcare system since the fall of communism but alcohol has a large part to play. The consumption of an average Russian is high, and its not just vodka. Whilst on the train it was the norm for people to have a couple of beers at breakfast, another couple for lunch and spend the evening drinking beer and vodka. The problem is not confined to men, we witnessed many women drinking as much and children can be seen drinking heavily at a young age. Tackling such widespread abuse is clearly an issue for the future of the Russian nation.

Budget

A budget summary for phase 2 of the expedition is included below. The costs are those for the four members of the team combined. The word 'Half' on a line indicates that the cost of this item was split with the budgeting for phase 1 of the expedition. The higher level of one personal contribution is as a result of Warwick taking no share of the sponsorship money.

ITEM	COST £
International Flights (Half)	424.00
Visas (Half)	338.00
Accommodation	356.00
Food	250.00
Local Transport	423.00
Internal Flights from Kamchatka	820.00
Bear Man	286.00
Rafting and Fishing Permits	200.00
Valley of Geysers	571.00
Fishing Gear	52.00
Other	35.00
TOTAL	3755.00
Sponsorship	1720.00
TOTAL to PAY	2035.00
Personal Contributions	
1 @ £940	
3 @ £365	

Acknowledgements:

Funding: Royal Academy of Engineering Leadership Awards
Imperial College Exploration Board
Shell Personal Development Award
Matthew Prowse Memorial Award
Knowlson Travel Bursary, Bristol University

We would also like to thank:

PolusM
Anastavia Tseeva
WKH Chartered Accountants
The many Russians who willingly helped us.
Friends and relatives for their continuing support.

References:

Lonely Planet Guide to Russia, Ukraine and Belarus
The Siberian BAM Railway Guidebook; Athol Yates
Trekking in Russia and Central Asia; Frith Maier

Sources of Information:

The Expedition Advisory Centre; RGS
www.fco.gov.uk

APPENDICIES

Appendix A – notes to Lonely Planet and for future expeditions

Notes to Lonely Planet:

- At passport control on arrival at Moscow Airport it takes approximately 5mins/person (non-Russians) for visa checks due to the recent installation of a new computer system, which contains a photo ID correlated to your visa number. Process is long and painful expect 1-2 hr wait
- Minibus to the metro can now be found approx. 20m outside terminal. Cost is 20roubles to Rochney Voksal
- Accommodation @ \$18/person can be found at Hotel Tourist 200m from Botanichesky Sud station (red brick building)
- Hostel Tramp in Hotel (Rm 524, building 7) very helpful at booking tickets and tour. E-mail: info@hostelling.ru
- Yolki-palki (Moscow) restaurant cheap and traditional but portions are meagre and chicken is dubiously red.
- Take toilet paper on the trains since it usually runs out after the first day.
- Recommend the purchase of a length of cord if sleeping on the top bunk due to the train's ability to stop abruptly in the middle of the night. Numerous tie in points available to create a form of net.
- Novosibirsk has two train terminals. One for long haul (main grand station). Sub-urban on the walkway to the left as you face the station from the main square.
- Sub-Urban trains are divided by zone (which dictates the cost)
- Novosibirsk-Obskoe More 12Rubbles each way and takes approx. 50 minutes
- Private accommodation can be acquired from the numerous touts around the train stations. 1 bed flat \$20/night and 2 bed flat \$30/night
- Underneath New York Pizza off Vokalnaya magistral is the New York Times Bar the resident ex-pats bar. Drinks and live bands until 3am.
- Opera house in Novosibirsk is closed for Refurbishment and will open on 25th September 2002
- A new 24hr supermarket has opened at the junction of Vokzalanaya Magistral with the station square.
- Central Park in Novosibirsk contains large fairground with everything from dodgems to beer tents.
- There is no foreigners counter at the city railway agency
- Train Prices (2nd class)
 - Moscow-Novosibirsk 1700Rubbles (49hrs)
 - Novosibirsk-Tayshet 700Rubbles (22hrs)
 - Tayshet-Lena 500Rubbles (12hrs)
- Lake Ob is like a Post-apocalyptic ghost town until after school finishes at which point it becomes packed
- Lake Ob has a resident nudist beach, including Naked Volleyball. Located approx. 500m-1km left along the beach when you hit the lake having left Obskoe more station
- Swimming in Lake Ob is highly recommended, considerably warmer than most English lakes
- Lots of non-biting but very annoying insect in the vicinity of Lake Ob after 3-4pm
- Recommend beach about 500m-1km round the headland to the right arriving at the beach from Obskoe More station. Secluded, no broken glass or driftwood.
- When buying food at a train station during a stop. It is considerably cheaper outside the train station complex and usually of better quality
- Mobile phones work in Novosibirsk and also Tayshet
- Should emphasis in the guidebook that most Russians are not only reluctant but also abusive to foreigners who make no attempt to speak Russian. Only the younger generation is willing to try.

- Accommodation in Tayshet is cheapest in the newly renovated station dormitories.
 - 12hrs/24hrs/add. 6hrs
 - 2 bed simple 244/136/81
 - 2 bed (tv+sofa) 280/154/90
 - 4 bed simple 229/128/78
 - No en-suites and no showers, only communal toilets
- Tayshet end of school/prize giving held at the stadium on 29/06/02. Beer, dancing and barbeques.
- Tayshet is far from the dive that LP makes it out to be, just go to the bars and meet the locals (oh and the local prize giving day!)
- English coins make an excellent gift or thank you to people who are generous (give you a drink, dinner etc.) Even a 1p piece is welcomed, they just want an English coin
- If you are not joining a train at its start location you will not get seat allocation, merely a carriage, to which the conductor will allocate you a seat. Therefore if travelling in a group do not expect to travel together
- There is a music volume dial in every compartment, situated just above the window. The conductor of the carriage chooses the music station
- Lena is a major changing point since many people switch to the river at this point
- Lena is a bit of a party capital and even at 0200 many beer tents are loud and lively
- Tickets for the steam boat can be bought on board until about 0130 on the night prior to departure when the main desk is closed for the night
- Tickets on board the Lena river boat steamer are broken into 4 classes where 3rd class is equivalent to a 2nd class cabin on the lower deck and 4th class is a dormitory. There is no quoted price for steerage (sleeping in the gangways)
- Steamboat accommodation is similar in size and comfort to a train, except with the addition of a small washbasin in the corner of the room.
- The toilets on board the steamer as squats and horrifically dirty and smelly
- There are no tourists on board the steamboat, all passengers are returning home, very few travel all the way to Yakutsk
- Kirensk is the first stop on the Lena steamer and its home. A population of about 3000. Shops are open 9-00. Stock is mainly long life food, any fresh food is expensive
- When the steamboat is about to leave captain gives 3 short horn blasts and then leaves 5 minutes later
- Showers (very hot) are free but arrange with the conductor to get in the queue. When it is your turn she will come and knock on the door.
- Food in the steamboat restaurant is limited but not too expensive.
 - Chicken \$1
 - Risol \$0.5
 - Stew \$1
 - Potato mash £0.5
 - A range of bread and cakes is cooked daily
- Life on steamer is very friendly, a lot of sharing. Chocolate while relatively cheap by western standards is a luxury and makes a good gift when plied with vodka and beer by Russians
- Drinking is very much to get drunk, no social sipping allowed. Often one person will circle the group with a cup and beer /vodka bottle. They go around the group making them down the glass and on to the next.
- The river steamer leaves Lena at 0900 and arrives in Yakutsk at 0700 some 5 days later
- Verging on the bizarre you should pay a visit to the top deck, where on the floor you will observe many insects incapable of flight (but with obvious wings). Mainly they buzz around on their backs and skim around bouncing off walls like ping pong balls.
- Mosquito concentration increases the further up the lena you go. They are not generally a problem since the boat is moving too fast. However when it stops, they can be intense and relentless
- On board ship when moving, flies and bees are a problem; the wasps don't bite unless you aggravate them. However the flies will land and start eating you, leaving little red dots all over, they will happily bite straight through t-shirts
- It is surprisingly hot travelling on the steamer. Despite the coolness outside the cabins are like sweat rooms, no airflow at all.

- The stop at Lensk is 30mins. If you wish to stock up on food there is a kiosk about 500m down on the left from the jetty. There is also a beer tent and a restaurant.
- Lena-Yakutsk River boat Schedule:

Km	Departure Time Downstream	Destination	Departure Time Upstream
0	0900	Osstrovo (Ust-Kut or Lena)	0900
301	1000	Kirensk	1000
513	1920	Korshuriovo	0650
622	0320	Vezeriye	1930
743	0940	Vitim	0940
767	1120	Peledui	0720
954	2020	Lensk	1530
1037	0040	Nuya	0730
1083	0320	Tinnaya	0330
1111	0500	Chapaevo	0050
1151	0720	Macha	2100
1232	1120	Delgeyskaya	1340
1277	1400	Daban	0940
1324	1650	Killats	0540
1361	1730	Olekminsk	0220
1426	0050	Khorinskaya	1920
1485	0350	Uritske	1430
1537	0630	Marinkha	1050
1581	1120	Cantiyakhtat	0610
1622	1320	Malikam	0220
1893	0220	Pakrovsk	0450
1988	0700	Yakutsk	2100

Departure Dates:

Lena: June 1,5,22

July 1,18,27

August 14,25

September 12,23

Yakutsk: June 6,10,13,17,22,27

July 2,6,9,13,18,23,28

August 2,5,10,16,20,26,31

September 3,8,14,18,24,29

(Note that half the boats from Yakutsk only go to Olekminsk)

Costs (Lena-Yakutsk)

1st class: 3818 Rubbles

2nd class: 3359

3rd class: 2373

4th class: 1450

Steerage no quoted price, must be negotiable though since 50 people at least do!

- In the Lena steamer restaurant the menu may change daily but note the small asterixes next to foods indicating availability. The only thing usually available is risol and mash!
- Showers are free on board the steamer and the water is good and hot due to the excess of steam available. You tell your maid and she will knock on your door when it is your turn. It is like a sauna in there so do not expect to be able to dry yourself upon leaving.
- The ship moors up outside Yakutsk at around 11pm and anchors up before heading in for about 7am the next morning
- Hotel Kolus in Yakutsk does not take Foreigners
- The bus system in Yakutsk costs 5 roubles for a ride to anywhere, you pay the driver when you get off, or a ticket clerk on the bus itself
- Air-ticket office in Yakutsk may hassle you about foreigners not being able to buy tickets. Tell the assistant to phone head office and everything is fine
- Rather bizarrely the shop in the air-ticket office sells an overwhelming number of cleaning products and beer only!

- The only place to change money in Yakutsk on a Saturday is Hotel Lena although it closes at 4pm
- When changing money expect each note to be checked at least 3 times, torn or worn notes will not be accepted
- Recommend visiting the Sakha Festival if you are in town in July. Follow signs out of town to CAXA. The event is sponsored by the local diamond mining company so all food is free, food includes:
 - Raw fish eaten whole
 - Raw fish salad
 - Horse
 - Horse Bowel
 - Fermented Horse milk (alcoholic)
 - Raw horse artery stuff with blood
 - Kebabs
 - Duck
- It is not possible to use a BT chargecard in a Russian Phone outside Moscow
- A visit to the Horse races near the new Austrian Hospital is well worth a look. Entry is 40 roubles and the riders compete to win a novelty item, in our case a fridge
- Most shops in Yakutsk are 24hr supermarkets although the range is usually long life and tastes awful.
- Don't bother trying to find Sheridan's Shaft (the original 116m permafrost shaft) it's closed to the public
- Don't bother visiting the geological museum; it's merely a collection of minerals, although the person who shows you around is very keen! 3rd floor turn right main university building
- Mammoth museum costs a hefty 100 roubles, yes it has mammoth remains but you'll be bored in 5 minutes
- Archaeological museum costs 100 roubles
- Recommend a visit to Bologna from Yakutsk (a glacial mineral water source despite 30 degree heat and it's in the middle of a forest)
 - Drive out of town and cross the Lena on a car ferry (30 roubles for a car, takes 40mins) then drive down the only road and at the junction turn left strangely following the sign to Yakutsk? Then turn left down a small track marked by a hooded picnic table. Drive to the car park and descend a 100m of wooden steps onto the glacier you can't miss it. The water is pure and very cold. The water is only +0.5degrees. A taxi there and back would cost around \$100.
- There is no visa check when entering Yakutia by boat up the Lena
- There is no visa check when leaving by Yakutsk airport
- Since we had a home stay we managed quite happily to be in Yakutsk without a visa for the Sakha republic. When booking flight, changing money and even taking a flight passports checked but no problems
- Be careful swimming in the Lena River, it is warm but there is a strong current when you venture out little. There is also a lot of broken glass on the beach and innumerable inanimate objects in the water.
- The Kolyma Highway is not feasible in summer between Yakutsk and Ust-Nera. We were recommended a fleet of tractors and about a month as a time estimate for that stretch alone.
- There is no direct flight from Yakutsk to Magadan, you must fly via either Vladivostock or Khrablavosk. Flights to Khrablavosk: tue, thur, sat. Vladivostock: tue, sat
- Can save a considerable amount of money if doing multi stage flights by going with same company (operator). Yakutsk-Vladivostock-Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky saved us 3000 Roubles each by solely flying with vladivostock air. Total was 5640Roubles including random 150Rouble miscellaneous charge?
- The main museum in Yakutsk is closed for 1 year for renovation, open summer 2003
- The flight from Yakutsk to Vladivostock takes 3hrs
- If you do not register your visa and you get caught the fine is at least \$20 and a lot of grief in Russian
- Hotel Vienna opposite Vladivostock airport is \$84 for a single, although they can arrange transport (in good English) to their sister hotel, 5 minutes away and \$20/person

- Taxi to centre of Vladivostock from airport 300-500 roubles (no traffic 45 mins, traffic 80+mins)
- Hotel Primoyre in Vladivostock can arrange taxi to airport 500 roubles.
 - Double cheap 1200 roubles (shower, tv, 2 beds)
 - Double suite 2000 roubles (bath, tv, lounge, cut glass cabinet, 2 beds)
- Do not drink the water in Vladivostock
- Burger, chips and coke @magic burger 50 Roubles
- Submarine museum has open torpedo tube you can crawl down and stick your head out of front of sub for an awesome photo, although you are next to the pacific fleet hq so be careful
- Weight allowance on vladivostock-petropavlovsk Kamcahtsky is strictly 20kg this includes your hand baggage. Excess is paid at 37 roubles/kg
- If driving into a city at night expect every car passing the city limits to be stopped by the police. You have to give them your driving licence details
- Avoid drinking OYAKOBO beer its terrible
- On Vladivostock air if you ask for juice you get no nuts, if you get a beer you do (all complimentary)
- Hotel Edelveis (Petropavlovsk) \$27/person not hot water, does do visa registration 20 roubles breakfast included (cheapest hotel in P-K)
- Near hotel Edelveis is a café on the main street good cheap food, \$2/person
- Café @ hotel Edelveis expensive and food not great
- You will be met on the aircraft when it lands at P-K by an FSB agent for interrogation about what you are doing, recommend a point of contact to avoid hassle (like tour agency)
- The baggage conveyor @ P-K airport has to be seen to be believed, straight conveyor dumps bags onto floor.
- Main air ticket office in P-K and the only one to take visa/mastercard is next to Dom kniga bookshop
- Two internet cafes (one on either side of the road) can be found on Ultisa Lukashevskaya
- Good outdoor shop called 'tourist' about 200m west of department store (no. 14 on lp map)
- Hotel Petropavlovsk has a cashpoint
- If you want to visit or even drive to the geothermal PowerStation you need a visa (sort of).
- Ascent of Vulochnskaya volcano just south of P-K requires an FSB permit due to the fact you can see Nuclear sub base from the top
- FSB permits also required in the trekking area just north east of P-K and anywhere north of Kyluchi (goodness know what there hiding beyond kyluchi!)
- Lake Kurlioe is the best place to see bears (nearly guaranteed) a 2 day excursion costs \$400/person includes accommodation and helicopter
- Valley of Geysers excursion costs \$200/person with Uzon caldera as well \$250/person
- To shoot a bear costs \$1000 for first shot \$100 for every subsequent shot. Season is May to June although now banned until 2010.
- Can still shoot deer, excursion takes about 5 days, need a permit
- Fishing permit \$10/rod/day
- 4 day rafting trip (rapids 1-2) +fishing costs \$600 (excluding fishing permits) from Malkee to Kavalershoe (120km)
- Good hot springs near the geothermal PowerStation
- Met station at the geothermal institute has an excellent hot tub and is very welcoming
- An apartment in P-K should cost around \$50/night
- Recommend visiting market opposite department store, big, cheap, very interesting
- Smoked Salmon 140-200 roubles/kg
- Potatoes and fresh veg very expensive
- Meat good quality and cheap
- Harbour area of P-K is dead, the best area seems to be around the department store
- Excellent but expensive restaurant called 'korea house' on ulitsa Leninskaya near regional museum (400-800Roubles a plate)
- Hotel Oktyabrskaya is undergoing a refit and upgrade although the restaurant is still open, portions small (150 Roubles/person)

- P-K to St. Petersburg on Kras Air 8900 Roubles flying via Krasnoyarsk
- Maps of Kamchatak currently very limited so recommend aerial plane maps from Stamford's in London, although not very accurate (rivers missing etc)
- If trekking alone take a bear flare. Has two ends for day and night flare, best and infact only non-; lethal deterrent available
- Fishing is excellent and while rods cannot be hired they can be bought cheaply (if buying Chinese imports) Full set up approx. \$25
- The police checkpoints outside P-K stop and check for caviar smuggling regularly you need a permit to transport the stuff
- At a checkpoint if the red light is constant then you must stop and show your driving licence. No passengers need to show ID. Flashing red means the policeman can pull you over at his command
- There is an excellent road side stop which seems to be obligatory for all buses, is at the road junction about 1 hr out from P-K. Numerous sellers of deep-fried something in bread, from fish and meat to cheese and veg. They keep them remarkably hot despite no signs of electricity.
- If you wish to climb the P-K backyard volcanoes the cost is \$130 for transport and \$50 for a guide. You depart at 6am and complete the ascent and return within a day
- When rafting beware of the lower flatter sections of river, this is bear country
- Russian bear avoidance tactics involve lighting a fire all night, mainly containing bark which gives off a thick and smelly smoke that distracts the bear from the smell of humans and food.
- Fishing even by complete novices like myself managed to yield fish in excess of 2ft long
- Bar Victoria can be found just behind the supermarket and Internet café. Go down the stairs, does main meals at 50 roubles and is a disco/bar. Food is served in very secluded booths
- The large nightclub on the main street with a windmill in neon lighting is 50Rouble entry weeknights and 100Roubles at weekends. Open 2300-0600
- The Slavyansky grocery store on the main street is 24hrs and serves many 'American foods' like pizza and ice cream. It also takes credit cards and has a cash point
- The bar anchor night club on the road southwest from the department store can be found after ascending a very grand marble stair case. 50 rouble entry, lots of mirrors, bad disco, cheap drink, 2300-0700
- The market opposite the department store is open 10am-7pm 7days a week. Good fish and meat market
- There is a club and internet café behind the department store
- A taxi to the helicopter terminal costs about 250 roubles
- At the heliport you can book/pay for your tickets in the building tucked away in the trees. A new terminal is being built but it is as yet unfinished. They speak good English
- Kreshet is the company that operates helicopter excursions to the valley of the geysers. Tel: 111633 or 64347
- A trip to the valley of the geysers
 - 27 passengers, 2 guides, 2 pilots, 1 engineer
 - You get an in-flight commentary in both English and Russian. The outbound flight takes 1hr 15mins
 - During flight see: acid lake and numerous volcanoes
 - Then undertake a 1.5 hr excursion around the geysers
 - Some geysers spurt every 20mins some every 8hrs
 - Then a good hearty lunch before a 1hr flight back to the heliport
- The bus station at Enyazovo is open 7:45-16:30 and the 215 bus departing at 0830 goes to ESSO
- There is a 24hr post office and soon to be completed Internet café at the store on the road just of that leading southwest from the department store.
- At the 10km station bus 214 goes to Esso and leaves at 0900. The bus takes 9-10hrs to get to Esso and costs 300 roubles
- There is currently tarmac road until about 50km beyond the road junction leading north. Then just dirt track. They are currently laying track presumably to meet up with the 30km or so section around Mildovo

- The bus stops for about 1hr at mildovo when everyone gets off and there is a café and shop. The bus disappears presumably to get fuel before reappearing just prior to departure.
- The bus arrives in Esso just outside the town hall
- There are several hotels in Esso although they usually turn out to be a spare room, they are reasonably charged at between 150-200roubles
- Esso has constant running hot water due to the geothermal source, but sporadic cold water
- There is no running hot water in P-K even in the best hotels it only runs for an hour, 3 times a day
- Esso has a large 15x25m swimming pool which is geothermally heated to be as hot as a bath
- It's free to use and cleaned twice a month by the local rotary club
- The traditional museum costs 50 roubles for tourists and photography is restricted. There is also a souvenir shop
- There are two main shops, one of which has an attached restaurant and is open until midnight (food 50roubles/person). Next door is the discotheque open fri and sat
- There is also a small market square situated near the bus stop
- The library in Esso contains the local rotary club, a museum to bears and a computer linked to the Internet. It is all run by a lady called Natalia who speaks English. She also has an apartment available at 150 roubles/person
- There is a well stocked supermarket next to the library open 10-19
- Horse back riding is possible from Esso, ask Natalia in the library to find people to organise. Day trips and long excursions (nearest volcano 100km away is possible). However the speed is equivalent to walking
- There are hot springs at the village just outside Esso
- There are lots of bears around esso so if walking in the area be prepared. The mosquitoes are also second to none and 100% deet and t-shirts don't seem to affect their biting ability
- For luxury accommodation in Esso at \$35/night including 3 meals try: Yergohmenka, Madezhda, Zehyonoya street
- Polus-M is an excellent logistic company for budget travellers and will cater to your budget and specific requirements.
 - Director: Oleg Y. Morozov, climbing, trekking, rafting, fishing, tours, excursions, all services required (mainly logistics). Budget travellers well catered for,
 - Address: Russia, P-K, Tushkanova street, 10-2 (for letters: Russia, P-K, PC683031, PO box 104. Internet www.polusm.com
 - Tel: 115011 office and 58530 mobile
 - Ask to speak to Yuri or Julia who speak excellent English. They can also organise apartments and permits
 - A taxi from P-K to the airport costs 300 roubles
 - Go through doors marked 1 and 2 at airport to get to ticket counters. Everything gets x-rayed first
 - When flying kras air recommend getting seats in rows 13-15 huge amount of leg room for no reason
- Trekking possibilities in the valley of geysers:
 - \$200/ person including guide to geyser valley
 - \$60/day permit inside park
 - \$50/day for guide
 - \$50/day for guard with gun against bears
 - You then need to hire helicopter at geyser valley for a whole hour to drop you at the designated drop zone. Helicopter costs \$1200/hour and it is a minimum of 3 days out of the park
- Kamchatka mineral water taste like fizzy saline solution. Basically it's packed with minerals and so on.
- Krasnoyarsk is the hub of kras air. Most arrivals go into the large, dull and plain transfer lounge.
- Woodstock is a good bootleg CD shop selling at about \$2 each. Fontanka 38, open 11-22

- <http://russianroom.50g.com> and email: russianroom@yahoo.com A chap called Toni can arrange accommodation in St. Petersburg (the cheapest around at about \$17/person) phone: +7 812 9009928.
- The St. Petersburg youth hostel only accepts bookings after the first night has been paid for in advance
- At St. Petersburg Mscovskaya station the advanced ticket booking booths are no.s 40-42 tucked off to the right hand side as you enter the main station. If buying for immediate travel or within 24hrs then buy at the large hall near the trains.
- After extensive testing of all the baltika beer brands (in ranked order, best first)
 - No. 6 Porta (heavy and black)
 - No. 5 Gold (high alcohol content)
 - No. 3 Classic (Served everywhere, standard larger)
 - No. 7 Export (similar to no. 3 widely available)
 - No. 10 Jubilee (Smaller bottle premium beer, almond taste)
 - No. 9 Strong (needless to say high alcohol)
 - No. 2 Lemon (Party mix)
 - No. 2 Orange (Party Mix)
 - No. 2 coffee (Party Mix)
 - No. 8 Wheat (German style beer)
 - No. 0 Non-alcoholic (pretty nasty)
 - No. 1 Light (4.5% and they call it light)
 - No. 4 Original (Heavy and an acquired taste)
 - No. 2 Cherry (Party Mix)
- Try and get hold of a Russian passport (perhaps the security guard's) when changing money as Russians get a better rate
- APS film can only be found in Moscow and St.Petersburg
- If travelling as two on a trains, you can travel in a single carriage in second class by taking seats 1+2 in a carriage
- St. Petersburg-Moscow 2nd class takes 8hrs and costs 430Roubles
- Student cards are rarely ever checked so any photo ID card for an under 25 should get a discount
- Entry into the church of the Resurrection of Christ: 100Rb student, 50Rb to use a camera (enforced with a sticker on camera and watchers)
- Referencing of the BA office in guide is as shown on map 3 is correct, map 6 is wrong
- Referencing of cost of flight from Vladivostock to Moscow quoted different in two places in guide as \$300 and \$120, \$120 is the most accurate
- A good time to buy hermitage tickets is about 1pm in the lunchtime lull. Students go free, 300Rb all others, 100Rb photographic ticket
- *In St. Petersburg you should note that is the cruise ship capital. The legendary guides with raised umbrellas guide geriatrics in their hordes*
- Pizza hut approx. 300Rb for a large pizza
- Patio Pizza on Nevsky prospect approx. 400Rb for a large pizza
- All you can eat pizza is not a concept that has reached Russia
- Tram/trolleybus costs 5Rb per trip
- Metro 6 Rb
- A cheap seat at the Kirov ballet is approx 25 roubles (Russian rate so multiply by 6 for foreigner rate)
- The purchase of Russian tickets from touts and paying the mark up on arrival seems to be quite acceptable practice
- A return ticket for the station to see St. Catherine's palace in St. Petersburg costs 18Rb minibus station to palace 6Rb
- Entrance to St. Catherine's palace gardens 50 rb students
- Entrance to palace 150Rb (student) and 50Rb for use of a camera
- Military antiques shop on 62 sadovaya street (St. Petersburg) open 11-20
- When buying tickets at st. Petersburg you will need to pay a 70rb insurance ticket. It is known locally as mafia tax, read it as you will
- Andrew's consulting in Moscow has moved to: Volknonka 1812, ulitsa kzorotkinskaya tel: 9169898

- The traveller's guesthouse in Moscow:
 - \$54 private room and bath
 - \$36 single with shared bath
 - \$48 double with shared bath
 - \$18 dormitory room
 - An ISIC card gets a 5% discount
- The included breakfast at the Traveller's guest house is legendary amongst those staying there as being awful
- Elki-Palkoi at Tverskaya station has an excellent Mongolian barbeque costing about 250Rb per plate
- Kremlin now costs 100Rb for a student to visit all buildings except the armoury. 50Rb to use a camera. 175rb to visit the armoury (student)
- Lenin's tomb is incorrectly marked on map should be no. 30 on map 6 (not no. 29)
- Access when Lenin's tomb is open is via Resurrection gate (near the eternal flame) No cameras of any description are allowed inside leave them at the cloakroom at the entrance to the Kremlin
- Red square is closed when Lenin's tomb is open
- It is free to enter Lenin's tomb
- Police are frequently checking visas around Kremlin, often demanding bribes or wanting to take you to the police station. The simple solution is to request to pay the fine (i.e. bribe) on the spot. A bribe of anything between \$2-20 maybe required. The policemen are noted for keeping their bribes under their hats.

Expedition and Exploration Potential in Siberia:

- Steamer up the Lena, very little civilisation beyond designated towns. Rolling hills covered with forests surround the Lena. No roads or infrastructure potential for wilderness exploration and possibly hiking in virgin territory
 - No/very vague maps available, Novosibirsk Bookshop
 - Supplies available in Lena and some in Kirinsk
 - Take a Steamer or hydrofoil to Kirinsk then arrange a local boat to transport you to a drop off point
 - Food available locally is mainly dried and therefore good for hiking
 - No communication potential, radios work sporadically if at all
 - Rumour has it that compasses don't work in the area due to the ore deposits
 - Good array of wildlife, bears may be a problem
- Potential for climbing near Kirinsk on the cliffs that face the water is possible. Definitely virgin climbing, evacuation would not be easy. Excellent climbing could be undertaken on the Lena Pillars again very remote though.
- Potential for river rafting near the Lena.
 - River is warm perhaps 20degrees
 - July-August would be ideal
 - Food is easy in summer since fresh fish and vegetables available
 - Potentially good rafting down: Tyga river to lake Biakal.
 - Also Indigirka and Kolyma rivers, although some sections may be impassable and due to the isolated nature evacuation may be non-existent.
- Mountaineering in Kamchatka
 - Possibilities include:
 - Active volcanoes
 - Ice and snow climbing to any technical level
 - Rock summits and rock climbing
 - Wilderness trekking
 - However the access is an issue any location beyond the main drag expensive
 - Truck \$120/hr
 - Helicopter \$1200/hr
 - No need to trek with an armed guard outside the valley of geysers, take bear flares
 - Limited equipment is available, but of international quality and comparable prices

- Rafting Kamchatka
 - Excellent fishing for food
 - Not that great rapids on main rivers
 - Big bear threat in lowland areas
 - Rescue may be difficult other than escape down river
 - Possible to both hire and buy rafts in P-K
 - It does rain a lot and hard so take suitable waterproofs
 - Wellies and oilskins recommended even in summer
 - Generally there are several rivers with good high quality rafting, probably to grade 5 and beyond. However they are very remote and access is difficult, however many are virginous. It would be a major undertaking and you would need to take supplies for several weeks.